

Service, Sacrifice, Loss, Grief, and Memory:
The Sam Peak and *Spare Charlie* Crews
534th Bomb Squadron, 381st Bombardment Group,
Heavy
April 11, 1944-June 22 & 24, 1944

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This thesis is dedicated to the members of the Peak and *Spare Charlie* crews and their families.

On a cloudy Thursday evening in Abbeville, France, a fleet of B-17 heavy bombers flew above the town and dropped their bombs. On this day, 22 June 1944, Abbevillois, the inhabitants of Abbeville, and other French citizens who lived in the surrounding area encountered many events. In the early morning hours, without firing a single shot, French commandos attacked the Abbeville prison and released seventy of their comrades, including four who were condemned to death.¹ At 3 pm, a plane flew over the train station in the town and dropped a bomb near the locomotive depot, effectively cutting some telephone wires.² At 7:09 pm, right after the B-17 *Spare Charlie* dropped its bombs, the plane was hit by 88 mm flak. It was at this moment that the lives of the nine men aboard *Spare Charlie* would forever change.

Although numerous men fought in World War II, many of them made the ultimate sacrifice. They all deserve to be remembered for their bravery, service, and sacrifice. The men written in this thesis are just a few. The majority of them trained in the United States with each other, flew their missions together, and died alongside one another. These men were sons, brothers, uncles, fathers, and husbands. Most importantly, they were young men who had promising futures ahead of them. Although these men came from varied backgrounds, they were brought together for a common cause of which most of them died for.

This thesis will examine the lives and missions of members of two B-17 “Flying Fortress” crews that were shot down over and crashed in France on 22 and 24 June 1944, and analyze how communication and miscommunication impacted their families as they dealt with the loss of their soldier as well as how it impacted how the crew members have been

¹ “The Prison Attack,” Abbeville-Passion Histoire d’une ville, June 22, 2017, accessed March 27, 2020, permission given to author to use website, <http://www.abbeville-passion.fr/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=490&mnuid=30&tconfig=0>.

² Jacqueline Legrand, *Courageuse Abbeville, 3 Septembre 1939 3 Septembre 1944* (Abbeville, France: L’imprimerie F. Paillart, 1990), 100.

remembered by their families. In addition, this thesis will also evaluate the prisoner of war experience of three of the crew members.

A biographical overview of the crews will be reviewed. To understand more, two crews will be discussed in this thesis. The first crew is the Sam Peak crew. This crew, composed of nine men, trained together in the United States and flew the majority of their missions with each other. On the Peak crew's twenty-third mission, co-pilot 2nd Lt. Victor Romasco and F/O navigator James Chandler were replaced by 1st Lt. Bob Petroski and 2nd Lt. Jack Lundberg. The reasons why Lt. Romasco and F/O Chandler were replaced will be discussed later on. The other crew, the *Spare Charlie* crew, analyzed in this thesis, is the Peak crew, with the exception of Lt. Romasco and F/O Chandler, and the addition of Lt. Petroski and Lt. Lundberg.

The Sam Peak crew

Pilot 1st Lt. Samuel "Sam" Lewis Peak

Samuel "Sam" Lewis Peak was born on 5 May 1917 in Fort Worth, Texas, as Samuel LaField Payne Jr. to Samuel LaField Payne and Elizabeth "Betty" Burns Payne. Sometime between May 1919 and February 1920, Betty and Samuel Sr. divorced. By 1923, Betty married Jeff Peak and had her third child, William Peak, with him.³ At some point in time, Sam and his older sister, Mary Maxine, took Peak as their official last name. In addition, Sam's middle name was changed from LaField to Lewis.⁴

³ Sam Peak in household of Jeff Peak, 1930 U.S. Federal Census Record; De Leon, Comanche, Texas, United States; Roll 2311; Enumeration District: 11; from *FamilySearch.com* (accessed April 23, 2019).

⁴ "Samuel Lewis Peak and Juanita Prince Tarver Marriage Record," November 15, 1941, Montgomery County Clerk's Office; Conroe, Texas; *Montgomery County, Texas, Marriage Records*; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 19, 2019).

A Texan with a long family history of veterans serving the United States, Sam was commissioned a reserve officer on 10 May 1940 and called to active duty in the Quartermaster Corps on 25 June 1941.⁵ By July of that year, Sam, ranked as a second lieutenant, was stationed at Camp Polk, based in Leesville, Louisiana.⁶ The next month, Sam was assigned as property officer.⁷ At the beginning of August, Camp Polk held an opening dance for the officers there. Among the guests attending was Juanita Tarver, a Leesville native and student at Louisiana State University.⁸ Sam probably met Juanita at this dance or another event held at Camp Polk. Sam and Juanita married in Montgomery County, Texas, on 15 November 1941.⁹



Image 1- Sam Peak. 1943.

Sam was stationed at Camp Polk until April 1942, when he was moved as a first lieutenant to the Engineer Corps. Sam was transferred again to the Army Air Corps and began his aviation training in December 1942.¹⁰ By April 1943, Sam was stationed at Enid Army Flying School in Enid, Oklahoma. There, he was a student officer while he completed primary flight school.¹¹ In nine weeks, cadets received sixty hours of the fundamentals of flight training

⁵ "Lt. Samuel Peak Missing in Action," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 22, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, www.newsbank.com.

⁶ United States Adjutant-General's Office, *Army Directory: Reserve and National Guard Officers On Active Duty July 31, 1941* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 919.

⁷ "Assignments Are Made at Camp Polk," *The Town Talk*, August 26, 1941, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/213446815>.

⁸ "Opening Dance At Camp Polk," *The Town Talk*, July 5, 1941, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/213451869>.

⁹ "Samuel Lewis Peak and Juanita Prince Tarver Marriage Record," November 15, 1941, Montgomery County Clerk's Office; Conroe, Texas; *Montgomery County, Texas, Marriage Records*; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 19, 2019).

¹⁰ "Lt. Samuel Peak Missing in Action," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*; and "Leesville Pilot Killed in Action," *Weekly Town Talk*, May 12, 1945, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/212988903/>.

¹¹ 1943 Enid Army Air Field Yearbook.

in two-seater Stearman, Ryan, or Fairchild trainers. Their flight instructors were civilian employees.¹²

On 27 June, Sam arrived at Frederick Army Airfield, in Frederick, Oklahoma. Here, Sam completed advanced pilot training. At this stage in training, cadets were prepared for single-engine or multi-engine training. Sam was placed with multi-engine training. He learned to fly a multi-engine plane in formation and increased his ability to fly on instruments at night in the AT-9, AT-10, AT-11, or AT-17 advanced trainer.¹³ Training lasted nine weeks and Sam graduated from Frederick Army Airfield as a member of class 43-H.¹⁴ On 19 July, Juanita gave birth to her and Sam's only child, Patricia "Pat" Ann Peak, in Houston, Texas.¹⁵ By December 1943, Sam was training at Alexandria Air Base in Alexandria, Louisiana.¹⁶

Co-Pilot 2nd Lt. Victor "Vic" Roger Romasco

The third of four children, Victor "Vic" Roger Romasco was born 26 November 1916 in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, to Antonio "Tony" Romasco and Nicola "Nina" Sabatini Romasco. Both Tony and Nina had emigrated to the United States from Italy.¹⁷ Vic attended Uxbridge High School and graduated in 1936. He then studied law for two



Image 2- Vic Romasco.

¹² "Into the Sky: Primary Flying School," National Museum of the United States Air Force, May 4, 2015, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196857/into-the-sky-primary-flying-school/>.

¹³ "Winning Their Wings: Advanced Flying School," National Museum of the United States Air Force, May 4, 2015, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196855/winning-their-wings-advanced-flying-school/>.

¹⁴ "Second Class Cadets At F.A.A.F.," *The Frederick Leader*, June 28, 1943, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/596731424>.

¹⁵ Patricia Ann Peak, *Texas, Birth Index, 1903-1997*, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed August 27, 2019).

¹⁶ "Register of Dental Patients at Dental Clinic, Army Air Base Alexandria, LA," December 8, 1943, Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

¹⁷ Victor Romasco, 1920 U.S. Federal Census Record; Uxbridge, Worcester, Massachusetts; Roll: T625_748; Page 15B; Enumeration District 167; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed January 24, 2020).

years at Northeastern University in Worcester, Massachusetts.¹⁸ Vic worked in the payroll department for Whitin Machine Works in Whitinsville, Massachusetts.¹⁹ The mill, known to locals as The Shop, was one of the largest textile-machine factories in the world. During the war, The Shop produced military supplies, turbines, and steam engines.²⁰

On 1 June 1942, Vic enlisted in the Army Air Corps.²¹ After various aptitude and physical tests, Vic was classified for pilot training. Following this classification, Vic began preflight ground school at Maxwell Field in Alabama, which lasted approximately nine weeks.²² Preflight training entailed all aspects of basic training as well as academic instruction, physical condition, and military training.²³ During training, Vic and other cadets were taught how to fly at night, by instruments, in formation, and cross-country. Cadets flew around seventy hours in the BT-9 or BT-13 basic trainer.²⁴ In March 1943, Vic graduated from Maxwell in class 43-I. He received advanced pilot training at Stuggart Field in Arkansas. In November 1943, Vic completed his training, was given his silver wings, and



Image 3- “Lieut. Victor Romasco...who recently received his commission and silver wings of the army air corps was honored by more than 150 of his friends at a testimonial...John S. Derham, former assistant attorney general, presented the young officer with a purse on behalf of those present.”

¹⁸ “Lt. Romasco, War Prisoner, Cited By Army,” unknown newspaper, circa July 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

¹⁹ Victor Roger Romasco Draft Card, October 16, 1940, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

²⁰ Craig S. Semon, “Uxbridge man restores steam engines during WWII,” *telegram.com*, November 15, 2013, accessed March 29, 2020, <https://www.telegram.com/article/20131115/NEWS/311159903>; “Lt. Romasco, War Prisoner, Cited By Army,” unknown newspaper, circa July 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

²¹ “Lt. Romasco, War Prisoner, Cited By Army,” unknown newspaper.

²² “Cadet Program,” National Museum of the United States Air Force, May 4, 2015, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196858/cadet-program/>.

²³ Thomas H. Greer, “Individual Training of Flying Personnel,” in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 6:557-563.

²⁴ “Crossroads: Basic Flying School,” National Museum of the United States Air Force, May 4, 2015, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196856/crossroads-basic-flying-school/>.

received his commission.²⁵ Probably the next month, Vic was stationed at Alexandria Air Base in Alexandria, Louisiana. While training in Alexandria, Vic's fiancée, Muriel Wood, received "a diamond ring for Christmas" from Vic.²⁶

Navigator 2nd Lt. Thomas Joseph Tracy

Thomas Joseph Tracy was born on 23 April 1923 in Inverkeithing, Scotland, to William and Mary Tracy.²⁷ Thomas was the youngest of three children. His brother, William, was born in 1912 and sister, Roseann, in 1916.²⁸ In 1923, the same year Thomas was born, the Tracy family emigrated from Scotland to Rochester, New York.²⁹ Thomas grew up in Rochester and attended the Aquinas Institute, where he graduated from in 1940.³⁰

Around the same time, he worked for the American Laundry Machine Company in Rochester. The company manufactured commercial laundry, dry cleaning and textile processing machinery.³¹ Thomas entered military service in January 1943.³² It is not known where he trained, but at some point, he was classified as a navigator and took advanced navigation classes.



Image 4- Thomas Tracy.

²⁵ "Lt. Romasco, War Prisoner, Cited By Army," unknown newspaper.

²⁶ Tillie Marker, "W.M.W. Office Chatter," *News From Home* 2, no.3, (January 1944), accessed January 24, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/newsfromhome1942keel/page/n117/>.

²⁷ Thomas Joseph Tracy Draft Card, June 30, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 6, 2020); and Thomas J Tracy, 1940 U.S. Federal Census Record; Rochester, Monroe, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02844; Page 11B; Enumeration District 65-105; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 6, 2020).

²⁸ "Capt William A Tracy," FindaGrave, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/119084115/william-a-tracy>; and "Roseann M. Busacco," FindaGrave, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/174068224/roseann-m-busacco>.

²⁹ Mary Tracey, 1930 U.S. Federal Census Record; Rochester, Monroe, New York; Page 25A; Enumeration District 0057; FHL microfilm 2341185; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 6, 2020).

³⁰ "Lt. Thomas J. Tracy Killed in Germany," *Democrat and Chronicle*, December 15, 1944, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/136350250>.

³¹ Thomas Joseph Tracy Draft Card; and "Asbestos Exposure at American Laundry in Rochester, New York," Belluck & Fox, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.belluckfox.com/new-york-asbestos-companies/american-laundry-in-rochester-new-york/>.

³² "Lt. Thomas J. Tracy Killed in Germany," *Democrat and Chronicle*, December 15, 1944.

Following his graduation from advanced navigation, Thomas was probably commissioned a navigator and second lieutenant. By January 1944, he was training with the Peak crew at Alexandria Air Base.

Bombardier 2nd Lt. Allen Hilding Osterberg

The oldest member of the crew, Allen Hilding Osterberg was born on 25 October 1916 in Delta, Michigan, to Erick Osterberg and Hannah Ekman Osterberg. Hannah and Erick emigrated from Vora, Finland, although they were really Swedish. It was common for Swedes to settle in the coastal areas of Finland, such as Vora.³³ Anyhow, both Erick and Hannah wanted to find better jobs and start anew. They had siblings already living in the United States. Two of Erick's brothers settled in Chicago, Illinois, and Oakland, California. When she was eighteen-years-old, Hannah emigrated to Gladstone, Michigan, where two of her sisters lived. Although she knew no English, Hannah worked as a maid and a cook for a prominent family. Eventually, she learned English.³⁴

Allen grew up in the Delta area. In 1934, he worked as a bus driver for Maple Ridge Township schools.³⁵ Allen graduated from Rock High School in 1935.³⁶ In early 1940, Allen and a few of his family members were living in El Cerrito, California.³⁷ Some of his sisters and a brother moved from Michigan to California to continue their education and find better jobs.³⁸ They probably lived in El



Image 5- Allen Osterberg.

³³ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, November 2, 2019.

³⁴ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, November 2, 2019.

³⁵ "Rock Schools Are Renovated," *The Escanaba Daily Press*, August 31, 1934, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/52999497>.

³⁶ "Lt. Osterberg War Casualty," *The Escanaba Daily Press*, July 9, 1944, in possession of Kay Shapy.

³⁷ Allan H. Osterberg, 1940 U.S. Federal Census Record; El Cerrito, Contra Costa, California; Roll: m-t0627-00196; Page 10A; Enumeration District: 7-37; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 9, 2019).

³⁸ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, November 2, 2019.

Cerrito as it was close to where one of Erick's brothers lived. By October, Allen moved back home to Michigan and worked as a self-employed radio technician.³⁹

On 15 March 1942, Allen enlisted in the Army Air Corps in Delta.⁴⁰ On 12 April, Allen left Escanaba for Milwaukee where he expected "to be assigned to Santa Ana for training as a cadet in the Army Air corps."⁴¹ While at Santa Ana, he had nine weeks of pre-flight training. The typical cadet spent his first three weeks in the classification center to determine if they were to be pilots, bombardiers, navigators, or mechanics.⁴² It was determined that Allen would become a bombardier.

Following his time at Santa Ana, Allen was sent to Thunderbird Field in Phoenix, Arizona, where he had primary flight training. After arriving, Allen wrote his sister Edna:

Here I am, and of course you notice I've moved...It's always about 100 degrees + they say it gets 125 degrees...I think I'll get used to it though. It was worse the first day. Otherwise this here is a swell place. All conditioned and we have nice big plastered rooms- 8 to a room- with shower + toilet facilities for each room. In fact its nicer than you ever see in the movies. The only thing is Santa Ana was a snap compared to this, the way we have to toe the mark. And everything is done double time – run full speed to wherever you are going and observe all regulations to a tee, and believe me there's plenty of em. Punishment is walking the ramp- the asphalt runway is front of the hangars. There's plenty of about that, and I'm quite determined not to have to walk any tours on that ramp...Let's get back to the field, I want to mention the two swimming ports we have here, went in swimming last night and really had a time. And oh yes the planes. There's about 300 of em here and they (are) taking off and landing about every half minutes or less. I went up for my first instruction this morning. We get about 30 min a day for this first week. Then ground classes- we received 6 manuals providing we get time to study I think I'll be smoking everything ok. I understand they give a fellow a pretty fair deal here, but never the less I may be back at Santa Ana any time. We eat

³⁹ Allen Osterberg Draft Card, October 16, 1940, from <https://www.fold3.com/image/662056920> (accessed September 10, 2019).

⁴⁰ Allen Osterberg, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Delta County, MI; March 15, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁴¹ "Army Flier," *The Escanaba Daily Press*, April 15, 1942, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/32264348>.

⁴² Edrick J. Miller, *The SAAAB Story: The History of the Santa Ana Army Air Base* (Santa Ana: CA, 1981), 56.

cafeteria style and the food is good- but I don't eat as much- I suppose I'll be underweight. Well I'll close- those upper class men keep clapping in to keep us "on the feel" and the P.R. keeps blaring and we have to listen to every announcement and it's not, so I'll close, and hope to tell you all about things in detail someday.⁴³

On 17 July, Allen was flying in a PT-17 aircraft and had a landing accident which caused a ground loop.⁴⁴ Luckily, Allen was not injured. Following completion of primary flight training, Allen was sent to Victorville Army flying school in California for advanced bombardier training. Ground instruction consisted of about 425 hours, most of which was dedicated to critiques of air missions and preflight inspection of bombing. Ground training also dealt directly with bombing and bomb equipment and accessories. Bombardier students learned about the forces acting upon a falling projectile and with the principles of a bombsight. In addition,



Image 6- Allen (left) and two other bombardier cadets at Victorville.

another subject was bombing accessories, which included the study of bomb racks, fuzes, aerial cameras, and radio. Separate courses were given on flight instruments and the elements of bombsight maintenance and calibration. In the course on bombing procedure most of the student's time was spent on a synthetic bomb trainer which served as a device for transition from ground to air training. A special course was also devoted to the C-1 automatic pilot which the bombardier normally operated during actual bombing runs. Analyzing results of practice bombings and explaining scoring methods made up the bombing analysis course, and the basic AAF doctrines of employment of air power were expounded in a course called bombardment aviation. In addition to the subjects related only to bombing, some dealt with elementary navigation. Training was given in pilotage, dead reckoning, and computers; the graduate bombardier was therefore qualified in

⁴³ Letter, "Allen Osterberg to Edna Osterberg," June 26, 1942, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

⁴⁴ "July 1942 USAAF Stateside Accident Reports," Aviation Archaeological Investigation & Research, accessed October 8, 2019, <https://www.aviationarchaeology.com/src/AARmonthly/Jul1942S.htm>.

elementary navigation as well as in his primary specialty. Several courses common to the preparation of other aircrew members--weather, flight planning, oxygen indoctrination, aircraft and naval recognition, and continuation practice in radio code--rounded out the ground-school curriculum. Military instruction and physical conditioning were practically the same as in pilot training.⁴⁵

Furthermore to bombardier classes, bombardier students were required to take a six-week flexible gunnery course. Allen most likely received this training while at Victorville.⁴⁶ In April 1943, Allen graduated from Victorville in class 43-5 and received his commission as a bombardier and second lieutenant.⁴⁷ Sometime during December 1943 and January 1944, Allen was sent to Alexandria Air Field in Alexandria, Louisiana.

Top Turret Gunner and Engineer Staff Sgt. Murl Francis Simmons

The second of five children, Murl Francis Simmons was born on 5 October 1922 in DeKalb, New York, to Ralph Simmons and Isabelle Savage Simmons, who was known by her middle name June. Ralph was a cook in the 64th Infantry, 7th Division, which fought in France during World War I.⁴⁸ He worked as a farmer most his life and for a short time at the Rushmore Paper mill in Gouverneur. The Simmons family lived in Rossie, New York, until 1936, when they moved to Gouverneur, fifteen miles (twenty-two km) west of Rossie.⁴⁹ On 21 December 1936, Murl's father, Ralph, died at home from pneumonia.⁵⁰ On 5 August 1940, June married Glen Hall at the Spragueville Methodist Church in Spragueville, New York.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Greer, "Individual Training of Flying Personnel," in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 6:580-581.

⁴⁶ Greer, "Individual Training of Flying Personnel," 6:579.

⁴⁷ "Lt. Osterberg War Casualty," *The Escanaba Daily Press*.

⁴⁸ "Ralph R. Simmons," FindaGrave, accessed April 23, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/26073782/ralph-r-simmons>.

⁴⁹ "Isabelle June Hall," *Gouverneur Tribune-Press*, August 12, 1998, accessed April 22, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn92061434/1998-08-12/ed-1/seq-7/>.

⁵⁰ "R. Simmons Passed Away in Gouverneur," *Ogdensburg Journal*, December 23, 1936, accessed April 5, 2020, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031165/1936-12-23/ed-1/seq-6/>.

⁵¹ "Isabelle June Hall," *Gouverneur Tribune-Press*.

Murl attended Gouverneur High School from 1936 to 1939. In 1937, Murl's fellow classmates noted that Murl's redeeming virtue was modesty.⁵² The next year, Murl declared that his ambition was to be the famous actor Robert Taylor's stand-in.⁵³ In 1940, Murl worked as a pin setter.⁵⁴ Two years later, he worked for Rushmore Paper Company at the Natural Dam mill site in Gouverneur.⁵⁵ The company produced paper and lace goods.⁵⁶

Murl was drafted into the military and enlisted on 24 November 1942 in Utica, New York.⁵⁷ On 2 December, after passing physical examinations and completing a seven-day furlough, Murl and twenty-nine other Gouverneur selectees left the town to begin active service.⁵⁸ Two days later, Murl was in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where he received basic training until 30 December.⁵⁹ From 30 December until 5 June 1943, Murl attended mechanics school at Seymour Johnson Air Field in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and at Douglas Aircraft school in Santa Monica, California, from 6 June to 14 July.⁶⁰ At both



Image 7- Murl Simmons.

⁵² Gouverneur High School, *Deanonian 1937 Yearbook*, (Gouverneur, NY: Graduating Class of 1937, 1937), Gouverneur High School, pg. 29, <https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/sllboces/id/78930>.

⁵³ Gouverneur High School, *Deanonian 1938 Yearbook*, (Gouverneur, NY: Graduating Class of 1938, 1938), Gouverneur High School, pg. 43, <https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/sllboces/id/79329/rec/4>.

⁵⁴ Murl F Simmons, 1940 U.S. Federal Census Record; Gouverneur, St Lawrence, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02769; Page 13B; Enumeration District: 45-27; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 9, 2019).

⁵⁵ Murl Francis Simmons Draft Card, June 30, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

⁵⁶ Nelson B. Winters, "Of Gouverneur and Old Lace: The International Lace Manufacturing Co., 1903-1944," *The St. Lawrence County Historical Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Fall, 1993): 15, <https://www.slcha.org/quarterly/issues/v038no4.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Murl Simmons, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Oneida County, NY; November 24, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁵⁸ "Large Contingent Leaves This Week," *The Tribune Press*, December 2, 1942, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031312/1942-12-02/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁵⁹ "Identification Data," Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁶⁰ "Said Missing...," *The Tribune Press*, July 12, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031312/1944-07-12/ed-1/seq-4.pdf>; and "Identification Data," Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File.

locations, Murl learned about how to maintain airframes, aircraft engines, and accessories integral to the plane, including equipment such as propellers, hydraulic and electrical systems, carburetors, and generators.⁶¹

From 14 July to 3 August, Murl was stationed at the Army Air Forces Training Command in Kearns, Utah. From 3 August to 8 October, he trained at the Flexible Gunnery school at Fort Myers, Florida. He received further training from 8 October to 29 November in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁶² On 29 November, Murl was stationed at Alexandria Air Base, in Alexandria, Louisiana, where he trained as a member of the Peak crew.

Radio Operator Staff Sgt. Frank Albert Welke, Jr.

Named after his father, Frank Albert Welke Jr. was born 21 September 1923 in Queens, New York, to Frank Albert Welke Sr. and Marion Shanley Welke. During the First World War, Frank Sr. served in Company E, 164th Infantry of the North Dakota National Guard.⁶³ Frank fought overseas in France, where he distinguished himself in service, from 15 December 1917 to 27 July 1919.⁶⁴



Pvt. Frank Welke

Frank Jr. was the oldest of three children. His brother, Edward, was born in 1925 and sister, Marie, in 1926. The Welke family lived in Queens Image 8- Frank Welke Sr. with Marion's parents, Edward and Anna Shanley, until 1940. Around this time, both of

⁶¹ Thomas H. Greer, "Training of Ground Technicians and Service Personnel," in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, ed. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 6:629-630.

⁶² "Said Missing..." *The Tribune Press*; and "Identification Data," Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁶³ "Frank Albert Welke," Roster of the Men and Women Who Served in the Army or Naval Service (Including the Marine Corps) of the United States or its Allies from the State of North Dakota in the World War, 1917-1918 Volume 4 Rich to Zygmund, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 28, 2019).

⁶⁴ "Veterans of World War I- Army [M-Z]," Manitowoc County, Wisconsin Genealogy, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://www.2manitowoc.com/ww1M.html>.

Marion's parents passed away and the Welke family moved to Elmore Avenue in East Meadow, New York.⁶⁵

Frank attended Hempstead High School and graduated from the school most likely in 1940.⁶⁶ It was probably around this time that Frank became interested in learning to play the violin and his father bought him one.⁶⁷ In 1942, Frank worked for Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation in Bethpage, New York.⁶⁸ During the war, Grumman manufactured a series of U.S. Navy fighter planes. The Corporation was the Navy's prime aircraft manufacturer in the early 1940s and most of its business came from the Navy.⁶⁹

Frank was drafted and later enlisted on 10 February 1943.⁷⁰ During the next few days, Frank had his induction examination. On 17 February, after a sendoff, Frank and other enlistees were given cigarettes, small books and lapel flags by the auxiliary to the Bellmore American Legion post. A color guard and the senior Mepham Central High band accompanied the men as they marched to the train station.⁷¹ Frank was then transported to Miami Beach, Florida, where he received basic, mechanical, and technical training from 25 February to 21 March.⁷²

Men whose classification test score was at least 100, had satisfactorily completed the mechanical aptitude test, and showed an aptitude in Morse Code were sent to Radio Operator

⁶⁵ Frank Welke, 1940 U.S. Federal Census Record; Hempstead, Nassau, New York; Roll: m-t0627-02687; Page 8A; Enumeration District: 30-130; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 9, 2019).

⁶⁶ "Welke Reported Missing," *The Nassau Daily Review-Star*, July 8, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031113/1944-07-08/ed-1/seq-4/>.

⁶⁷ Kathy Colquhoun, letter to author, December 2019.

⁶⁸ Frank Albert Welke Jr. Draft Card, June 30, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

⁶⁹ "The History WWII to 1994," The Grumman Pages, accessed March 9, 2020, <http://www.angelfire.com/space/grumman/history/grummanhistory2.html>.

⁷⁰ Frank Welke, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Nassau County, NY; February 10, 1943, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁷¹ "School Band Turns Out," *The Nassau Daily Review-Star*, February 18, 1943, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031113/1943-02-18/ed-1/seq-20/>.

⁷² "Information required for Grave Registration," May 13, 1946, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Mechanic School to train as a radio operator.⁷³ From 26 March to 20 August, Frank received radio operator-mechanics training in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Frank was trained in electrical and radio fundamentals, including bearing and direction-finding by triangulation, Morse code, “superheterodyne” receivers and other equipment.⁷⁴ From 23 August to 20 October, Frank was at Kingman Army Air Forces Flexible Gunnery School in Kingman, Arizona.⁷⁵ From 5 to 29 November, Frank received further training in Sat Lake City, Utah. On 2 December, he was at Alexandria Air Field for his final training before going off to fight in the war.



Image 9- Frank Welke Jr.

Assistant Radio Operator and Armorer/Ball Turret Gunner Staff Sgt. Robert “Robby”

Frank Scharff

Known by both “Bob” and “Robby,” Robert Frank Scharff was born 10 December 1921 in Bronx, New York, to Max Scharff and Barbara Lehmann Scharff. Robby’s parents emigrated from Germany and married in West Hoboken, New Jersey, in July 1900.⁷⁶ After her mother died, Barbara left Germany to join her brother in the United States. One of her sisters stayed in Germany and helped with the German underground resistance during the war.⁷⁷

⁷³ R. W. Holley, “The Radio Operator-Gunner Enlisted Crewmember During WWII,” 4, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AFEHRI/documents/AerialGunnerParachutist/holley.pdf>.

⁷⁴ “Information required for Grave Registration,” May 13, 1946, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File; and Harry W. Fritz, Review of “Reveille for Sioux Falls: A World War II Army Air Forces Technical School Changes a South Dakota City,” by Lynwood E. Oyos, *Great Plains Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2016): 151, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gpq.2016.0029>.

⁷⁵ “Information required for Grave Registration,” May 13, 1946, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁷⁶ “Barbara Lehmann and Max Scharff Marriage Record,” July 18, 1900, New Jersey Marriage Records, 1670-1965, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed August 27, 2019).

⁷⁷ Bettyann Mariano, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, February 19, 2020.

Robby was the youngest of nine children. He was an uncle to two nephews when he was only five-years-old. By the time he was ten-years-old, Robby had six nephews and one niece.⁷⁸ Barbara wanted her children to have an education and only spoke English in the house.⁷⁹ Robby attended at least two years of high school, probably somewhere in the Bronx.⁸⁰ Robby worked as a machinist for the Sperry Gyroscope Company.⁸¹ During the war, the company specialized in high technology devices such as analog computer-controlled bomb sights, airborne radar systems, and automated take-off and landing systems. Sperry created the ball turret gun that was mounted under the Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress” and the B-24 Consolidated B-24 “Liberator.”⁸² Ironically, Robby was the Peak crew’s ball turret gunner.



Image 10- Robby Scharff.

Robby enlisted in the Air Corps on 29 September 1942 in the Bronx.⁸³ After spending two days at Camp Upton in New York, Robby was sent to and trained at Randolph Field, about twenty-five miles (forty km) northeast of San Antonio, Texas, from 7 October to 16 February 1943.⁸⁴ Here, Robby most likely received pre-flying training, which consisted of physical training, military training, and supervised athletics.⁸⁵ Robby spent ten days, from 16 to 25

⁷⁸ Robert Scharff scrapbook, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

⁷⁹ Bettyann Mariano, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, February 19, 2020.

⁸⁰ Robert F. Scharff, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Bronx County, NY; September 29, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁸¹ Robert Frank Scharff Draft Card, February 16, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

⁸² “Sperry Gyroscope,” Rochester Avionic Archives, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://rochesteravionicarchives.co.uk/organisations/sperry-gyroscope>.

⁸³ Robert F. Scharff, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Bronx County, NY; September 29, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

⁸⁴ “Information required for Grave Registration,” March 8, 1946, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁸⁵ Greer, “Individual Training of Flying Personnel,” in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 6:558.

February, in the 480th Squadron at San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, which classified and pretested aviation cadets.⁸⁶ At some point, it was decided that Robby would receive nonpilot training. The curriculum had great emphasis on mathematics, target identification, photography, and meteorology, which were basic to flying operations.⁸⁷



Image 11- Robby (left) and buddies. San Antonio, 1942.

Robby was transferred to Harlingen, Texas, where he was in the 480th Flexible Gunnery Training Squadron.⁸⁸ The six-week training course consisted of ballistics, range estimation, aircraft recognition, and Morse code with shooting practice. Firing at moving targets progressed from indoor pellet-gun galleries to outdoor skeet shooting with shotguns to when they were available, .30- and .50-caliber machine gun ranges.⁸⁹ Although it is not known why, Robby was in the hospital from 27 March to 4 April.⁹⁰ He remained in Harlingen until 17 April, at which time he was transferred to Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi. Here, PFC Scharff, a member of the 395 Technical School Squadron, received mechanical training until 8 October, when he was sent to Salt Lake City, Utah.⁹¹ During the next few weeks until 29 November, Robby “received

⁸⁶ “WW2 Cadets at SAAC,” 8th Air Force, accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.8af.af.mil/News/Photos/igphoto/2000539998/>.

⁸⁷ Greer, “Individual Training of Flying Personnel,” in *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 6:558.

⁸⁸ “Information required for Grave Registration,” March 8, 1946, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁸⁹ David Sear, “How to Become a Ball Turret Gunner,” *Air and Space Magazine*, May 2015, accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.airspacemag.com/military-aviation/how-become-ball-turret-gunner-180954667/>.

⁹⁰ “To Clinical Records Branch, For Disposition,” September 16, 1946, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁹¹ “Information required for Grave Registration,” March 8, 1946, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File; and “Register of Dental Patients at Dental Clinic Keesler Field, Mississippi. August 1943, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

intensive training” and following completion in Salt Lake City, he arrived at Alexandria Air Base on 2 December.⁹²

Armorer/Ball Turret Gunner Staff Sgt. Redin Robert Kilpatrick

On 8 October 1923, Redin Robert Kilpatrick was born at home in Fort Drum, Florida, to Alice Lanier Kilpatrick and Drayton Kilpatrick.⁹³ On 21 November 1932, Redin’s mother died from cancer.⁹⁴ Redin grew up in Sneads, Florida. It is not known where Redin attended high school but following his graduation, he went into stock farming. During his training, he mentioned that he planned “to go back to stock farming when war is over” and that “hunting is his favorite hobby.”⁹⁵

Redin enlisted 21 October 1942 at Fort Barrancas, Florida.⁹⁶ He was sent to Keesler Field, where he was accepted for air cadet training. Like Vic Romasco, Redin completed his preflight training at Maxwell Field. Following preflight training, Redin went to Lafayette Aeronautic school in Lafayette, Louisiana, for primary training. However, he was eliminated and was sent to Lowry Field near Denver, Colorado, for armament training. In October 1943, Redin trained in aerial gunnery as a member of Squadron B at Tyndall Field, located near Panama City, Florida.⁹⁷ By December 1944, he was training with



Image 12- Redin Kilpatrick.

⁹² “Missing on 23rd Bombing Mission,” unknown newspaper, circa July 1944, in possession of Bettyann Mariano; and “Information required for Grave Registration,” March 8, 1946, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁹³ “Redin Robert Kilpatrick,” Ancestry, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/61081027/person/44066941690/facts>.

⁹⁴ “Alice Elizabeth Lanier,” Ancestry, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/61081027/person/44066941692/facts>.

⁹⁵ “Gunnery of the Week,” *Tyndall Target*, October 23, 1943, <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0024307/00079>, accessed May 6, 2020.

⁹⁶ Redin R Kilpatrick, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Jackson County, FL; October 21, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 6, 2020).

⁹⁷ “Gunnery of the Week,” *Tyndall Target*, October 23, 1943.

the Peak crew at Alexandria Air Base. On 19 December, he married Allah Lee Gentry in a Catholic ceremony in Alexandria.⁹⁸

Assistant Engineer and Waist Gunner Staff Sgt. Richard “Dick” Delno Oberlin

The youngest member of the crew, Richard “Dick” Delno Oberlin was born on 20 June 1924 in West Unity, Ohio, to Jacob Oberlin and Luella Knapp Oberlin. Jacob had been previously married and had two daughters from his first marriage. After his first wife died in 1920, he married Luella.⁹⁹ In addition to Dick, they also had a son, Jack, in 1933.¹⁰⁰

Dick grew up in West Unity and attended West Unity High School. After graduating from West Unity High in May 1942, Dick worked for Bryan Handle Company.¹⁰¹ Knowing that he would have to go into the service soon, Dick moved to Akron, Ohio, where he was “employed as a work leader at the Goodyear Aircraft Company.”¹⁰² During the war, the company manufactured 104 B-26 bombers for the military.¹⁰³

At Christmas that year, Dick married his high school sweetheart, Elizabeth “Betty” Harker, who went with him to Akron.¹⁰⁴ Near the end of January 1943, Dick was drafted. He “got a

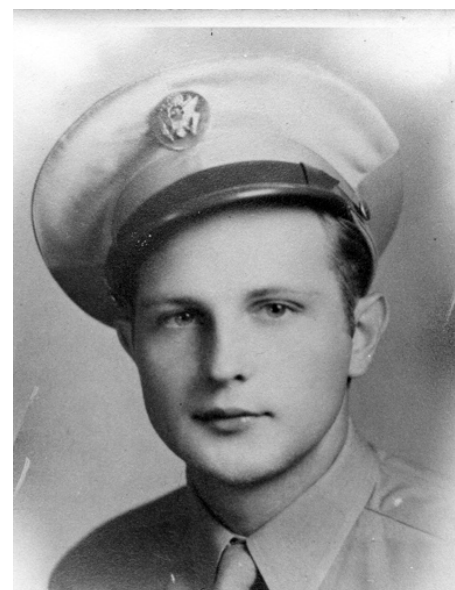


Image 13- Dick Oberlin.

⁹⁸ “Redin Robert Kilpatrick,” Ancestry, accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/61081027/person/44066941690/facts>.

⁹⁹ “Jacob E Oberlin,” FindaGrave, accessed September 28, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/91366927/jacob-e-oberlin>.

¹⁰⁰ Jack E Oberlin, 1940 U.S. Federal Census Record; West Unity, Williams, Ohio; Roll: T627_3169; Page 1B; Enumeration District: 86-1; from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 9, 2019).

¹⁰¹ Richard Delno Oberlin Draft Card, June 27, 1941, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

¹⁰² Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; and Don Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*, February 8, 2007, accessed September 22, 2019, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10604-928821/the-bryan-times?s=310818851>.

¹⁰³ “Goodyear Aircraft Corporation,” Ohio Central History, accessed September 29, 2019, https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Goodyear_Aircraft_Corporation; and Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

¹⁰⁴ Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

letter from the U.S. government. It said ‘Greetings, you have been selected by your friends and neighbors...’¹⁰⁵ Dick enlisted on 18 February in Toledo, Ohio.¹⁰⁶ It is not known where and for how long Dick trained, but it can be assumed that he had similar training to the other enlisted men in the Peak crew. Due to the fact that Dick was assistant engineer, he most likely had more training that would qualify him for that position.

Tail Gunner Staff Sgt. Max Lamar Rockey

Max Lamar Rockey was born 22 January 1924 in Springport, Michigan, to Fred Rockey and Minnie Gawthrop Rockey. Max was the ninth of twelve children. A gifted athlete, Max participated in basketball, football, and baseball at Springport High School. He was so talented in baseball that he auditioned to play as a pitcher for the Detroit Tigers and received a call back.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately Max did not get on the team because he was from “too small a school.”¹⁰⁸ Max worked for Willow Run Bomb plant near Ypsilanti, Michigan.¹⁰⁹ During the war, Willow Run produced B-24 bombers and by 1944, produced a B-24 every hour.¹¹⁰

Max was incredibly determined to join the war effort. He originally attempted to join the Marine Corps in December 1942, but was rejected due to having a flat foot, which made him ineligible to join the war.¹¹¹ Max’s room was decorated with model planes he built. His younger sister, Betty, remembered that “those planes were everywhere. If he wasn’t playing sports, he

¹⁰⁵ Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination.”

¹⁰⁶ Richard D. Oberlin, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Summit County, Ohio; February 18, 1943, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Sarah Chuby, “Recalling a Brother,” *The Battle Creek Enquirer*, May 30, 2005, accessed January 2, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/204203374/?terms=max%2Brockey>.

¹⁰⁸ Heather Esterline, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, January 27, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Max Lamar Rockey Draft Card, June 30, 1942, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed March 9, 2020).

¹¹⁰ “Willow Run,” Detroit Historical Society, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/willow-run>.

¹¹¹ “Springport,” *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, December 21, 1942, accessed July 18, 2019, www.newsbank.com; and Heather Esterline, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, January 27, 2020.

was building planes.”¹¹² As the war progressed, the Air Force allowed men as young as seventeen to apply as an air cadet with the consent of their parents.¹¹³ This was the route Max took and after convincing his mother to sign the papers, seventeen-year-old Max joined the Air Force on 1 January 1943 in Kalamazoo, Michigan.¹¹⁴ Max was dating a girl who wanted to marry him. However, he refused to marry her as he did not want her to have to face the repercussions if he were to die during the war.¹¹⁵

After his enlistment, Max was taken to Keesler Field in Mississippi, where he trained in the 53rd Training Group Company.¹¹⁶ Max had basic training, which lasted four weeks, during which classifiers determined the type of schooling each recruit would receive. Many stayed at Keesler to become airplane and engine mechanics, while others were transferred to aerial gunnery or aviation cadet schools.¹¹⁷ In August, Max was transferred to Long Beach, California, where he attended Army Air Forces Technical Training School at Douglas Aircraft Corporation.¹¹⁸ Max probably received technical and mechanical training, which included developing techniques in the use of tools and machines, which in turn influenced one’s ability as an airplane mechanic and maintenance man.¹¹⁹ In September, Max



Image 14- Max Rockey.

¹¹² Chuby, “Recalling a Brother,” *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

¹¹³ Bruce Ashcroft, *We Wanted Wings: A History of the Aviation Cadet Program*, 33, <https://www.aetc.af.mil/Portals/88/Documents/history/AFD-061109-026.pdf?ver=2016-01-12-160019-363>.

¹¹⁴ Max L. Rockey, U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946, Kalamazoo County, MI; January 1, 1943, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed May 3, 2019); and Chuby, “Recalling a Brother,” *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

¹¹⁵ Heather Esterline, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, January 27, 2020.

¹¹⁶ “Organizations and Stations,” Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

¹¹⁷ “History of Keesler Air Force Base,” Keesler Air Force Base, October 11, 2006, accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.keesler.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/360538/history-of-keesler-air-force-base/>.

¹¹⁸ “Organizations and Stations,” Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File.

¹¹⁹ 625th Technical School Squadron, <http://ww35.usafunithistory.com/PDF/0600/625%20TECHNICAL%20SCHOOL%20SQ.pdf>.

was in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he had gunnery training.¹²⁰ In December, Max was stationed in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he waited to be assigned to a bomber crew.¹²¹ On 2 January 1944, he was in Alexandria Air Base training with the Peak crew.

Alexandria Air Base, Alexandria, Louisiana

By January 1944, the Peak crew was assembled at Alexandria Air Base, which was nicknamed Alex.¹²² Here, the crew trained together on B-17s and prepared for bombing in Europe or the Pacific Theater. The standard B-17 crew consisted of ten men, which is how many men were on the Peak crew during training at Alex. However, by the time the Peak crew was assigned to the 381st Bombardment Group in April 1944, the 381st was completing successful missions with no lost planes almost every day. Because of that, only nine-men crews were flying in the B-17s, rather than ten, with one of the waist gunner positions empty.¹²³

The heavy bomber B-17 “Flying Fortress” played a pivotal role in the American effort during the war. They were employed due to their effectiveness as the crews could perform daylight attacks and it was believed that crews could do raids unescorted by flying in tight formations and providing their own defense. However, this belief proved to not work well. German fighters reacted in great force over a considerable amount of time, and US losses rose to high levels in 1942 and most of 1943. In response, the bombers were aided by fighter planes in late 1943 when P-38s with drop tanks were introduced, followed by P-47s and then P-51s.¹²⁴ B-

¹²⁰ “Organizations and Stations,” Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File.

¹²¹ “Organizations and Stations,” Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File; and William L. Smallwood, *Valor, Guts, and Luck: A B-17 Tailgunner’s Survival Story during World War II* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 32.

¹²² Smallwood, *Valor, Guts, and Luck: A B-17 Tailgunner’s Survival Story during World War II*, 33.

¹²³ James G. Brown, *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All, A Chaplain’s Inside Story on the Men of the 381st. Bomber Group*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press, 1994), 397-398.

¹²⁴ Alfred Price and Mike Spick, *Handbook of Great Aircraft of WWII* (England: Abbeydale Press, 2000), 178.

17 crews encountered low temperature and atmospheric pressure while flying at high altitudes.¹²⁵ They were provided with good thermal clothing, but if they did not have enough warmth or oxygen while flying, they could die from hypothermia or anoxia.¹²⁶

In the first few years of the war, B-17 crew survival rates were low. In 1943, the Eighth Air Force suffered as many as 8,800 losses in combat and 2,000 from noncombat accidents. Most crews died before finishing their tour of twenty-five to thirty missions.¹²⁷ These facts were all well-known by the men flying in B-17s. Standing in his uniform at the train station to begin his military career, Allen Osterberg mentioned to his brother, Jay, “they are going to shoot us down like flies.”¹²⁸ It took much bravery and courage to fly bombing missions.

While at Alex, the Peak crew trained to practice their teamwork. They flew practice bombing missions to various destinations and targets that were briefed.¹²⁹ Each man in the crew was an expert in his own way and all were crucial for having a successful crew. The success of bombing operations depended almost entirely on the quality and training of the crews.¹³⁰ As the pilot, Sam Peak was the airplane commander, charged with all the duties and responsibilities of a command post, including disciplining and training his crew. Vic Romasco, the co-pilot, was the executive officer, and had to be familiar with every single one of Sam’s duties as pilot. The navigator, Thomas Tracy, had the job of directing the flight from departure to destination and return. As the bombardier, Allen Osterberg needed to know when to release bombs at the right time in order to accurately hit the predetermined target.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Price and Spick, *Handbook of Great Aircraft of WWII*, 221.

¹²⁶ Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe 1940-1945* (New York: Viking, 2013), 163.

¹²⁷ Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe 1940-1945*, 164.

¹²⁸ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, August 15, 2019.

¹²⁹ Smallwood, *Valor, Guts, and Luck: A B-17 Tailgunner’s Survival Story during World War II*, 39.

¹³⁰ Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe 1940-1945*, 163.

¹³¹ “B-17 Crewmen Duties and Responsibilities,” 303rdbg.com, accessed November 1, 2019, <http://www.303rdbg.com/crew-duties.html>.



Image 15- Some officers training at Alex. Back row left to right: Lt. Roy Rice, Lt. Sam Peak, Lt. Vic Romasco. Front row left to right: Lt. Allen Osterberg and unknown lieutenant.



Image 16- Some officers training at Alex. Left to right: Unknown lieutenant, Lt. Roy Rice, Lt. Sam Peak, Lt. Sanford White, Lt. Allen Osterberg.

Lt. Peak made position assignments for the enlisted men. Engineer Murl Simmons' dual function was to monitor the engine and system instruments during takeoffs and landings. He also needed to troubleshoot any mechanical or system problems that might arise during a mission. In addition, he would man the top turret gun when needed. Dick Oberlin was assigned to be the Peak crew's assistant engineer and waist gunner. Radio Operator Frank Welke manned the main radio. When not at the main radio, he operated a single .50 from a mount in the top of the fuselage. Robby Scharff was the assistant radio operator and in Europe, became the armorer and ball turret gunner. As a ball turret gunner, he needed to protect the underbelly of the plane. Armorer and ball turret gunner, Redin Kilpatrick's job was to supervise maintenance of all the guns, and when the plane was airborne on the way to a mission, to unscrew the pins that would allow the bomb propellers to turn when they were released. Assistant armorer and tail gunner,

Max Rockey, protected the back of the plane with two guns.¹³² The teamwork of the crew was crucial for them to survive their missions.

On 20 February, Allen Osterberg wrote home:

It's getting pretty close to the time when we're supposed to leave here. So naturally interest goes up a little and we (wonder what is) going to happen to us and when and how, as is always the case when we move. So I can't give you anything definite only expect to be heading over less in maybe or couple of weeks or sooner. We have a rough idea of where we're going too. We may fly our plane over. I hope so. I don't like the idea of a troop ship myself. I'm afraid I might get sea sick... We won't be able to take much baggage along. Just our G.I. stuff so I guess I'll have to send some of the stuff home... Well I'll have...a couple of hours of classes this afternoon + flying.¹³³



Image 17- Front Row L to R: Samuel L. Peak, Victor R. Romasco, Thomas J. Tracy, Allen Osterberg.
Back Row L to R: Murl F. Simmons, Richard Oberlin, Frank A. Welke Jr., Robert F. Scharff, Redin R. Kilpatrick, Max L. Rockey.

¹³² "B-17 Crewmen Duties and Responsibilities," 303rdbg.com; and Smallwood, *Valor, Guts, and Luck: A B-17 Tailgunner's Survival Story during World War II*, 36-37; and Caption on back of crew photo from Allen Osterberg list the positions of each man.

¹³³ Letter, "Allen Osterberg to Osterberg family," February 20, 1944, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

While the Peak crew trained at Alex, they took their crew photo. Frank Welke sent the Peak crew photo home. On 20 March, in his local newspaper, the photo was accompanied with the caption that “Sergeant Welke, a radio operator, has recently completed an intensive course in combat flying at the Alexandria army Air base, Alexandria, La. and as a member of a Flying Fortress crew will soon go overseas to a combat area.”¹³⁴ In late March, the Peak crew began the process of heading overseas when they left Alex for Grand Island, Nebraska.

Sometime before the Peak crew arrived at Grand Island, Sgt. Kilpatrick and Lt. Tracy were taken off the crew. Sgt. Kilpatrick was later assigned to the 544th Bomb Squadron, 384th Bombardment Group on 6 May 1944. On 21 June, the B-17 he was flying aboard crash-landed at Bulltofta Airfield in Malmö, Sweden, where he was imprisoned the rest of the war.¹³⁵ Lt. Tracy was taken off the Peak crew because he couldn’t find his way and navigate well.¹³⁶ He was later assigned to the 349th Bomb Squadron, 100th Bombardment Group. On 24 May 1944, Lt. Tracy was killed in action over Fahrenkrug, Germany. He is buried in the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium.¹³⁷ Lt. Tracy was replaced by Flight Officer James “Hap” Chandler, a young nineteen-year-old Tennessean.

Navigator Flight Officer James “Hap” Harris Chandler

James “Hap” Chandler was born on 27 April 1924 in Aubrey, Arkansas. When Hap was two-years-old, the Chandler family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where many of their relatives lived.¹³⁸ Hap received his nickname because he was happy all the time and his buddy, Dick

¹³⁴ “Radio Operator,” *The Nassau Daily Review Star*, March 20, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031113/1944-03-20/ed-1/seq-6.pdf>.

¹³⁵ “Kilpatrick, Redin Robert,” 384th Bombardment Group Heavy, accessed July 14, 2019, https://384thbombgroup.com/_content/_pages/person.php?PersonKey=2103.

¹³⁶ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019. Ali was given this information by Dick Oberlin.

¹³⁷ “2Lt Thomas J Tracy,” FindaGrave, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56361334/thomas-j-tracy>.

¹³⁸ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 15, 2020.

Coffee, gave him the nickname because Hap was game for anything.¹³⁹ Hap was very bright and skipped a grade, which resulted in Hap being the youngest person in his class his entire life, including being the youngest officer in the 381st Bombardment Group and in Stalag Luft III.¹⁴⁰

The youngest of three boys, all of whom served during the war, Hap began his military service on “a rain morning” on 18 September 1942. That day, he took his exams, which he “passed all of easily.”¹⁴¹ On 8 March 1943, Hap reported for training in San Antonio, Texas, where he was assigned to Squadron 106, Flight H.¹⁴² During that month, Hap took his exams, got high scores, and waited to be classified. Writing his mother about this, Hap mentioned that “I am really worried about my classification. I was one of the first ones thru and I am not classified yet. They just called me before. The surgeons heard they said that I was qualified for Pilot, Bombardier, and Navigator. I made the highest grade on navigator so I took the course navigator.”¹⁴³ On 24 March, Hap was officially classified as a navigator.¹⁴⁴ About a month later, on 21 April, Hap was stationed at Ellington Field, near Houston, Texas.¹⁴⁵



Image 18- Hap Chandler.

Two days later, Hap was going to start classes but they were called off because First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited Ellington.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁹ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 25, 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 25, 2020; and James H. Chandler diary, December 25, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴¹ James H. Chandler diary, circa 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴² James H. Chandler diary, circa 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴³ James H. Chandler diary, March 20, 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴⁴ James H. Chandler diary, March 24, 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴⁵ James H. Chandler diary, April 21, 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁴⁶ James H. Chandler diary, April 23, 1943, in possession of Harris Chandler.

Probably in July 1943, Hap began attending advanced navigation school at the Hondo Army Airfield, about forty-one miles outside of San Antonio, Texas. There, he went through eighteen weeks of intensive training of “the science of aerial navigation,” which including flying approximately 15,000 miles on training missions in the AT-7 Navigator and the B-34 Ventura.¹⁴⁷ In addition, he learned how to navigate by the stars, compass, radio, and pilotage (observation of familiar landmarks).¹⁴⁸ A typical day for the Hondo cadet consisted of waking up around 6 am, eating breakfast, and cleaning up his room, going to class from 7:30 am until 1:30 pm. After, the cadets marched for an hour, followed by exercises and games. Dinner was at 6:30 pm and taps at 10:30 pm.¹⁴⁹

The same time Hap was training at Hondo, a relatively new officer and Hondo graduate, 2nd Lt. John “Jack” Lundberg, was teaching navigation to aviation cadets in the 87th Navigation Group.¹⁵⁰ Although it is not known if Hap and Jack’s paths ever crossed at Hondo, Jack would play an significant role in Hap’s life months later in June 1944. Hap graduated from Hondo on Christmas Eve, 24 December 1943.¹⁵¹ He was commissioned a flight officer instead of a second lieutenant most likely because he had a high school diploma and was under the age of twenty.¹⁵²



Image 19- Hap’s Hondo graduating class 43-18-2. Hap is 4th from the right on the back row.

¹⁴⁷ ““Boomerang Boy,”” *The Deseret News*, April 6, 1943, in possession of Steve Fox.

¹⁴⁸ “Boomerang Boys Win Navigators’ Wings,” *The Hondo Anvil Herald*, April 23, 1943, accessed December 14, 2018, <https://newspaperarchive.com/hondo-anvil-herald-apr-23-1943-p-1/>.

¹⁴⁹ Letter, William J. Carraro Jr. to His Family, December 14, 1942, Carraro, William J., Jr. Papers, 1909-1984, Folder 3, The Filson Historical Society.

¹⁵⁰ Jack’s address mentioned on envelope to Rich Fox, September 22, 1943, in possession of Steve Fox.

¹⁵¹ James H. Chandler diary, December 24, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁵² Ashcroft, *We Wanted Wings: A History of the Aviation Cadet Program*, 38.

After graduation, the newly minted officers were assigned for their next duty. Typically, they were given three months of transition training and would then go off to combat. Hap was sent to Alex, where he trained with the Jack Pearl crew.¹⁵³ On 16 March 1944, Hap wrote in his diary “Well, here I am again after such a long time. Now an officer and a member of a combat crew” and have now been “placed in another crew and sent to the staging area where I am now. I am stationed as a navigator on a B-17G.”¹⁵⁴ Hap probably wrote this while he and the Peak crew were at Grand Island, Nebraska.

“They Came From Over the Pond”

The Peak crew left Grand Island on 22 March and that evening “landed at Greiner Field, New Hampshire.”¹⁵⁵ That night, Vic Romasco wrote his fiancée Muriel:

Well dear I’ve been a few places since you last heard from me- I was in CENSORED Saturday and here I am in CENSORED. Now don’t ask me where Labrador is because I’ve never been there before- I can’t tell you just exactly the name of the place- this will kill you as I did me- I was within 40 mi of home last nite- I slept there too but I couldn’t call or come down to see you or even let you know where I was- Boy I almost went A.W.O.L. I’ve have flown CENSORED of miles in the last 2 days- that is really getting around...I couldn’t buzz down around the house but we had a controlled flight and we had to check out at CENSORED so I couldn’t come down... You have been riding right along with me too as your picture is sitting in the plane right up there in CENSORED with me- Well dear I guess I’d better close now as I’m dead tired and I still have a bit of flying to do- I love you loads and lots...almost jumped the fence to come to see you- good nite dear.¹⁵⁶

The next morning, 23 March, “we left and flew to Goose Bay, Labrador,” Canada.

“After spending a night and day at Goose Bay, we left the next night for (Meeks) Field, Iceland,”

¹⁵³ James H. Chandler diary, crew list, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁵⁴ James H. Chandler diary, March 16, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁵⁵ James H. Chandler diary, April 5, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁵⁶ Letter, “Victor Romasco to Muriel Wood,” March 22, 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

where the Peak crew stayed for two days.¹⁵⁷ While in Iceland, on 26 March, Robby Scharff wrote a V-mail home. “Just a line to let you know that I’m somewhere CENSORED. Everything is going along fine for I’m still feeling as fine as ever...Love to u all and I’ll write again soon.”¹⁵⁸ The next day, the Peak crew “flew to Prestwick, Scotland. Upon arriving there they took our plane 7027, and caught a train to Stow, England. After staying there for 5 days we arrived at (Bovingdon), England, to go to school for 11 days.”¹⁵⁹ After combat bomber crews arrived in Britain, they trained for operations in Europe at Bovingdon Airfield, before they were assigned to a bombardment group.¹⁶⁰

On 29 March, Vic Romasco wrote a V-mail that mentioned he was “Somewhere In England.” Writing his fiancée, Muriel, Vic said “This is just a short note to let you know all is well with me, and that I did arrive o.k. The trip was quite pleasant all the way, and we did have a good time at it. It was quite easy to get accustomed to the English monetary system. It seems quite simple to me. The country is very much like our own- Also the weather is quite like ours in New England...Don’t worry about me. I’m doing fine.”¹⁶¹

A few days later, 31 March, Allen Osterberg wrote his brother and sister-in-law “here I am a long way from home but arrived in good shape. Most telling was a train ride we had here. This country always seemed long way off but it only seems” like “back home now that I’m here. Wrote some other letters to the folks, they may not get them for a while yet though. Have had quite a bit of time have to ourselves so have checked on some of the town” and “countryside

¹⁵⁷ James H. Chandler diary, April 5, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁵⁸ V-mail, “Robby Scharff to Scharff family,” March 26, 1944, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

¹⁵⁹ James H. Chandler diary, April 5, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁶⁰ “Bovingdon,” American Air Museum in Britain, accessed April 7, 2020, <http://www.americanairmuseum.com/place/50>.

¹⁶¹ V-mail, “Victor Romasco to Muriel Wood,” March 29, 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

here...This is pleasant country and not what you might think. The people have it pretty tough though and are plenty friendly to us considering the Americans have been here quite a spell.”¹⁶²

534th Bomb Squadron, 381st Bombardment Group, Heavy

On 8 April, Hap wrote in his diary “Easter Sunday and here I am with nothing to do except to go to classes and day dream.”¹⁶³ However this quickly changed as the Peak crew was assigned to the 534th Bomb Squadron, 381st Bombardment Group Heavy, 8th Air Corps on 11 April.¹⁶⁴ The 381st, based in Ridgewell, England, in eastern England, about fifty-five miles northeast of London, consisted of the 532nd, 533rd, 534th, and 535th Bomb Squadrons. It was activated 1 January 1943 and began training in Pyote, Texas, under Colonel Joseph J. Nazarro. After arriving in Ridgewell on 2 June, the Group operated chiefly against strategic objectives in the European Theatre. When the 381st was not engaged in strategic bombardment, it supported ground troops and attacked targets of interdiction.¹⁶⁵

The 534th Bomb Squadron was activated 3 January 1943 from the 19th Bombardment Squadron, 34th Bombardment Group Heavy in Blythe, California. The 534th left Blythe the same day to train for overseas duty in Pyote, Texas. After training was complete in April 1943, the 534th moved to Pueblo, Colorado, to take up the usual garrison duties. The Squadron did so until May, where they moved to New Jersey to embark to England. They arrived at Ridgewell on 3 June 1943, where they joined the 381st Bombardment Group.¹⁶⁶ Colonel Harry P. Leber Jr.

¹⁶² V-mail, “Allen Osterberg to Jay and Mary Osterberg,” March 31, 1944, in possession of Kay Shapy.

¹⁶³ James H. Chandler diary, April 8, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁶⁴ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, April 11, 1944.

¹⁶⁵ Maurer Maurer, ed., *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (United States: DIANE Publishing, 1961), 269.

¹⁶⁶ “Events,” January to June 1943, 534th War Diary, 984, Reel A0639.

began commanding the 381st on 9 January 1944.¹⁶⁷ Between 28 April and 19 May of that year, members of the 381st were flying missions almost every day and did not lose a plane in ten successive missions. In addition, German air power was dwindling, but their flak was just as severe. As the Germans pulled back their military lines, they moved back their ground guns. Therefore all the targets were still protected by German ground fire.¹⁶⁸ This is somewhat impressive considering that the 381st did not lose a plane to such intense flak.

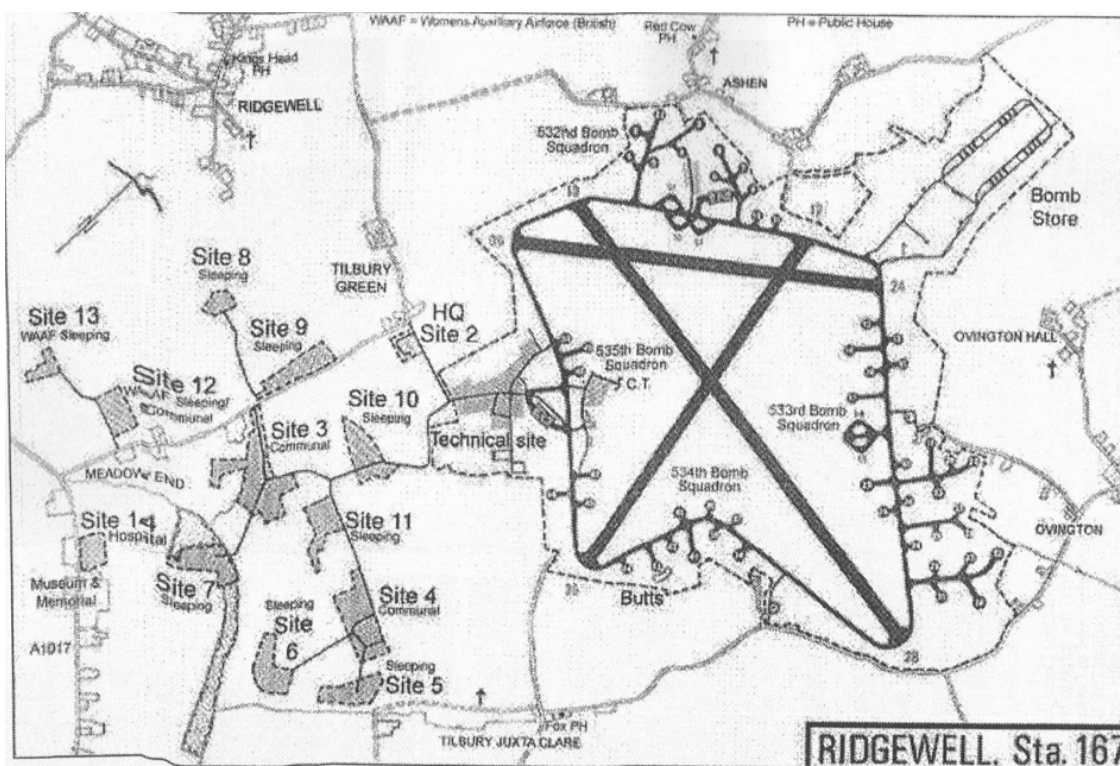


Image 20- Map of Ridgewell.

Officers and enlisted men lived in separate huts at Ridgewell. Typically, the enlisted men in a crew would live together and the officers in a crew would live together. However, on 12 April, Hap wrote in his diary “Am living in a hut with another crew. Haven’t flown any yet but I

¹⁶⁷ “Brief History of the 381st Bomb Group, Ridgewell England Station 167.” 381stbg.org, accessed April 6, 2019, <http://www.381stbg.org/history.php>.

¹⁶⁸ James G. Brown, *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All, A Chaplain’s Inside Story on the Men of the 381st. Bomber Group*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press, 1994), 397-398.

am dying to."¹⁶⁹ It is assumed that Sam Peak, Vic Romasco, and Allen Osterberg lived together in the same hut.



Image 21- Huts at Ridgewell.

Missions

It was standard operating procedure to split up new crews to fly their first few missions with seasoned crews as a matter of indoctrination.¹⁷⁰ The typical experience on a day of a mission for the men at Ridgewell consisted of the following:

You have a mission, the operations officer will wake you in the morning somewhere around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and you get up and you dress and you go to breakfast and if you're flying, you get eggs. Then after breakfast, we go to a briefing. They have these big curtains up on the front of the stage and the (commanding officer) of the squadron usually runs the briefing. They pull the curtain back and then there's a red line

¹⁶⁹ James H. Chandler diary, April 15, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Helman Kaurin Collection, (AFC/2001/001/15309), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

going across the map and that's your mission for the day...When you weren't flying, you got powdered eggs.¹⁷¹

On 19 April, Hap Chandler:

had to fly to a little town on the English coast this afternoon. It wasn't a very nice job. We had to pick up a crew that had not been able to make it back to the home base. The Engineer was killed and Navigator + pilot wounded. Lt. Craft, who came from Alex with us, is now reported Missing in Action, but it is assumed he is dead because no one saw any chutes come from the plane, and it was seen (exploding) in the air. May the Lord always bring me home.¹⁷²

Three days later, 22 April, Hap "flew the relay ship this afternoon out over the channel. We took a 'limy' to monitor the German fighters radio. I also flew with the hottest B-17 pilot I have ever seen."¹⁷³

Sam Peak also "went on a mission today, it was his first, the planes are coming in, I hope he came back with them."¹⁷⁴ Lt. Peak was a big drinker and every time the Peak crew went up, he was drunk getting on the plane. Vic Romasco would get the plane off each time. By the time they got oxygen and were in the air, Sam was sobered up and fine. Despite being known as a drinker, Sam gained the reputation of being a good pilot who could fly out of sticky situations.¹⁷⁵

On 25 April, the Peak crew flew their first mission together to bomb the airfield at Metz-Frescaty, France. The airfield was used as a fighter base, training field, and air park for the Luftwaffe. There was no enemy aircraft opposition and meager flak. Bombing results were reported as excellent.¹⁷⁶ "It was quite easy" for the Peak crew "except that we got caught in propel ash that almost threw us into a spin, when we pulled out of the spin, we were made the

¹⁷¹ "Interview of Dr. Sam Whitehead," World War II through the eyes of the Cape Fear, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://library.uncw.edu/capefearww2/voices/whitehead101.html>.

¹⁷² James H. Chandler diary, April 19, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁷³ James H. Chandler diary, April 22, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁷⁴ James H. Chandler diary, April 22, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁷⁵ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019.

¹⁷⁶ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, April 25, 1944.

lead squadron, and they released their bombs on us, we were lucky enough not to get hit by the bombs, but a bomb stockle came thru the wing. I think it is bad enough like it is, but when your own men try to bomb you out of the sky that is too much. No flight opposition, + little flak.”¹⁷⁷

On the 381st Bombardment Group’s one-hundredth mission, 27 April, the Peak crew flew to Cherbourg, France, where their mission was to bomb rocket installations. The bombing altitude was 20,000 feet and the target was right in the center of a heavy flak area. Due to cloud cover over the target, the ships made one pass at the target without dropping their bombs and then returned to base.¹⁷⁸ This day was Hap Chandler’s birthday:

And did I spend it in an awful place. I went on my second mission today. It was to Cherbourg, France, and was it rough, the group that went over the target ahead of us lost two planes. The flak was so thick that you could have landed on it. They say it was really rougher than most places. Right after we passed over the target we noticed that number four engine was throwing oil so we had to feather it. Then we noticed that number 3 engine was only at 1200 RPM’s so we also had to feather it, but it picked up again over the channel, we didn’t get to drop bombs on the target, so we had to salve them into the channel to lose the load on the ships. We finally got back to the base safely, but I hope we never have another like that. But I still say that is one heck of a way to spend your 20th birthday. I hope that my 21st birthday is spent in more pleasant surroundings.¹⁷⁹

Taking off at 8:15 am from Ridgewell on 28 April, the Peak crew, flying in the high squadron, bombed the airfield at St. Avord, France. The airfield had been used as a long bomber base but was converted to a pathfinder group’s station. Results were reported as excellent.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ James H. Chandler diary, April 25, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁷⁸ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, April 28, 1944. The details in the entries for April 27 and 28 are switched in the diary; and Ernest Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon: Complete and Unabridged Combat Diary of Medical Detachment, 1943-44, 242nd Medical Dispensary, Eighth Army Air Forces, 381st Bomb Group, Station 167, Ridgewell, Essex, England*, ed. William N. Gaillard (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2005), 115.

¹⁷⁹ James H. Chandler diary, April 27, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁸⁰ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, April 27, 1944. The details in the entries for April 27 and 28 are switched in the diary; and Gaillard, 115.

Writing in his diary for the day, Hap Chandler mentioned “this one today wasn’t so rough. We caught a little flak and saw 3 ME 109’s off our left wing but they didn’t make a pass at us, Thank the Lord... All of the bombs made a direct hit on the target, and blasted the hangers and barracks, we really knocked the heck out of them there. Maybe I will get to sleep tomorrow.”¹⁸¹

The following day, 29 April, the Peak crew attacked the industrial centers in Berlin, Germany. Bombing altitude was 25,000 feet.

The flak was intense to moderate and several crews reported that they observed their bombs dropping on their target, while others reported that there was a cloud cover.¹⁸² “Today was really a rough one for the boys. We went over and hit the ‘big B,’ (Berlin, Germany). The head navigator got lost and we nearly had it today. There was quite a bit of flak over the target, and after that they took us over Germany and caught flak all of the way. Then we just had enough gas to return to the field, I really had to sweat that out. We lost 2 B-17s today, but the only time I was slightly scared was all of the time.”¹⁸³

The Peak crew’s next mission occurred on 1 May. The men were briefed at 1145 hours (11:45 am) and took off at 1415 hours (2:15 pm). The mission called for the B-17s to bomb the

B-17 Flight Plan from Major Jones' Mission 28 APRIL 1944 (continued)

PILOTS' MTG 0445
STATIONS 0530
START ENG 0545
TAXI 0600
TAKE-OFF 0615
LEAVE FIELD 0715
ALTITUDE 9 000
LAST TIME T/O 0939

LOW GROUP - 1ST COMBAT WING
JONES 535
HENSLIN
5P 8061

<u>GNATZIG</u> 5Y 9890	<u>PLUEMER</u> 5Z 1878	<u>WILSON</u> 5R 1990
<u>RINGGENBERG</u> 5L 9798		<u>NELSON</u> 3P 2025

LOW - 532
534

<u>McCRORY</u> 2P 1575	<u>EZZELL</u> 2E 7088	<u>PENDERGIST</u> 2F 7760	<u>CRONIN</u> 4I 7238
<u>CAHILL</u> 2L 7969	<u>THOMAS</u> 2D 7100	<u>CANN</u> 2B 8103	<u>WARDNECKI</u> 4A 2585
<u>DEVINE</u> 2R 8079	<u>CROSSGROVE</u> 4K 7076	<u>SNYDER</u> 5Q 1067	<u>WILLIAMS</u> 4P 7174
			<u>GARDON</u> 4F 1291

91ST "B" GROUP, HIGH BOX, 1ST COMBAT WING
HIGH SQUADRON

<u>LANCASTER</u> 3L 1614	<u>RENICK</u> 3R 9997	<u>GARRETT</u> 3N 1698
<u>HOLLAND</u> 3U 7454	<u>TOWNSEND</u> 3Y 7589	<u>BAILEY</u> 3V 8194
<u>BLOG</u> 2M 2088		<u>PEAK</u> 4L 7721

Image 22- Flight plan for 28 April mission and the Peak crew’s position in the high squadron.

¹⁸¹ James H. Chandler diary, April 28, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁸² 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, April 29, 1944; and Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 117.

¹⁸³ James H. Chandler diary, April 29, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

rail yards and station at Troyes, France. The target was successfully attacked and the bombing results were said to be good. All twenty-five planes returned at 2045 (8:45 pm) to Ridgewell.¹⁸⁴ “Today was the air medal day for me. I went on my fifth mission today. It was a milk run. We... caught just a little flak on the coast on the return trip. I wish that I could have 25 more just like that one.”¹⁸⁵

On 6 May, the Peak crew took off at 0530 hours (5:30 am) with the target designated as the rocket gun installations in Cherbourg and La Glacerie, France. The target was nine-tenths overcast, so the bombs were not dropped. There was no fighter opposition and only moderate flak fire was encountered over the target area.¹⁸⁶ “Well, today I got in mission #6. We went back down to Cherbourg but still didn’t drop any bombs at all. But our ship had a little better luck this time, we came back on all four engines, but with quite a number of holes in the plane, including one long gash just over my head, I was really scared. A number of other pieces of flak hit the wing but by some miracle missed the gas tanks, thank God. I hope that I never go back there again, as even once was too much.”¹⁸⁷

That day, Allen Osterberg wrote his brother, Jay, and sister-in-law, Mary, “just received your letter today...First mail I’ve had since I left Grand Island, Nebr. Right now we’ve got our little radio on and listening to the weekly” entertainment. “We get all the good American players here and really enjoy them. I’ve managed to get some (coal) for our little stove so have a pretty warm hut to night...but it’s cold anyhow. I’ve been wearing long...underwear ever since I” have

¹⁸⁴ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 1, 1944; and Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 117.

¹⁸⁵ James H. Chandler diary, May 1, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁸⁶ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 6, 1944; and Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 118.

¹⁸⁷ James H. Chandler diary, May 6, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

“been here. We took in London on a pass the other day. Quite some city, but we didn’t get much for our money... will have to close...we get all the sleep we can these days.”¹⁸⁸

The next day, 7 May, the Peak crew bombed Berlin. Cloud cover prevented crews from observing bomb hits. There were no fighters and flak encountered was moderate to intense.¹⁸⁹

Mentioning the mission, Hap wrote:

Another day, another mission. Now there has been 7 go by. We went over to the big “B” again today, but I can think of a lot better ways to spend Sunday, than flying over Berlin. There were no fighters but plenty of flak. We got one hole in the Takis tank and a number of small holes in the fuselage, but luckily none of the crew was hurt. This ride was comparatively simple to the last one I went on. I am now madly in love with those P-47, P-51, + P-38’s. It is really a joy to see them sitting out on your wing.¹⁹⁰

In Vic Romasco’s local newspaper, it was reported that “Lt. Romasco engaged in his second big bombing assault over German territory...and returned safely to his base, according to information received today from army air force officials. Commenting on the raid, Lieutenant Romasco said, ‘Sixty to 80 enemy fighters mostly ME-109s in two groups, made a sweep at the wing on our left but didn’t knock any bombers down. A couple of flights of P-51s chased them away. It was a good thing the escort was there, or it would have been tough for those forts.’”¹⁹¹

On 8 May, Lt. Osterberg wrote his parents:

The other four boys that were in this hut have gone to the rest home for a week. They’ve been here quite a while and it won’t be so long before they’re finished. Everybody looks forward to that day and talks about what they’re gonna do. Oh! Yes I’ve been to London on a pass and had quite a good time. Didn’t get much for our money though. Well I’ll close. Busy day tomorrow.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ V-mail, “Allen Osterberg to Jay and Mary Osterberg,” May 6, 1944, in possession of Kay Shapy.

¹⁸⁹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 7, 1944; James H. Chandler diary, list of missions, in possession of Ali Powell; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ James H. Chandler diary, May 7, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁹¹ “Lt. Romasco Again in Bombing Raid,” *The Woonsocket Call*, circa May 29, 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

¹⁹² Letter, “Allen Osterberg to Erick and Hannah Osterberg,” May 8, 1944, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

The Peak crew flew their eighth mission on 9 May. “Well, today we pulled #8. And I am very glad to say it was a mild run. We hit an airfield in Southern France. It was at St. Dizier. We passed just north of Paris and I was able to see it in the distance. We made a direct hit on the target and lots of explosions were seen. I hope we can make about 22 more just like that one.”¹⁹³ The bombing results were reported as excellent and the B-17s experienced meager and accurate flak.¹⁹⁴

The next day, 10 May, the Peak crew was just six minutes off the Dutch coast, heading to bomb Rothenberg, Germany. However, the mission was called off and the B-17s returned to Ridgewell at 1000 hours (10 am).¹⁹⁵ On 11 May, Vic Romasco, Hap Chandler, Murl Simmons, Robby Scharff, Dick Oberlin, and Max Rockey were awarded Air Medals.¹⁹⁶ When Robby, Dick, and Max were awarded their Air Medals, their ranks were sergeant. At some point between then and 22 June, they were promoted to Staff Sergeants.

On 12 May, the Peak crew and members of the 534th Bomb Squadron flew in the high squadron as they attacked synthetic oil plants in Lutzkendorf, Germany. Crews reported that their bombs hit main buildings and storage tanks.¹⁹⁷ In the target area, “the

B-17 Flight Plan from Major Halsey's Mission 12 MAY 1944 (continued)

12 MAY 1944	
PTS' MTG	0700
STATIONS	0745
START ENG	0800
TAXI	0815
T/O	0830
LEAVE FIELD	0942
ALTITUDE	16,000'
LAST TIME T/O	1016
CBW LEAD	
LEAD - 535	
HALSEY CLARK	
PFF*B 594	ARMSTEAD
<u>SNYDER</u> 5W 0017	<u>WESTWOOD</u> PFF-D 562
<u>BARNICLE</u> 5S 7330	<u>HARING</u> 50 2102
<u>THOMAS</u> 2D 7100	<u>PARKMAN</u> 5P 7265
<u>BAILEY</u> 1575 <u>BRADNER</u> 8103	<u>WILLIAMS</u> 4P 7174
<u>KLINKSIEK</u> 2A 7023	<u>PEAK</u> 4A 2535 <u>MYERS</u> 4E 1569
<u>DEVINE</u> 2R 8079 <u>CANN</u> 2Q 7442	<u>ACKERMAN</u> 4D 2049
<u>RIGGENBERG</u> 5T 8117	<u>WHITE</u> 4J 8159 <u>MURRAY</u> 4G 1550
LOW - 533	HIGH - 534

Image 23- Flight plan and position of the Peak crew on 12 May.

¹⁹³ James H. Chandler diary, May 9, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁹⁴ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 9, 1944; James H. Chandler diary, list of missions, in possession of Ali Powell.

¹⁹⁵ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 10, 1944.

¹⁹⁶ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 11, 1944.

¹⁹⁷ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 12, 1944.

flak was extremely rough, but luckily we came home without a hole in the ship. We have a really fine ship now, so far it doesn't have a name. Knock on wood for me, because this squadron hasn't lost a ship since I went operational. I hope that will keep up for quite a while to come."¹⁹⁸

After a weeklong break, the Peak crew flew their tenth mission over Berlin on 19 May. The 534th Bomb Squadron led the low group. The B-17s encountered intense and accurate flak over the target area. The crews reported the results as good.¹⁹⁹ "Another long haul to Berlin, and I have now reached up #10, with only 20 more to go, + they can't come any too fast to suit me. I hope I never have another one to Berlin, this was my third one and are they rough. We lost two men" and "two planes, but we still haven't lost any from this squadron since I became operational (knock on wood)."²⁰⁰

Three days later, 22 May, the Peak crew bombed shipyards and a naval base in Kiel, Germany. "I got in #11 today. We hit (Kiel) Germany. Nothing much happened but we brought back a few holes in the ship. The flak was very light. I hope that this continues. The other crew in this hut are getting close to finishing up. I hope they all get through alright."²⁰¹

The next two days, 23 and 24 May, while flying in *The Betty L*, the Peak crew bombed the city of Saarbrücken, Germany, and the Friedrichstrasse station in Berlin.²⁰² *The Betty L* was Sam Peak's plane and he christened the B-17.²⁰³ He most likely named the plane after his mother, Betty, and the L probably stood for Leesville, Louisiana, which is where his wife,

¹⁹⁸ James H. Chandler diary, May 12, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

¹⁹⁹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 19, 1944.

²⁰⁰ James H. Chandler diary, May 19, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁰¹ James H. Chandler diary, May 22, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁰² 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 23-24, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

²⁰³ It is mentioned in a military photo of Sam that he was the pilot of *The Betty L*. The photo and caption can be viewed at <https://www.fold3.com/image/32145419>.

Juanita, was from and was living when Sam was overseas. *The Betty L* was a favorite and popular plane used in the 534th Squadron.²⁰⁴

Writing in his diary on 23 May, Hap mentioned that:

I finished #12 today to get the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal. I was really glad to see that Col. Leber was flying because I knew that it would be a milk run. We were supposed to hit Metz, France, but since it was over east we bombed off on Saarbrucken, Germany. We caught a



Image 24- *The Betty L*.

little flak but no holes in the ship. I have now signed all of the necessary papers for my commission. I don't know when it will be through. Still no planes lost.²⁰⁵

The next day, 24 May, talking of their mission, Hap wrote “am I lucky, Berlin again today and we were taken off of the flight at the last minute. They caught fighters over the target today. The group lost 5 ships and this squadron lost 2 of them. Gordon and the rest of Craft's crew went down and also Wardenky. Williams brought back his ship with” one part that “burst away and also the rudder. Two ships exploded right under him and his tail gunner bailed out. I hope he is alright. This was the first plane lost since I hit the squadron.”²⁰⁶

On 28 May, the Peak crew flew again to Germany. They attacked the airfield at Leipzig, with excellent results.²⁰⁷ “Today I got in #13. We left to bomb Dessau, but something happened on the bomb run and as we were about to make a 360 degree, fighters attacked the group to our

²⁰⁴ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019.

²⁰⁵ James H. Chandler diary, May 23, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁰⁶ James H. Chandler diary, May 24, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁰⁷ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 28, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

left, so we bombed the secondary, which was the airfield at Leipzig, Germany. We received a few flak holes, but no one was hurt. Later on the composite group hit (Frankfurt) when the flak was terrific. One man was killed and several were wounded, but all in our ship came home alright.”²⁰⁸

On 29 May, the 534th Bomb Squadron flew in the low squadron, which was led by the Peak crew. Flying a round trip of 1700 miles (2735 km) over the North Sea and through Denmark, the B-17s target railroad factories in Posen, Poland. Crews reported that their target was well hit. A number of enemy aircraft attacked the formation but were driven off.²⁰⁹ “This one, #14, was the king of them all, as all day bop into Posen, Poland. We took off at eight and got home at six thirty!! But I can say we got home anyway. Something happened to one ship over the Baltic Sea and it spun in, but all got out in their chutes. And landed in the water, whether they were picked up or not I don’t know, but I hope so. I hope I never watch another one like that so long as I am over here.”²¹⁰

On 2 June, Lt. Osterberg flew as bombardier with the William White crew to Palaisseau/Massy, near Paris. Targeting the railway, bombing results were reported as good. Hits were observed in the marshalling yard near the choke point. There were no enemy fighter attacks and only meager, inaccurate flak was encountered.²¹¹ The next day, 3 June, flying in *Via Panola Express*, the Peak crew bombed attack gun emplacements in Hardelot, France. Due to heavy cloud cover, the results were unobserved.²¹² “Today I racked up the halfway mark, #15, it was the milk run of all the milk runs. Over to Pas de Calais and back. Only 4:15...time and at about 1

²⁰⁸ James H. Chandler diary, May 28, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁰⁹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 29, 1944; and Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 132.

²¹⁰ James H. Chandler diary, May 28, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²¹¹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 2, 1944.

²¹² 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 3, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

hour of that was taxi time, so you can see it was really a milk run. I wish that could get in the others real quick before the invasion starts, which I think that it will start some time this month. I will tell you that I have never gone into a bomb run without a prayer and I believe it helps.”²¹³

Similar to Hap’s pre-mission prayers, Vic Romasco always “received the sacraments before taking off on a mission.”²¹⁴

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, the 381st participated in two missions bombing bridges and airfields near beachheads over Ver-sur-Mer, Courselles, and Caen, France. The 534th, including the Peak crew flying on *The Betty L*, flew over and bombed Ver-sur-Mer, one of the beachheads where the British landed. It was the first bombing of the day, to precede the Allied landings at the beachheads. The crewmen could not see the results due to a solid overcast and encountered no enemy aircrafts or flak. Another bombing mission over Villers Bocage, France, was planned but

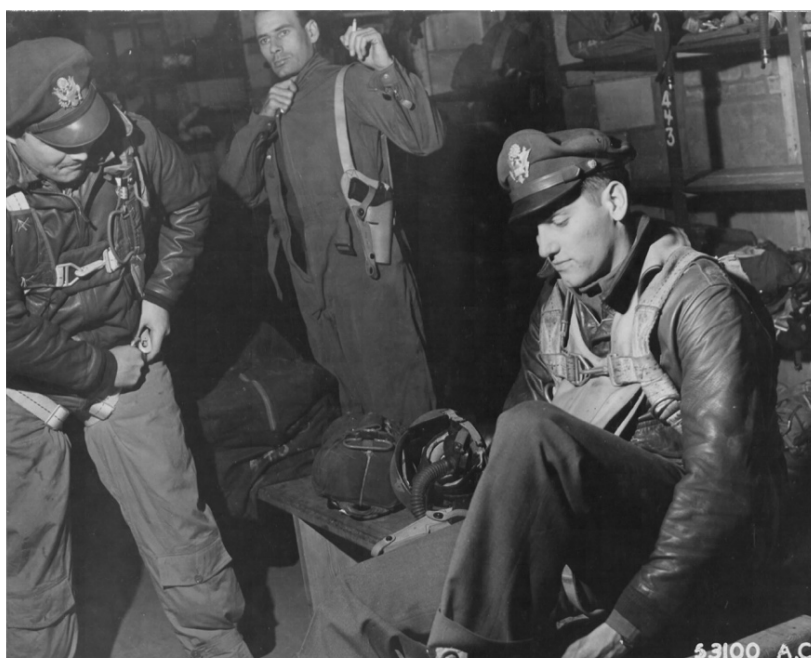


Image 25- Getting ready on D-Day. Left to right: Lt. James G. Manion, Sam Peak, Lt. Samuel Whitehead.

ultimately called off due to adverse weather conditions.²¹⁵

Talking about D-Day in his diary, Hap wrote:

Well, today started the invasion and I had dubious honor of being in the first wave of bombers to hit the enemy lines during the invasion. We were awakened at 12:15 and ate, held briefing, and then took off to bomb the coast of France. The sky was full of planes... I was 2nd ship over... We formed and flew off to our target. We were over the target at

²¹³ James H. Chandler diary, June 3, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²¹⁴ “Uxbridge Mother Receives Letter from Son’s Chaplain,” unknown newspaper, circa July 21, 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

²¹⁵ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 6, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

0701 and released our bombs. I really wish that it had been clear so that I could have seen the bomb strikes and some of the action below. Some of the boys have gone back out today, so if they pull another raid later on I imagine that I will go on it. I now have 16 missions and if I fly much more I will be finished soon I hope. There was no flak or fighters, other than our own over the target today! I think that we have...all pushed bombs into Germany. The field has the order that "Jerry" will try a counter invasion so now we all wear our 45's day and night anywhere you go, you take your pistol with you. I have mine now, loaded all ready for action, but I don't guess I will see any unless I get shot down in the battlefield. By some means or another I intend to keep my gun when I do go home. I wonder how the invasion will go!?? I hope we go right thru France, without stopping.²¹⁶

Later that day, Vic Romasco wrote his family that:

you will also ago remember it as one of the greatest days in our history, and your little boy was right in the front row- Yes Mom- I was one of the first wave of planes to hit on the invasion. Before I took off this morning I went to communion- I guess quite a few of the boys did, and said a great big prayer for the boys that were going to be on the ground under us-I'm really satisfied now- I would not give this day in my life for any thing in the world. I feel sorry for the boys that couldn't be in on the biggest show the world has ever seen- I suppose you know more about it than I do tho as I haven't heard any news of any kind as I've been sleeping most of the afternoon as we had to get up pretty early.²¹⁷



Image 26- Getting ready for D-Day. Lt. Joseph C. Hainzer, Vic Romasco, Lt. Donald I. Soale, Lt. Harry M. Smith, Lt. Robert A. Douglas.

Telling about D-Day, Allen Osterberg wrote his family "just a note at this time to let you know all's well after the first day and expect to have a pretty good...seat from here on in. Anyway I'll see what cooks to-morrow. Was pretty tired this afternoon as didn't get any sleep

²¹⁶ James H. Chandler diary, June 6, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²¹⁷ Letter, "Victor Romasco to Romasco family," June 6, 1944, in possession of Cheryl Herzog.

last night but it wasn't too bad. Here's a pin from some of the first bombs to go down today in advance of the ground force."²¹⁸

The following day, 7 June, the Peak crew flew on *Via Panola Express* to Kerlin-Bastard, France, in order to hinder the Luftwaffe by attacking the airfield there. "This afternoon left 4:30 for #17... We really knocked hell out of that place. There was flak, slight but really

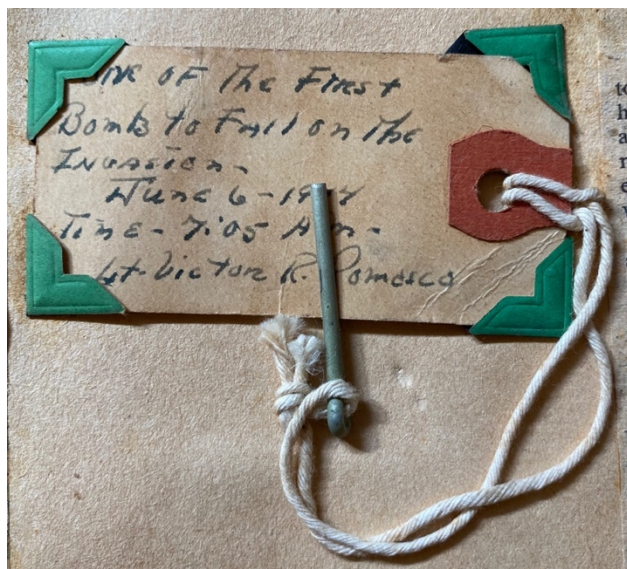


Image 27- "One of the First Bombs to Fall on the Invasion- June 6-1944. Time- 7:05 AM"

accurate. We had the low squadron today. The 2nd Element leader had 2 engines shot out and he had to ditch in channel, but all of them got out alright. We got in bed about 1:15, so I hope to get a little sleep."²¹⁹

Flying on *Carol Leigh* on 8 June, the Peak crew went to Tours, France, where they bombed a steel railway bridge over the Loire river, six miles (nine km) east of Tours.²²⁰

Recalling the mission in his diary, Hap Chandler noted that after about thirty-five minutes of sleep, the Peak crew:

got up to go on another mission, so I racked up #18 early this morning and was home before noon. We hit a railroad bridge, just outside of Tours, France. Our bombs made a direct hit on the bridge. That was light flack, but no battle damage done to the ship. I really am glad that I made this mission. As we hit the coast, I saw the landing barges pulled up on the land, thousands of them, then on the return trip we saw more boats than I have ever seen anywhere before in my life. They were all over the coast line and thousands more were coming over. It was really worth seeing. It is a wonderful show and I am glad that I have a front row seat, also that I am looking down at it all.²²¹

²¹⁸ Letter, "Allen Osterberg to Lynn and Edna Osterberg," June 6, 1944, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

²¹⁹ James H. Chandler diary, June 7, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²²⁰ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 7-8, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

²²¹ James H. Chandler diary, June 8, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

On 12 June, the Peak crew flew again on *The Betty L* to bomb the airfield in Lille, France. The target was reported as being well hit and the B-17s did not experience much direct flak.²²² The Peak crew left “early this morning on a mission. We went to Lille, France today, it was number 19 for me. It wasn’t too bad, there wasn’t any fighter and very little flak after the target so we came home safe and sound. I don’t know how they are going to count our mission.”²²³

On 15 June, Hap Chandler “was the spare navigator in the ship that lead the wing. Col. Kunkel was flying the ship. We went to Bordeaux, France where we hit an airfield that was holding the planes to be used against our invasion forces. This was no. 20 for me and only 10 more to go, I hope. Just before we hit the target the flak filled portions of the sky but there still wasn’t anything there that could compare with pre-invasion targets.”²²⁴

That night, Allen Osterberg wrote his last letter home:

Kind of quiet around here tonight. Most of the others in the hut got tired of staying in and went out to a local “pub” so I suppose they’ll get us out of the sack about money. If I get to sleep in I’ll be damn mad that I didn’t go too. Course that Limey beer, bitter and mild (two kinds) ain’t much to go often...A good cold bottle of “Bud” would kinda hit the spot right now. The folks may not have been getting any word from me for some time, which is due to the invasion. I told them they could be expecting that a long time ago. I think this letter should go tight on through now though. Well its June 15 and pretty well into summer. Things ought to be getting along pretty fine at home now. Mom + Pop busy with the garden. Hope mom doesn’t work too hard at it though. Would like to get back there this summer but I don’t think I can make it though. But I’m going down hill on my missions now... Say Mary get Jay to send me some snaps, Pictures of everybody and anything will be fine with me. If I can get hold of a camera to fit my film I’ll take some around here. Haven’t had any time off for a long time now but may get a day or two pretty soon.²²⁵

²²² 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 12, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

²²³ James H. Chandler diary, June 12, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²²⁴ James H. Chandler diary, June 15, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²²⁵ Letter, “Allen Osterberg to Jay, Mary, and Dale Osterberg,” June 15, 1944, in possession of Kay Shapy.

Three days later, 18 June, the Peak crew flew to Hamburg, Germany, on *The Betty L*. Their objective was to bomb the oil refineries in Hamburg. Weather results prevented accurate observations of the bombing results and the ships experienced unusually heavy and accurate flak.²²⁶ “Today, we hit one of those hard long missions. We came started our penetration deep into the heart of the Reich again. We took off long before day break...It was just like the targets that we used to catch before the invasion. There was really plenty of flak. We had a hole in the #2 engine. The new boys around here are really beginning to see what the old missions were like, but I can do without seeing, because I know.”²²⁷

On Dick Oberlin’s twentieth birthday, 19 June, the Peak crew flew for the first time on *Spare Charlie*. Originally, the mission was planned to target synthetic oil in Hamburg. However the mission was scrubbed and the B-17s flew over Merignac, France. Results were reported as excellent and anti-aircraft flak was heavy and accurate, while not a single enemy fighter was seen throughout the entire flight.²²⁸ The next day, the Peak crew flew again on *Spare Charlie* to Hamburg, where they bombed synthetic oil refineries again. The targets were along the dock fronts in Hamburg.²²⁹



Image 28- *Spare Charlie*, 30 May 1944, Ridgewell, England.

²²⁶ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 18, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

²²⁷ James H. Chandler diary, June 18, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²²⁸ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 19, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.

²²⁹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 20, 1944; and Kevin Wilson, e-mail to author, April, 15, 2019.



Image 29- Missions flown by the Peak crew

- 1- Ridgewell, England. The base where the Peak crew was stationed.
- 2- Metz-Frescaty, France. Bombed on 25 April.
- 3- Cherbourg, France. Bombed on 27 April and 6 May
- 4- St. Avord, France. Bombed on 28 April.
- 5- Berlin, Germany and the Friedrichstrasse station in Berlin. Bombed on 29 April, 7 May, 19 May, and 24 May.
- 6- Troyes, France. Bombed on 1 May.
- 7- La Glacerie, France. Bombed on 6 May.
- 8- St. Dizier, France. Bombed on 9 May.
- 9- Lutzkendorf, Germany. Bombed on 12 May.
- 10- Kiel, Germany. Bombed on 22 May.
- 11- Saarbrücken, Germany. Bombed on 23 May.
- 12- Leipzig, Germany. Bombed on 28 May.
- 13- Posen, Poland. Bombed on 29 May.
- 14- Hardehot, France. Bombed on 3 June.
- 15- Ver-Sur-Mer, France. Bombed on 6 June.
- 16- Kerlin-Bastard, France. Bombed on 7 June.
- 17- Tours, France. Bombed on 8 June.
- 18- Lille, France. Bombed on 12 June.
- 19- Hamburg, Germany. Bombed on 18 and 20 June.
- 20- Merignac, France. Bombed on 19 June.
- 21- Abbeville, France. Shot down on 22 June.

On 21 June, Hap Chandler flew a mission with a different crew. The Peak crew had the day off. Hap felt that he:

really did alright on my 24th mission we went to Berlin today and I shot down a fighter. I was flying with the hard luck crew that has been shot up quite bad and has had to ditch in the channel over but we made it just fine. Just after we hit the German coast we could see the smoke from Hamburg, the target we hit yesterday, it was still blazing. Then about 10 minutes later...we met a number of Jerry planes. ME 210, SU 88, ME 109, ME 189, FW 190. They came in from the rear but they didn't seem to be able to fly very well and also were quite scared. Finally 1 ME 210 broke through and came at the nose of our plane. I began firing and his #2 engine burst into flame. He came on and was so close that I could see him and the co-pilot could see the bullets hitting the canopy and him so I guess that I killed him, then he went into a spin + exploded. We really had a field day. I guess that our wing shot down at least 20 planes and our ship (claimed) 3. After that we hit the target and dropped our incendiaries, you could really see things burn. Then Pendergist got hit in the left wing with flak and went into a dive but everyone got out alright, so that isn't too bad. They raised the missions but I only have to do one extra, so that leaves me only 7 more.²³⁰

Lt. Roy Pendergist was captured by the Germans after he landed. Hap and Vic would later be imprisoned in Stalag Luft III with Lt. Pendergist.²³¹

During that day, Robby Scharff wrote his final letter home. "Dearest Mother, Received your lovely letter today and it was really good to hear from you...Well Mom, with me it's just about the same. No kick coming for there's no use of complaining...Glad to hear that everything is O.K. at home and all are in good health. Your loving son, Bob."²³² Max Rockey also wrote his mother. "Dear mom, don't write anymore. I'll be home sometime next week. Can't say when because I don't know just what train I'm taking."²³³ It is not known when Max Rockey wrote this letter home, but according to his family, it was written within the week before he was shot down.

²³⁰ James H. Chandler diary, June 21, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²³¹ James H. Chandler diary, list of men in Stalag Luft III's Center Compound, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²³² Letter, "Robby Scharff to Barbara Scharff," June 21, 1944, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

²³³ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

Thursday 22 June 1944- The Mission That Was Supposed to Be a Milk Run

On Thursday 22 June, the Peak crew was flying again on *Spare Charlie* for their twenty-third mission. For unknown reasons, Vic Romasco was flying as pilot on the B-17 *Schnozzle*.²³⁴

Due to *Spare Charlie* needing a co-pilot, 1st Lt. Robert “Bob” Frank Petroski volunteered, even though he was not scheduled to fly that day.²³⁵ Lt. Petroski, from Detroit, Michigan, had been at Ridgewell since November 1943. Earlier that year in February, Bob married Mary Louise “Mary Lou” Earl in Macon, Georgia. At the time they were married, Bob was completing advanced pilot training at Turner Field, in Albany, Georgia. On 29 April 1943, Bob graduated training at Turner Field and was commissioned a second lieutenant and given his wings.²³⁶



Image 30- 1st Lt. Robert “Bob” F. Petroski.

Lt. Petroski was the head pilot of his crew when they were assigned to Ridgewell in November 1943.²³⁷ On 31 January 1944, Bob, only twenty-three-years-old, was promoted to first lieutenant.²³⁸ Bob’s son, Robert Petroski Jr., was born in May 1944 and Lt. Petroski named his B-17, *My Son Bob*, in honor of his newborn son.²³⁹ David Osborne, the former historian of the 381st Bombardment Group, listed Bob’s mission count as twenty-nine.²⁴⁰ Lt. Petroski’s tour of duty consisted of thirty missions, so he was close to going home. In addition, he flew multiple

²³⁴ Megan FitzGerald, *Sgt. Grover Lee Scoggins*, 2014, 6. FitzGerald received the plane information from Kevin Wilson, president of the 381st Bomb Group Memorial Association.

²³⁵ Dennis Beauvais, Facebook message to author, September 27, 2019.

²³⁶ Bob Krausmann, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 14, 2019; and “The Service Parade,” *The Detroit Free Press*, May 6, 1943, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.genealogybank.com/>.

²³⁷ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, November 9-10, 1943.

²³⁸ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, January 31, 1944.

²³⁹ Dennis Beauvais, Facebook message to author, September 27, 2019. His father, Lt. Robert Beauvais, flew with Bob and claimed that Bob named the plane.

²⁴⁰ David R. Osborne, *They Came From Over the Pond, The Story of the 381st Bomb Group, Ridgewell, Essex, 1943-1945* (Winston-Salem, NC: 381st Bomb Group Memorial Association, 2009), 405.

missions as the lead plane in June 1944. Knowing he had much experience flying as the lead plane, was close to finishing his tour of duty, going home, seeing his family, and meeting his son, it makes sense why Bob Petroski volunteered to fly with the Peak crew on *Spare Charlie*.

Lt. Petroski was not the only non-Peak crew member to fly on *Spare Charlie* on 22 June. 2nd Lt. John “Jack” Keith Lundberg, from Val Verda, Utah, arrived at Ridgewell in May 1944 and was assigned as a navigator in the John Houston crew.²⁴¹ Prior to his overseas service, Jack was a navigation instructor at the Hondo Army Airfield in Hondo, Texas, which was also where Jack received his advanced navigation training and graduated from on 1 April 1943.²⁴² On 15 December 1943, Jack married his sweetheart, Mary Catherine Maher, at the Madeline Cathedral in Salt Lake City, Utah.²⁴³



Image 31- 2nd Lt. John “Jack” K. Lundberg.

Lt. Lundberg and the Houston crew flew their first mission on 30 May.²⁴⁴ Jack flew eight missions before his superiors recognized his talents. He exhibited “courage, coolness, and skill” in the exercise of his military duties.²⁴⁵ John Houston, the pilot in Jack’s crew, mentioned that Jack was “taken off the crew and then began to train as a lead navigator.”²⁴⁶ As part of his lead navigator training, Lt. Lundberg flew two missions on 12 and

²⁴¹ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 13, 1944.

²⁴² “7 Utahns Killed in War; 2 Others Wounded; Val Verda Flier Loses Life in Battle for France,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 30, 1945, accessed November 12, 2018, <https://newspaperarchive.com/salt-lake-tribune-jun-30-1945-p-7/>; and “Finding of Death of Missing Person,” January 9, 1946, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives, Saint Louis, Missouri.

²⁴³ “Mary Catherine Maher Weds in Military Rites,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, November 15, 1943, accessed November 9, 2018, <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6k979jf>.

²⁴⁴ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, May 30, 1944, 381st.org.

²⁴⁵ Letter, “Robert H. Dunlop to Mary Catherine Lundberg,” January 8, 1945, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

²⁴⁶ Letter, “John Houston to Mary Catherine Lundberg,” November 20, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

19 June with Howard Kesley, the 534th Bomb Squadron's Operations Officer. Jack's first mission as lead navigator was on 22 June and since the Peak crew was the lead plane on that mission, twenty-five-year-old Lt. Lundberg replaced Hap Chandler as the navigator on *Spare Charlie*. Hap flew with Vic Romasco on *Schnozzle*.²⁴⁷

On 22 June 1944, the town of Abbeville, located in northern France, had been occupied by the Germans for a little over four years. On 20 May 1940, the Germans attacked Abbeville and reached the English Channel. From 28 May to 4 June, a battle, now known as The Battle of Abbeville, occurred between the French and British and the German 2nd Panzer Division. The defeat of the French and British resulted in the Germans achieving their goal of encircling the French and English troops in northern France.²⁴⁸ It was during this time period that the British evacuated their troops in the now famous Dunkirk evacuation.

The Luftwaffe was the German Air Force. The Luftwaffe fighter-wing Jagdgeschwader 26 (JG 26) Schlageter occupied the Abbeville airfield. The unit, nicknamed "The Abbeville Boys" or "The Abbeville Kids" by British and American aircrews, was known for its fearsome reputation. These Germans flew yellow nosed BF 109s and FW 190 aircraft. The skill and determination of Luftwaffe units when attacking US bomber formations made crews wary whenever any yellow nosed aircraft attacked them.²⁴⁹

The 6th Fallschirmjäger-Division, consisting of paratroopers, was formed in Amiens in May 1944 at the request of Erwin Rommel to reinforce the Atlantic Wall. Before being sent to Normandy, the unit was situated in the Abbeville area, preparing to defend the area from Allied

²⁴⁷ 534th Bomb Squadron crew assignment cards, June 22, 1944, slide 1268, Reel A0639, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama.

²⁴⁸ "The Battle of Abbeville," Abbeville-Passion Histoire d'une ville, March 26, 2017, accessed March 27, 2020, permission given to author to use website, <http://www.abbeville-passion.fr/articles.php?lng=en&pg=463&mnuid=30&tconfig=0#z2>.

²⁴⁹ "Jagdeschwader 26 'Schlageter,'" Asisbiz, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.asisbiz.com/Luftwaffe/jg26.html>.

forces.²⁵⁰ On 22 June, the German soldiers in Abbeville and the surrounding area were members of Parachute Unit Number 60066, SS.²⁵¹

Due to its proximity to England, German rocket launching sites were located near Abbeville, which resulted in the city being a target often frequented by Allied bombers.

However, the *Spare Charlie* crew's last mission, on 22 June, was to take part in a raid on switch and power stations in Abbeville.²⁵² After taking off from Ridgewell at 1650 hours (4:50 pm), *Spare Charlie* lead a formation of eleven ships, all members of the 534th Bomb Squadron.²⁵³

The men participating in the mission believed it was going to be a milk run---an easy mission where minimal resistance from the enemy was expected. It was to also be a short mission, only

about four hours.²⁵⁴ The fleet formed and started across the English Channel, went over the French coast a short way, and turned around to arrive in Abbeville around 7:08 pm.²⁵⁵



Image 32- German rocket launching sites in France.

²⁵⁰ Emmanuel Berle, Facebook message to author, September 29, 2019; and "6 Fallschirmjaeger Division," Axis History, accessed September 21, 2019, <https://www.axishistory.com/various/151-germany-luftwaffe/luftwaffe-ground-units/5679-6-fallschirmjaeger-division>.

²⁵¹ "Investigation of Isolated Graves of Air Force Personnel, H1, AFSC," May 31, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁵² 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 22, 1944.

²⁵³ Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 143.

²⁵⁴ Allison, "Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination," *The Bryan Times*.

²⁵⁵ United States Air Force, Missing Air Crew Report, "June 22, 1944" (Microfilm MACR #5918, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD), also on <https://www.fold3.com/image/28641808>; and Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.



Image 33- 534th in action. *Spare Charlie* is in the middle with markings Triangle L, GD-H.

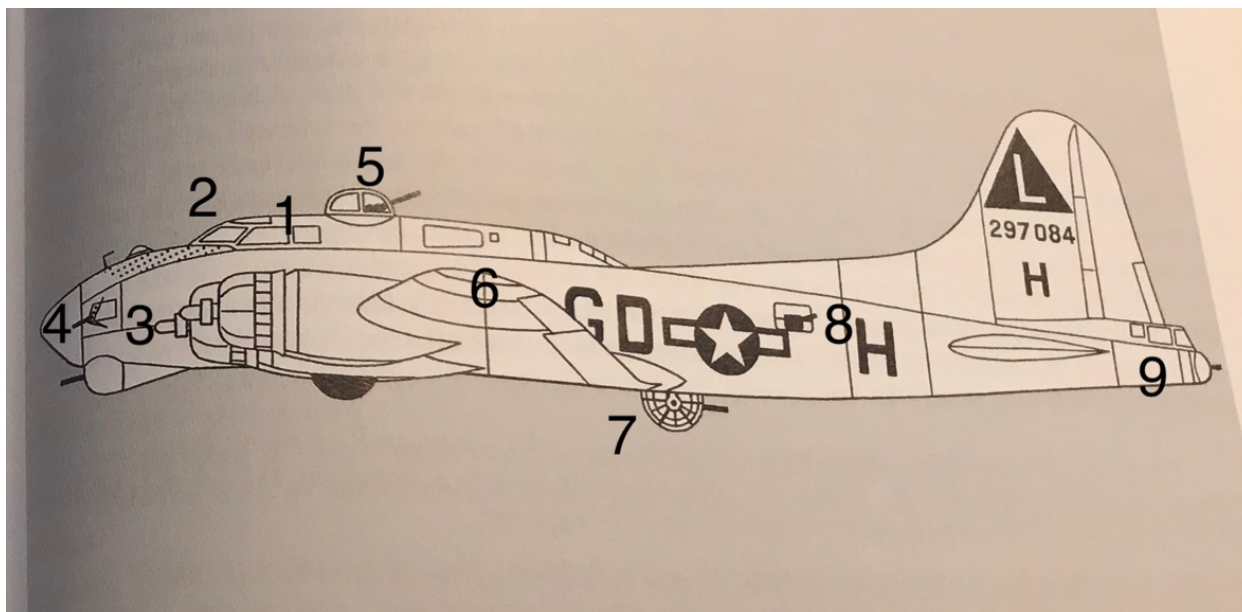


Image 34- *Spare Charlie* crew positions.

- 1- Sam Peak- Pilot
- 2- Bob Petroski- Co-pilot
- 3- Jack Lundberg- Navigator
- 4- Allen Osterberg- Bombardier
- 5- Murl Simmons- Top Turret Gunner
- 6- Frank Welke- Radio Operator
- 7- Robby Scharff- Ball Turret Gunner
- 8- Dick Oberlin- Waist Gunner
- 9- Max Rockey- Tail Gunner

As the fleet of bombers neared the Abbeville train station, *Spare Charlie* proceeded to drop its bombs at a bombing altitude of 25,000 feet.²⁵⁶ At 7:10 pm, right as bombardier Allen Osterberg said “bomb bay doors coming closed,” *Spare Charlie* received a direct hit in the bomb bay and wing (two and three engines) by 88 mm flak shot from the Hôtel La Gare about seventy-seven yards (seventy meters) away from the train station.²⁵⁷ This mission was Lt. Robert Kaurin’s first mission. He:

was in the co-pilots position of the number two airplane flying off the left wing of the lead. I was convinced it was no milk run when a piece of flak came up through the cockpit floor and barely missing me it went between my back and the armor plate behind my seat and out the roof. Just after we had turned at the (initiation point) onto the bomb-run the lead aircraft suffered a direct hit by an 88 mm. It exploded inside the number two main fuel tank which burst into a huge fireball. I saw the lead pilot turn his head to look at the holocaust and at the same time he pulled back on the control yoke and the plane lurched up into a climbing turn to the left. I took the controls and pulled our plane up and to the right as his plane stalled out to the left. The fireball from his crippled plane engulfed our right wing.²⁵⁸

As *Spare Charlie* “fell off to the left in a stall we stalled out to the right and fell out of formation. We had to climb back into formation after recovering from the stall and we joined up with the number two B-17 which took over the lead position.”²⁵⁹ When *Spare Charlie* began to dive, the B-17 blew up, passed out of view of the other B-17s, and split in two.²⁶⁰ Parts of *Spare*

²⁵⁶ Letter, “Neil Rasmussen to unknown,” unknown date, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>; Gaillard, *Flight Surgeon*, 143.

²⁵⁷ “News From Men in the Service,” *The Escanaba Daily Press*, November 21, 1945, accessed November 16, 2018, <https://newspaperarchive.com/escanaba-daily-press-nov-21-1945-p-2/>; and Letter, “Neil Rasmussen to unknown,” unknown date.

²⁵⁸ Robert Helman Kaurin Collection, (AFC/2001/001/15309).

²⁵⁹ Robert Helman Kaurin Collection.

²⁶⁰ Ron MacKay, *Ridgewell’s Flying Fortresses The 381st Bombardment Group (H) in World War II* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2000), 143; and United States Air Force, Missing Air Crew Report, “June 22, 1944.”

Charlie crashed in the low lands and marshes between the communes of Mareuil-Caubert and Épagnette, a little over three miles (five km) south of Abbeville.²⁶¹

Journaling his entry for the day, Hap wrote:

Today is a very sad day for me. Today is the first time my old crew has flown a mission that I didn't fly with and the whole crew went down over the target and not a single parachute was seen to come out of the ship maybe my luck will hold out but you never can tell. All you can do is hope and pray, it has helped so far. I have never been in a bomb run that I enter it with a prayer on lips + I hope that they will continue to carry me on.²⁶²

Out of the nine crew members aboard *Spare Charlie*, only one survived. When the plane went into a tight spiral, and flames began shooting from the wings, the force of the plane's spin pinned the *Spare Charlie* crew members in place, unable to exit the burning aircraft.²⁶³ As the B-17 spun, waist gunner Dick Oberlin was "blown back by the door. I grabbed my parachute and was thrown out of the plane just before it



Image 35- *Spare Charlie*'s crash site in Les Marais d'Épagnette (The Marshes of Épagnette).

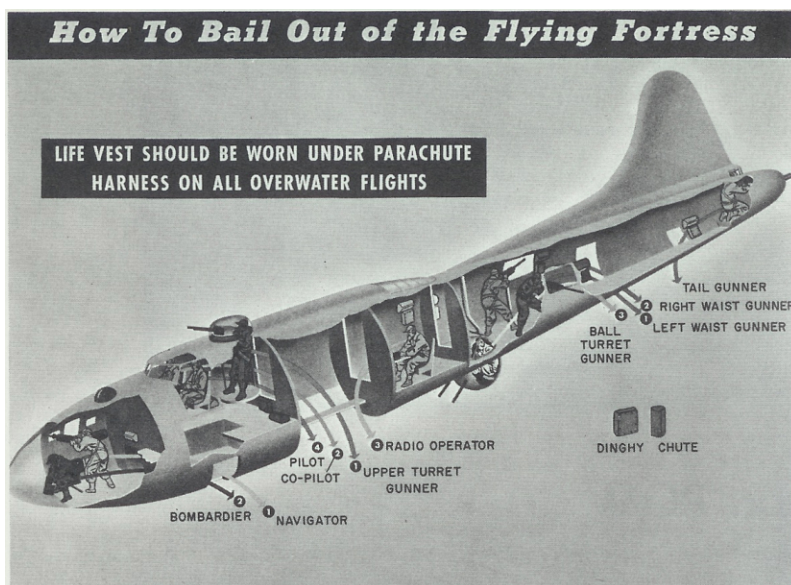


Image 36- Bail out positions on a B-17.

²⁶¹ "Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act," June 23, 1945, page 8, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives, Saint Louis, Missouri.

²⁶² James H. Chandler diary, June 22, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁶³ Allison, "Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination," *The Bryan Times*.

exploded... a few seconds after we were hit.”²⁶⁴ After Sgt. Oberlin landed in a hay field, he realized that he was wounded with shrapnel in a leg, a hand and his face. Recalling that moment, Dick remarked “I never even felt a thing, until I hit the ground.” When two young French girls approached him, Dick thought he might be rescued and hidden by the French in the German-occupied area. Those hopes were quickly dashed, however, when he was surrounded by German soldiers. He was held overnight in a house, with no medical attention for his wounds. Sgt. Oberlin “was scared to death...I felt like I was alone in the world” since his crew mates were now gone.²⁶⁵

Soon after *Spare Charlie* crashed in Les Marais d’Épagnette (The Marshes of Épagnette), the Germans visited the wreckage and found a few of the *Spare Charlie* crew member’s bodies. The Germans wanted to bury the bodies in the field near the crash site or put them down the Somme river.²⁶⁶ Instead, they examined the bodies and “removed from them articles such as identity tags, jewelry, papers, and photographs after which they placed the bodies in deep water without attention.”²⁶⁷ A young boy who lived next to the crash site saw the bodies of one of *Spare Charlie* crew members who was still wearing his flight gear, helmet, and mask. The boy then witnessed the Germans taking that crew member’s jacket.²⁶⁸ It is not known who the crew member was.



Image 37- Unknown man in flight gear wearing mask and goggles.

²⁶⁴ “News From Men in the Service,” *The Escanaba Daily Press*.

²⁶⁵ Don Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

²⁶⁶ “Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act,” June 23, 1945, page 8, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁶⁷ “Investigation of Isolated Graves of Air Force Personnel, H1, AFSC,” May 31, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File,.

²⁶⁸ Emmanuel Berle, Facebook message to author, July 18, 2019. Berle interviewed the witness in July 2019.

The Germans reported that five men were dead, but only Frank Welke was identified. This was most likely due to the fact that the Germans recovered Frank's identification tags, which they used in their report. The only information listed about Frank was what was on his identification tags.²⁶⁹ The bodies of the *Spare Charlie* crew members were left in the marsh for three days, until 25 June, when six of them were "recovered by French civilians, and under cover of night buried them in caskets" in graves 301 to 306 in the cemetery of Mareuil-Caubert, a commune close to *Spare Charlie*'s crash site.²⁷⁰

At the time of the burials, only two men, Sam Peak and Allen Osterberg, were identified---Lt. Peak's name could be seen on his jacket and Lt. Osterberg's identification tags were found on him. Lt. Peak was buried in grave 302 and Lt. Osterberg in grave 303. The other four men were buried

Befangenenlager: <u>H. U. 2351</u>	Staatsangehörigkeit: <u>U. S. A.</u>	No. der Liste:
Befangenen-Nr.:		Seite der Liste:
Name: <u>Welke, Frank</u>	Beruf:	
Vornamen: <u>Frank, A.</u>	Religion:	
Geburtsdag u. Geburtsort:	Truppenteil: <u>Marsch. Fortress</u>	Dienstgrad: <u>1. Sgt.</u>
Vorname des Vaters:	Komp. ufw. <u>32800468</u>	Matr. Nr. <u>32800468</u>
Familienname der Mutter:	Ort und Tag der Befangennahme oder Internierung: <u>25 June 44 at 19</u>	
Name u. Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person:	Verwundungen, Verletzungen oder Tod: <u>1 km. West of Epagne near Mareuil</u>	
Aufenthalt u. Veränderungen: <u>H 22.6.44/19 10 Uhr 1 km. W. Epagne b. Mareuil</u>	wann und von wo zugegangen: <u>(France)</u>	

Erbbilags:

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Image 38- German Prisoner of War Card for Frank Welke. The black cross on the top right corner signifies death.

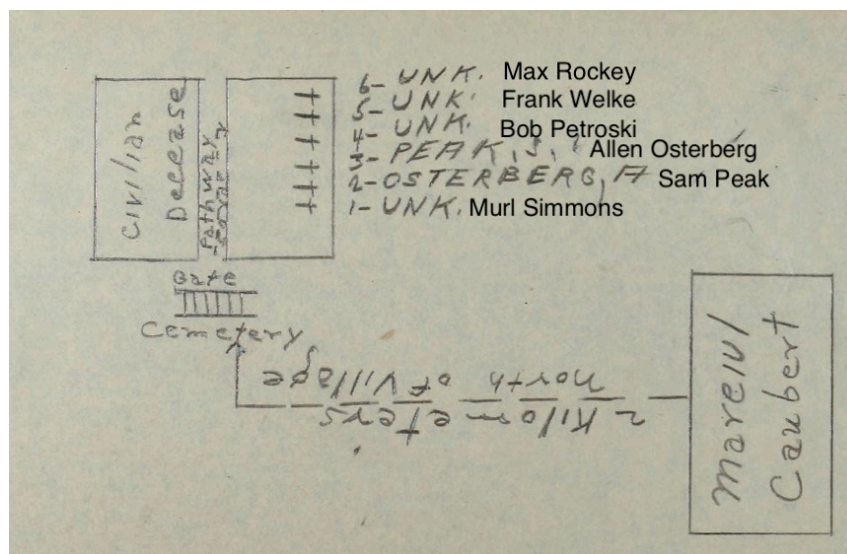


Image 39- Graves at Mareuil-Caubert. The graves of Allen Osterberg and Sam Peak are switched in this drawing.

²⁶⁹ Kampfflugzeug Unterlagen (KU) 2351 Report, July 15, 1944, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Can be accessed at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/147885681>; and "German Prisoner of War Card for Frank Welke," Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁷⁰ "Investigation of Isolated Graves of Air Force Personnel, H1, AFSC," May 31, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File.

as “inconnu” or unknown.²⁷¹ However, some items were still on the “unknown” men. The man buried in grave 304 (later identified as Bob Petroski) had a Bulova watch that was stopped at 7:10, the exact time *Spare Charlie* was hit and exploded. The number 438 could be seen on the jacket of the man (later identified as Max Rockey) buried in grave 306. Various cards, a pocket-book, and twenty 100 Franc notes were found on the man (later identified as Frank Welke) buried in grave 305.²⁷²

Similar to the *Spare Charlie* crew, on 24 June 1944, three members of a seven-member Lancaster bomber ND 729 crew only had a few more missions before they were to finish their tour of duty and go home. The seven-member crew, composed of Australians and Britons, were on a mission to attack a rocket launching site at Prouville in northern France. In the early hours of 25 June, the ND 729 was shot down by flak and crashed near Mareuil-Caubert. Most of the men parachuted out of the plane but died from wounds they received from landing too close to the ground. In addition, some of their parachutes caught on fire and a few of the men died of their burns. Five of the men were buried in graves 307 to 311, next to the *Spare Charlie* crew. All of them were initially buried as unknowns. One man was found a few months later and buried in Poix. The pilot, Flight Lt. Roland “Chip” Cowan, was not and has still not been found. It is believed he went down with the plane.²⁷³ The five Australian and British airmen are still buried in the Mareuil-Caubert cemetery.

²⁷¹ “Graves of American and British airmen,” Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁷² “Graves of American and British airmen,” Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁷³ Gilbert Martin, *The Routledge Atlas of the Second World War* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 160.

On 23 June, the Germans took Sgt. Oberlin to Poix, a small village twenty-six miles (forty-two km) south of Abbeville. After being held in Poix for four days, Dick was held at a prison camp in Brussels, Belgium. There, he was repeatedly interrogated. At one point, he lied to a German interrogator, who replied that Dick's statement wasn't true. Following his liberation, Dick wrote that on the drive to Poix, he "had to lay on top of boxes that contained the bodies of my crew



Image 40- One of Dick Oberlin's identification tags taken by the Germans. Now in possession of the United States National Archives and Records Administration.

members."²⁷⁴ He also remarked that during the drive to Poix, he rode "in the truck with the radioman's body." Because of this belief that the radioman (Frank Welke) was dead, during the interrogation, Sgt. Oberlin pointed out the German had lied to him since he stated that Dick's radioman made statements. In response to Dick's accusation, the German sent him back to his cell, saying he would be executed in the morning. Dick "thought they were going to shoot me." However, the Germans did not follow through with that threat, or subsequent threats that Dick would be shot.²⁷⁵ Sgt. Oberlin's belief that his crew members were taken to and buried in Poix will be discussed later.

Following his interrogation at Brussels, Dick spent three days at the Dulag Luft Interrogation Center, near Frankfurt, Germany. At Poix, Brussels, and the Dulag Luft Interrogation Center, Sgt. Oberlin "requested medical attention be given to my leg, which had particles of flak imbedded in it and was swollen and beginning to become infected. At each place, a medic merely used a tweezer to pick out pieces of flak and swabbed my leg with

²⁷⁴ "News From Men in the Service," *The Escanaba Daily Press*.

²⁷⁵ Don Allison, "'Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,'" *The Bryan Times*.

mercurochrome. At no time was any examination made of my leg or any medication other than mercurochrome applied to it. The leg was steadily becoming worse and no medical treatment would be given to me even though I requested it numerous times.”²⁷⁶

Vallères, France, 24 June 1944

Within a span of three days, every member of the Peak crew was either dead or a prisoner of war. On 24 June, Vic Romasco and Hap Chandler flew on *The Betty L* in the same situation as the Peak crew two days earlier. Vic was the squadron leader and led the high group in the 1st composite bomb wing, to bomb the railway bridge over the Loire river, west of Tours, France.²⁷⁷ “Everything went nicely until about 0840 when” *The Betty L* received “a direct hit in the Bomb bays + Radio Room, killing the ball turret man, the waist gunner, and the Radio Operator, severing the ships control cables, and putting the interphone set out of commission. The number 3 engine was on fire and burning the wing and into the gas tank.” Vic “went through the ship giving the order to bail out. First he told the engineer, then the copilot and then the Bomb + Nav. Then he reached for the escape hatch in the nose, pulled the lever and passed out from lack of oxygen, but luckily fell against the hatch and threw on out of the hole.”²⁷⁸ The B-17 went into a spin while it burned. It was then seen to hit the ground and explode.

Out of the nine men on board, only five, including Vic and Hap survived. Hap noted that “My chute opened after a bit of difficulty and falling 22,000 ft. Upon hitting the ground I was quite shocked and had also sprained an ankle. My plan was, if escape possible to make my way back through enemy lines to the American troops, but also, there were two soldiers of the Skull

²⁷⁶ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

²⁷⁷ 534th Bomb Squadron Diary, June 24, 1944.

²⁷⁸ James H. Chandler diary, “It Can Happen,” circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

and Crossbone's Squadron of Hitlers Jugend, who took charge at me immediately."²⁷⁹ Following *The Betty L's* crash, the Germans took the remaining plane parts, most likely to repurpose for their war effort.



Image 41- *The Betty L* wreckage.



Image 42- *The Betty L's* tail.



Image 43- Drawing of the Germans taking the tail of *The Betty L* away from the crash site.

²⁷⁹ James H. Chandler diary, "It Can Happen," circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

After being captured by the Germans, Hap Chandler was taken to Loudun, France, where he was interrogated. “The night of June 24, 1944 was the last night that I slept on springs for quite a while, not until after the war. The next morning I awoke with a start, wondering where I was, then I remembered that I was a prisoner. I dressed quickly and rushed to the window to seek a possible means of escape, but there was a guard who motioned me back with his rifle.”²⁸⁰

Four days later, the Germans told Hap “to be ready to leave. Soon we were placed in a Red Cross truck carrying ammunition, were carried across town and placed in an open trailer with 16 guards for 7 prisoners and were on our way to” Chartres. “During the journey, the men passed through” Les Mans “and an Airfield also a factory had been bombed out. We traveled all night and arrived at” Chartres “at 0500 AM and were placed in a civilian jail. That afternoon we were marched across thru to a P.O.W. camp that had been established in a Girls Catholic College. It was here I found Victor Romasco, Sgt. Giddens, Sgt. Waldo all that was left of my crew. I was very happy to see them and to hear their experiences.”²⁸¹

The Allied Investigation of the Mareuil-Caubert Burials and the Discovery of Lt. Jack Lundberg

The mission to liberate the Abbeville area was entrusted to the 2nd Canadian Corps, which consisted of Canadian and Polish divisions. They liberated Abbeville on 3 September 1944.²⁸² A few days later, members of General Headquarters, 2nd Echelon, 21st Army Group investigated the American, Australian, and British burials in Mareuil-Caubert for a report of

²⁸⁰ James H. Chandler diary, “It Can Happen,” circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁸¹ James H. Chandler diary, “It Can Happen,” circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

²⁸² “The Liberation of Abbeville,” Abbeville-Passion Histoire d’une ville, August 11, 2019, accessed March 27, 2020, permission give to author to use website, <http://www.abbeville-passion.fr/articles.php?lng=en&pg=578&mnuid=30&tconfig=0#z2>.

Allied personnel casualties.²⁸³ It was mentioned in the report that “coffins numbered 301 to 306 inclusive would appear to contain the bodies of American airmen; envelope No.303” would

“appear to refer to American planes...Coffins numbered 307 to 311 inclusive appear to contain the bodies of personnel serving in the R.A.F.”²⁸⁴ In addition, “Envelope No. 303, contains a photograph of

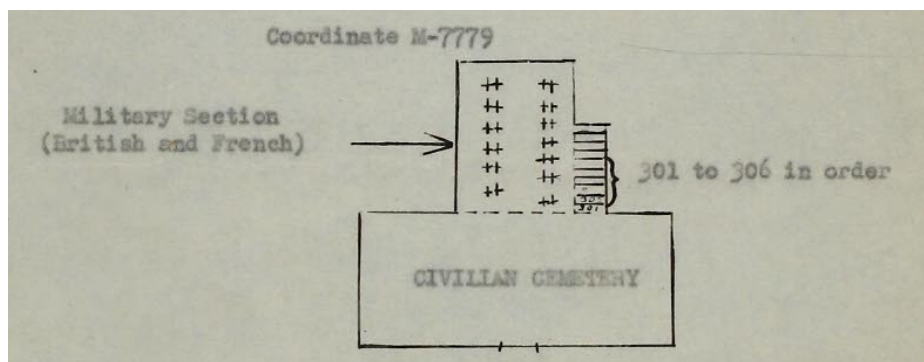


Image 44- The graves at Mareuil-Caubert. “301 to 306 in order” are the graves of the *Spare Charlie* crew.

Lieutenant Osterberg and the exhibits referred to are a flight order and bits of pencil marked paper that contain instructions etc.”²⁸⁵

On 13 February 1945, the Graves Registration and Effects Unit investigated the burials at Mareuil-Caubert again. “The graves of the six (6) American airmen and the five (5) Australian airmen are in a separate row. The American graves are the first six to the right facing the crosses. The crosses bear no markings or inscriptions. Caskets were furnished by the French.”²⁸⁶ The French locals were interviewed about the *Spare Charlie* crew and information was given as to where the plane crashed and that six bodies were found. It was stated in the Graves Registration and Effects Unit’s report that:

M. Cochon, Secretary to the town mayor, was present at the burials made in the cemetery at Mareuil and further states that definitely only six bodies were recovered and they were badly mangled and burned. However, when questioned specifically regarding the possibility of the teeth of these men being intact, it was stated they were...Conclusions

²⁸³ “Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act,” June 23, 1945, page 7, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁸⁴ “Reporting of Casualties to Allied Personnel,” October 19, 1944, Roland Reginald Cowan Military Files, National Archives of Australia, A705, 166/8/520.

²⁸⁵ “Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act,” June 23, 1945, page 7, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁸⁶ “Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act,” June 23, 1945, page 8, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

drawn from this investigation are that the remains of the four (4) Unknowns can possibly be identified and the identification of Peak and Osterberg verified if copies of the tooth charts of these men are made available at the time of disinterment.²⁸⁷

Two days later, on 15 February, Abbevillois (Abbeville citizens) found navigator Lt. Jack Lundberg's body within 100 yards of the wreckage and among marshes and tall weeds near the Abbeville side of the Somme river.²⁸⁸ Jack was identified from his military identification tags and claimed from the French by the English, who were holding the territory at the time. Later that day, he was buried in grave No. F-10 in the British Military Section of the Communal Cemetery in Abbeville.

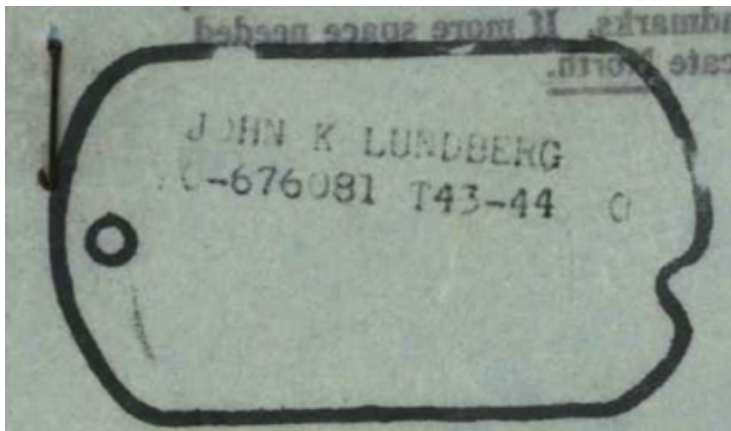


Image 45- A paper version of one of Jack Lundberg's identification tags.

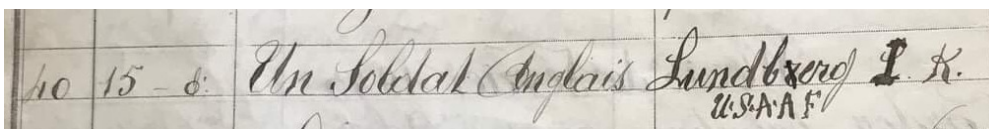


Image 46- Jack Lundberg's burial information in the Abbeville Communal Cemetery grave registration book.

When the body of Jack Lundberg was found by Abbevillois, one citizen found a gold wrist watch on his's body. A gift from his mother, Grace, it had Jack's initials engraved onto the back of it. The citizen took the watch and held onto it for a few years. In the early 1950s, the citizen gave it to the military who sent the watch back to Grace along with Jack's other items.²⁸⁹



Image 47- Jack Lundberg's watch.

²⁸⁷ "Review and Determination of Status Under the Missing Persons Act," June 23, 1945, page 8, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁸⁸ Letter, "Neil Rasmussen to unknown," unknown date; and "Investigation of Isolated Graves of Air Force Personnel, H1, AFSC," May 31, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File.

²⁸⁹ Chuck Lundberg, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, December 6, 2018.

Jack mentioned to his family “at all times realize that my thoughts are of you constantly” and the fact that his watch was on his body when he was found shows that he was most likely thinking of Grace, their family, and home while on his missions.²⁹⁰ Receiving the watch was probably very comforting for Grace. The watch is now in possession of one of Jack’s nephews.



Image 48- Jack Lundberg’s initials- JKL- engraved on the back of his watch.



Image 49- One of *Spare Charlie*’s engines. 1948. Found in the area where Jack Lundberg was discovered.

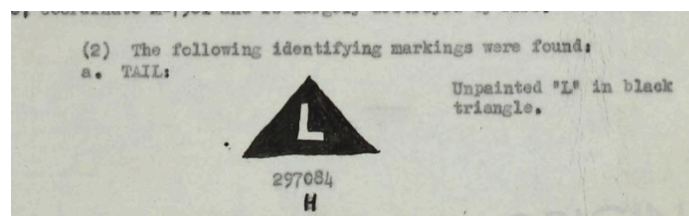


Image 50- Image of markings on *Spare Charlie*’s tail. The only part of the plane that remained intact and identifiable after it crashed..

²⁹⁰ Letter, “Jack Lundberg to Lundberg Family,” May 19, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

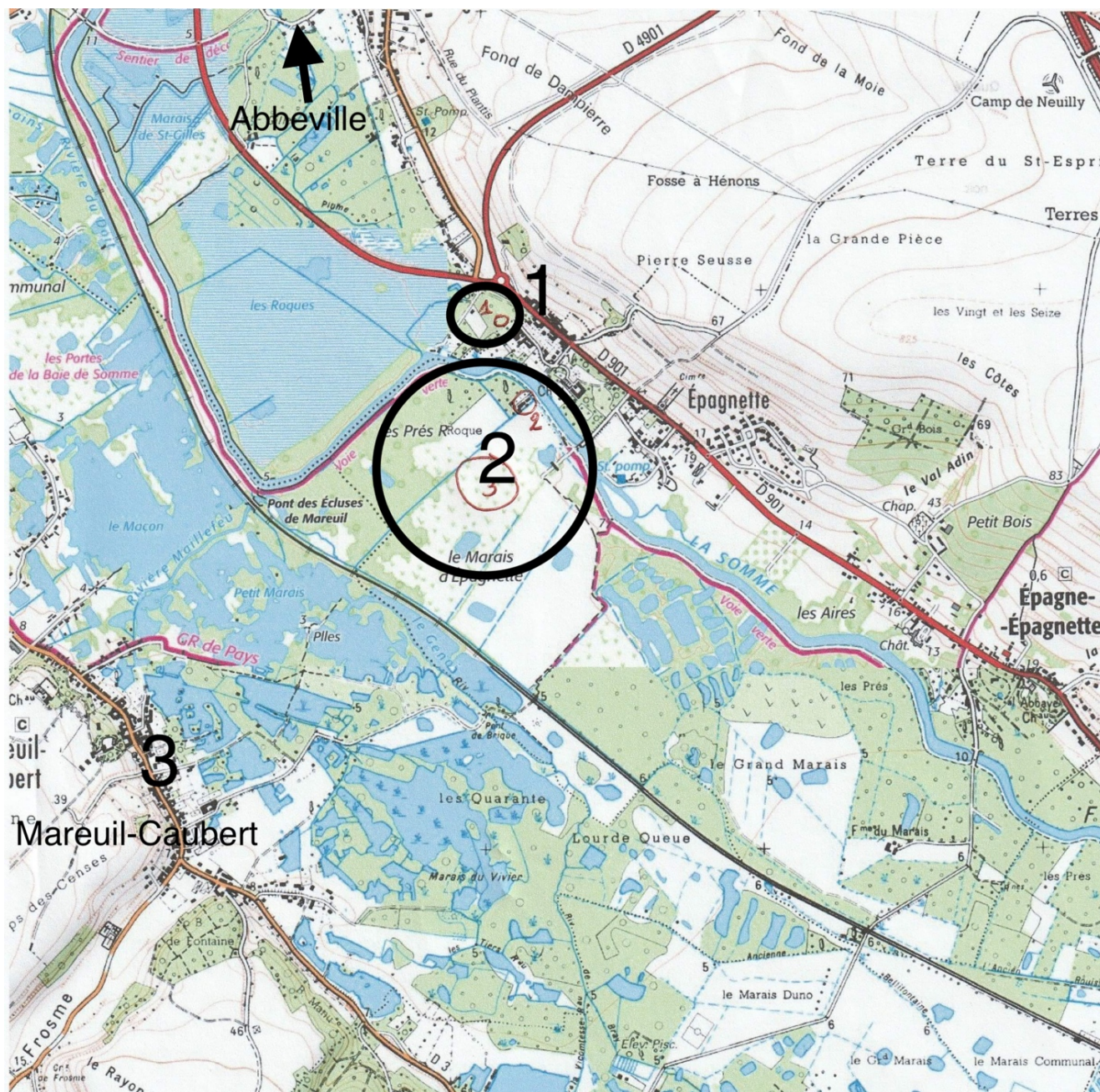


Image 51– Map of *Spare Charlie*'s crash zone.

1. A small part of *Spare Charlie* fell here, including a machine gun and an engine. The Germans arrived quickly and recovered the machine gun. Also the area where Jack Lundberg was found.
2. The area where an engine fell and where the majority of the plane and crew were found. A young boy, living in this area, remembered the jacket and helmet with the mask worn by one of the airmen. The Germans who arrived at the scene recovered five bodies, but later, six were found and buried by the French. The remains of Robby Scharff and the tail of *Spare Charlie* were recovered from this area in January 1947.
3. Mareuil-Caubert. The town where six of the men were buried.

Temporary Cemeteries

During the war, the U.S. Army established several temporary cemeteries throughout the world. These cemeteries were located where high casualties occurred. The U.S. Army Graves Registration Service was in charge of establishing temporary cemeteries. In addition to this, the Graves Registration Service was in charge of accounting for, identifying, and burying all American soldiers who were killed. Each U.S. Army and its individual divisions maintained their own Burial and Registration Command, each of which comprised of five officers and 260 soldiers. Each Command had a headquarters, each consisting of three platoons.²⁹¹



Image 52- Map of American temporary cemeteries in Europe.

On 29 June 1945, a little over a year after *Spare Charlie* was shot down, Lt. Jack Lundberg was disinterred and officially identified by Detention A, 4th Platoon of the 3049 Quartermaster Graves Registration Corps. One member of this unit, Sgt. Neil Rasmussen, contributed to identifying and taking care of Jack's body.²⁹² Like Jack, Sgt. Rasmussen was from Utah and attended West High School the same time Jack did. Although it is not known if their paths ever crossed while at West High, it is interesting that nine years later, their paths would cross again in this context and situation. After Jack was disinterred and positively identified, the Graves Registration Company took his body to the temporary St.

²⁹¹ "Cemetery Temporary," Mémoire & Database, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.database-memoire.eu/prive/en-us/cemetery-temporary>.

²⁹² Letter, "Neil Rasmussen to unknown," unknown date.

André de l'Eure Cemetery. There, on 12 July, “after an appropriate ceremony by a Chaplain,” 2nd Lt. John Keith Lundberg was laid to rest in grave 153 on the 8th row of plot G as “members of the Graves Registration Company stood by with heads bared and eyes lowered in Reverence and Prayer. The Flag was lowered to half-mast and Taps was sounded as” Jack was laid to rest.²⁹³

A few days later, on 7 July 1945, the six *Spare Charlie* crew men buried in Mareuil-Caubert were disinterred and identified by members of the same Graves Registration Company that identified Lt. Lundberg. While they were initially identified when buried, Lieutenants Peak and Osterberg’s identities were officially confirmed by their teeth chart records. Although co-pilot Bob Petroski, who was buried in grave 304, was originally buried as an unknown, he was identified from his identification tags.²⁹⁴ It is not known why Bob’s identification tags were not found when he was initially buried. When Bob was disinterred and identified, his gold wedding ring was found on him. The ring had a raised gold band and the top part of it was hollowed out inside, where it was stained red on the inside along with the inscription “ML—RF—2-20-1943”. It was sent to Bob’s wife, Mary Lou, about a year later.²⁹⁵



Image 53- Bob Petroski’s wedding ring.

²⁹³ Letter, “Neil Rasmussen to unknown,” unknown date; and “Graves Registration Report Form,” John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives, Saint Louis, Missouri.

²⁹⁴ “Report of Investigation of Isolated Grave or Unburied Remains,” July 10, 1945, Robert Frank Petroski Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁹⁵ Bob Krausmann, phone interview, notes by conversation, July 14, 2019.; and “Report of Investigation of Isolated Grave or Unburied Remains,” July 10, 1945, Robert Frank Petroski Individual Deceased Personnel File.

Although Bob Petroski, Sam Peak, and Allen Osterberg were identified, the identities of the three other *Spare Charlie* crew members buried in Mareuil-Caubert could not be established as no identification tags were found on them. In addition, other means of identification was almost impossible as their fingers had decomposed and most of their teeth were missing. On 12 July, the six men were buried next to each other in Plot H, Row 1, Graves 12-17 in the St. André de l'Eure cemetery. The three unknown *Spare Charlie* crew members



Image 54- St. André de l'Eure temporary cemetery.

were buried as unknowns and later identified within the next few years.

The government was not sure who the three unknown men were. They knew the men could be Sgts. Welke, Scharff, Rockey, and Simmons. However, Sgt. Scharff was discovered in *Spare Charlie*'s ball turret in 1947, which meant that he was not buried in Mareuil-Caubert. None of the unknown men had their identification tags on them when they were disinterred in June 1945. It was known that Frank Welke's identification tags were taken by the Germans as the Germans used them to report that Sgt. Welke had died. It could be wondered if the Germans also took the tags of the two other men but if so, why did they not report the deaths of the two other men? However, a theory has emerged from the evidence. In July 1944, the personal effects of Murl Simmons were inventoried. Among them were his identification tags.²⁹⁶ This suggests that Murl most likely left his identification tags at base and was not wearing them when he died.

²⁹⁶ "Inventory of Effects," July 10, 1944, Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

As for Max Rockey, his tags were not among his personal effects sent home. Sgt. Rockey's neck was missing when he was disinterred in June 1945. The most likely case is that when *Spare Charlie* blew up and Sgt. Rockey's neck broke, his tags fell off. Max's identification are probably in the Marshes of Épagnette.

The first unknown man to be identified was Frank Welke in April 1946. Initially assigned as X-483, Frank was identified from the "similarity of tooth charts of X-483 and S/Sgt. Welke."²⁹⁷ He was buried in grave 16 in between Max Rockey and Bob Petroski. Max Rockey was identified in September 1947. When Sgt. Rockey was an unknown, he was buried in grave 15 and it was believed that he was X-481(Murl Simmons) because there was a "similarity of tooth charts of X-481 and Sgt. Rockey."²⁹⁸ However, it was realized a year later that the "tooth chart for X-482 compares accurately with tooth chart for S/Sgt Rockey and negative with other members of the crew."²⁹⁹ In addition, "the identity of X-482 as S/Sgt Rockey can be substantiated further by comparison of height and color of hair."³⁰⁰ After he was identified, Max was reinterred in grave 12 and Murl Simmons was reinterred in grave 15 in November 1947.³⁰¹ Sgt. Simmons was not correctly identified until February 1949. Among some reasons for the positive identification of Murl Simmons were "dental characteristics of X-481 are in agreement with those for Sgt. Simmons and negative for all other crew casualties. Height estimate and color of

²⁹⁷ "Corrected Copy of Report of Burial," April 12, 1946, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁹⁸ "Report of Burial," April 12, 1946, Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

²⁹⁹ "Report of Burial," November 4, 1947, Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁰⁰ "Memo to OQMG," September 25, 1947, Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁰¹ "Report of Burial," November 4, 1947, Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File; "Report of Burial," March 30, 1949, Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

hair of X-481 are in agreement with those of Sgt. Simmons” in addition, by 1949 “Sgt. Simmons is the only unresolved casualty from subject aircraft.”³⁰²

The Investigation for and Discovery of Staff Sgt. Robby Scharff

By June 1945, Sgt. Robby Scharff was the only *Spare Charlie* crew member not found. After *Spare Charlie* crashed and the bodies of six crew members were recovered, the B-17 was left in the marsh where it fell. In the summer of 1945, citizens of Épagne and Épagnette reported a strong odor coming from the plane. In addition, they believed the smell was rotten food as they assumed that all of the crew members had been found and buried in Mareuil-Caubert in June 1944. The citizens tried to move the plane but had no success because the plane was in a marsh. In January 1947, the United States sent an investigator, Captain Thomas Zitelli, to examine and view the wreckage. Guided by Pierre Petit, the Mayor of Épagne and Épagnette, Captain Zitelli was taken “to the plane crash by boat. The field was ankle deep in water and mud.” Petit “pointed out the approximate spot that the odor had seemed strongest. I returned to the field several times in the next two weeks waiting for a cold freeze so that a jeep could get to the scene and pull the plane off of the hole.”³⁰³

On 23 January 1947, the ground was hard enough to:

support a jeep, so I attached a strong chain to the jeep and plane and after three hours of pulling, finally was able to remove the portions of the plane that appeared to be over the spot the body might be in. My interpreter and I pumped and bailed the water out of the hole and the head of the deceased was uncovered. His (Robby Scharff) legs were jammed under the lower ball-turret, so we had to pull the turret out before the body could be raised. His head was separated from his body, and was laying on his shoulders. Two identification tags were found around his neck.³⁰⁴

³⁰² “Report of Burial,” March 30, 1949, Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File.

³⁰³ “Narrative,” January 23, 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁰⁴ “Narrative,” January 23, 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File.

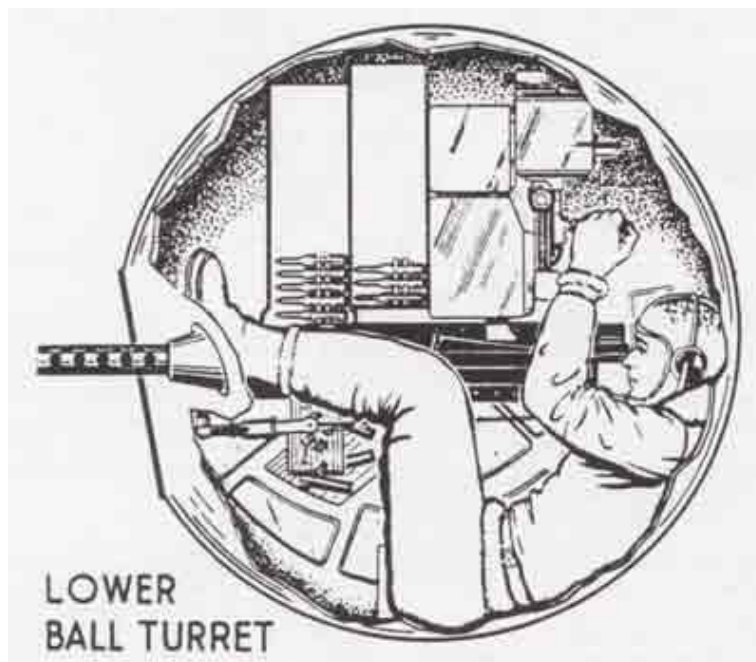


Image 55- A drawing of the ball turret and a ball turret gunner.

After Robby Scharff's remains were discovered and positively identified, his body was taken to the Blosville temporary cemetery, about 200 miles (321 km) west of Abbeville. There, Robby was buried in Plot T, Row 8, Grave 150.³⁰⁵



Image 56- Blosville temporary cemetery.

³⁰⁵ "Disinterment Directive," Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

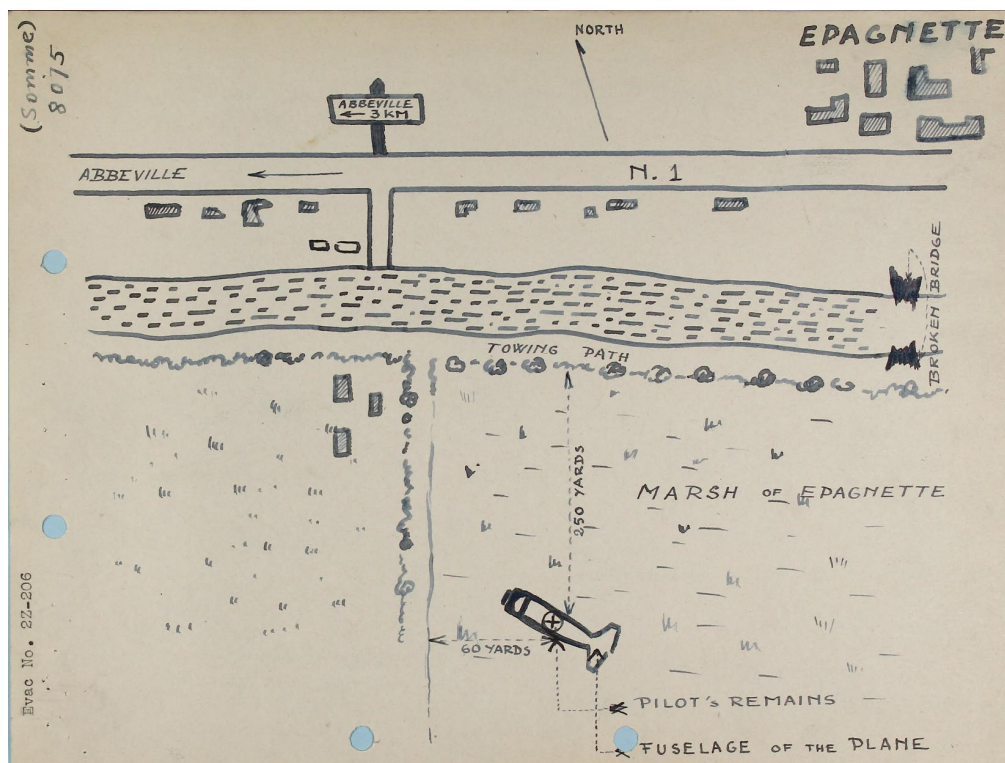


Image 57- A drawing of where *Spare Charlie* crashed and where Robby Scharff was found.



Image 58- Les Marais d'Épagnette (The Marshes of Epagnette) in November 2019. The area where Staff Sgt. Scharff was found and the tail of *Spare Charlie* was pulled out.

Stalag Luft Camps

On 8 July, after a lengthy interrogation at the Dulag Luft Interrogation Center near Frankfurt, Germany, Dick Oberlin was sent to Stalag Luft IV-B, a German Prisoner of War camp for captured flyers in Kiefheide, Germany.³⁰⁶ From the train's cattle cars that took them to the prison area, Dick "had to march to the prison camp."³⁰⁷ Recalling this incident, Dick said:

Approximately two thousand men were moved from Heydekrug, Stalag Luft IV, to Kiefheide Stalag Luft IV. They were unloaded at the railroad station at Kiefheide, which is approximately three kilometers from Stalag Luft IV. These men were all handcuffed and after disembarking, dogs were loosed on them. All the men started to run toward the camp and while running, the German guards some of whom were attached to Stalag Luft IV (Krieg Marines) and some of the personnel attached to Stalag Luft VI, who had escorted the prisoners, set upon them with bayonets and forced them to run the entire distance between the railroad station and the camp. When the men arrived at the camp, I saw many of them with shirts torn from their back because of bayonet wounds. Many were carried to the dispensary located in our lager. One man had fifty-four bayonet wounds.³⁰⁸

It was hard for Dick to keep up due to his wounded leg, but he sped up due to German shepherds nipping at his heels and the threat of being shot or bayoneted from the Germans.³⁰⁹

Dick was imprisoned at Stalag Luft IV from 8 July 1944 to 6 February 1945. Dick remembered that:

This camp was set up to accommodate approximately eight thousand men. However, during the period that I was there, over ten thousand men were imprisoned there. It consisted of four compounds separated by barbed wire. There were ten barracks in the camp. The barracks were one story frame buildings similar to the American barracks. There were eleven rooms which originally were made to accommodate sixteen men. However, during the period that I was there, twenty-four men occupied each room. Eight men found it necessary to sleep on the floor. Straw pads were provided. However, these

³⁰⁶ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³⁰⁷ Allison, "Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination," *The Bryan Times*.

³⁰⁸ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³⁰⁹ Allison, "Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination," *The Bryan Times*.

were filled with lice and fleas. There was one small stove for every room and we were allowed at the beginning of my imprisonment, ten briquettes for fuel but toward the last of my confinement we were cut down to less than four per day. We were issued two blankets, both very light of German Army Issue. The condition of the men was poor due to inadequate food. We were locked up nights and had no access to the compound under penalty of being shot.³¹⁰

In their room of twenty-four men, Dick was elected to get the food. He would sleep by the bucket and retrieve their food. The meal for all the men in the room was a sixteen-quart pail of whatever food was being provided.³¹¹ The prisoners daily rations consisted of a cup of hot water in one-half liter of cabbage soup, and very little bread per day. In addition, they occasionally had some meat. One time they got meat after a horse was killed in a bombing run.³¹² At times, they would eat worms in their soup because if they picked the worms out, then there would be nothing else to eat.³¹³ The men received an average of one-half Red Cross parcel per week. However, they were so weak, they could not carry the packages. In addition, they often split their packages with other men.³¹⁴

Dick remarked that “there was a dispensary in our lager and one main hospital for the entire camp. Captured medics served our needs but there were very little supplies to meet them.”³¹⁵ He continued to suffer from shrapnel in his back, which would fester up at times. One of Dick’s roommates, Tech Sgt. Glen Naze, would heat his penknife, cut the blisters, and

³¹⁰ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³¹¹ Thomas Saylor, “Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946-Glen Naze,” *Oral History Project: World War II Years, 1941-1946*, 2004, 16-17, https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/oral-history_ww2/52/. Permission given to author to use interview.

³¹² Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.; and Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

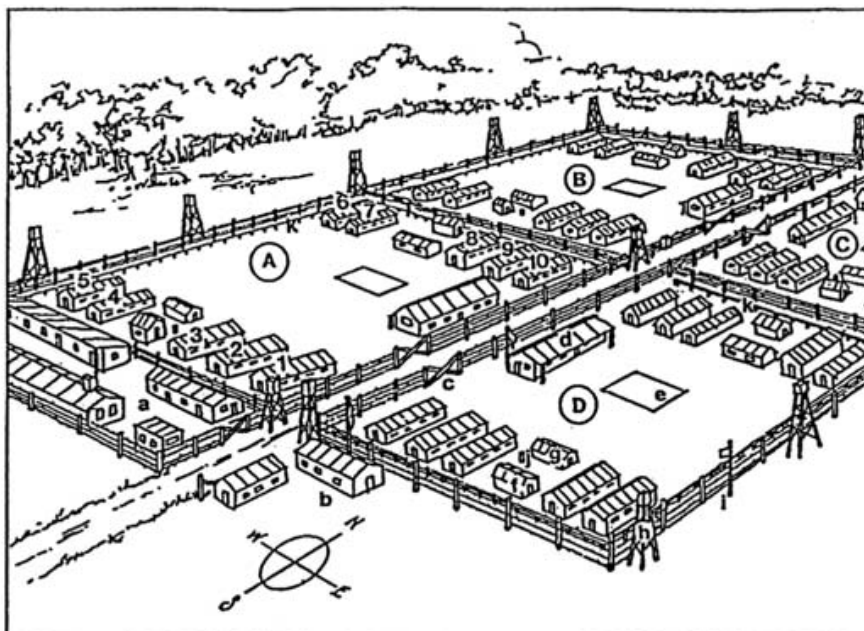
³¹³ Nancy Rawerts, e-mail to author, April 1, 2020.

³¹⁴ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 310; and Saylor, “Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946-Glen Naze,” 17-18.

³¹⁵ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

squeeze out pieces of shrapnel out of Dick's back. Naze believed that he took out at least thirty pieces of shrapnel. There was nothing to kill the infection except the heated knife, so after the shrapnel was squeezed out, Naze would reheat the knife to sear the cut, which was quite painful for Dick.³¹⁶

Stalag Luft IV



I was in A lager in barracks 9

- A,B,C,D,——— compounds or lagers - divided into four self-contained units.
- l——10——— barracks, 10 in each lager, approximately 40x130 ft. containing 10 rooms, designed for 16 men but reached overflowing capacity of 33 men per room
- a——vorlager—— vorlager, an outer camp housing the German administration buildings, hospital and quarters for German personnel
- b——warehouses—— Red Cross parcels were stored there
- c——entrance gate to each lager——just a way in
- d——kitchen?—— contained—2 offices, 2 sleeping rooms and a general purpose room
- e——fire pool—— shallow concrete pool filled with rain water and became stagnant & mosquito infested
- f——wash house—— with an abundant supply of cold water
- g——latrine——— a place that was constantly occupied, a place where rumors were born
- h——guard tower——manned, 24 hours a day with trigger happy Nazis
- i——search light—— to aid the trigger happy Nazis at night
- j——water pump—— situated in close proximity to the latrine
- k——guard rail—— a wooden rail 2 feet high, it encompassed 3 sides of the lager and read, "Anyone touching this rail will be shot."

Image 59- Drawing of Stalag Luft IV. Dick was in Compound A, Barracks Five.

³¹⁶ Saylor, "Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946-Glen Naze," 16-17.

The captain in “charge of the guards was named Pickard. He was in the regular German Army...He was very arrogant and very cruel. On numerous occasions he appeared drunk. He was very quick to fly into temper and seemingly had little control over it.”³¹⁷ It was pretty much routine stuff in the camp, consisting of monotonous rounds of lockups and roll calls. Some mornings after roll call, certain people would be called out. These people were never seen again. Everyone knew that they had been killed.”³¹⁸ To pass time, the men would walk around the camp, play bridge with homemade cardboard cards, and have school in small groups.³¹⁹ The men did not know much about anything going on outside of camp. The only news they were told was when President Roosevelt died in April 1945.³²⁰

On 6 February 1945, due to Allied troops coming closer to the camp, the prisoners at Stalag Luft IV were rounded up by their German guards, who marched them off. Dick reported to American officials that:

Approximately six thousand prisoners of war were marched twelve hundred kilometers from 6 February 1945 to May 1945. During the first fifty-three days we received two Red Cross parcels a piece. Also about two loaves of bread. We did not have any water other than that furnished by mud holes and melted snow. Frequently we had nothing to eat at all during the day. We had meat on one occasion when a horse was killed by a strafing plane. We were quartered in barns and other buildings along our way. The condition of the men was very bad. Many had dysentery and were ill. However, they were forced to march on penalty of being shot. On one occasion, approximately 13 February 1945, we were marched from early morning until 2300 (11 PM) through snow, ice and slush. At 2300 (11 PM) we were told to sleep in an open field. We had no covering other than two rain-soaked blankets and had to huddle together to form some sort of protection against the elements. When we arose the next morning there was about four inches of snow over us and the ground. Our rations for this day were one-half cup of burned macaroni.³²¹

³¹⁷ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³¹⁸ Nancy Rawerts, e-mail to author, April 1, 2020.

³¹⁹ Saylor, “Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946-Glen Naze,” 16-17.

³²⁰ Saylor, 25.

³²¹ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

Dick commented that the march was “right in the middle of winter and winter is just like it is” in Ohio. “We walked for 86 days-nights we slept in barns. You’re tired and cold.”³²² To keep warm, Dick slept with Glen Naze. They put one GI blanket down and slept with the other blanket covered over them.³²³ Dick mentioned that “we lost hundreds and hundreds.” If a man became too weak to keep up on the march, the Germans would take him away. “Soon a gunshot would be heard, and you’d know what happened to him.” One of the German guards asked where Dick was from, and actually knew of West Unity. The German told Dick that he had worked in Toledo before the war, but had returned to Germany after threats to family members there.³²⁴

On 2 May, Dick, Glen Naze, and the other prisoners were liberated by the English Second Army near Gudow, Germany.³²⁵ Dick recalled that “the Germans just threw down their guns, and we were free.” Dick weighed 155 pounds before he was captured but when “I was liberated I weighed 90 pounds, and I was in better shape than many of them.”³²⁶ Dick remembered that “the condition of the men was very poor. Many were exhausted and a number were ill, which illness was aggravated by the conditions existing.”³²⁷

³²² Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

³²³ Saylor, “Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946-Glen Naze,” 16-17.

³²⁴ Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

³²⁵ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³²⁶ Allison, “Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination,” *The Bryan Times*.

³²⁷ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.



Image 60- Map of Prison Camps.

1. Stalag Luft IV-B near Kiefheide, Germany. Camp where Dick Oberlin was imprisoned during the war.
2. Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Germany. Camp where Vic Romasco and Hap Chandler were first held.
3. Stalag Luft VII-A in Moosburg, Germany. Last camp where Vic and Hap stayed and where they were liberated.

The following experiences mentioned below are based off of Hap Chandler’s diary entries, which he wrote while a prisoner of war. It is assumed that Vic Romasco had similar experiences to what Hap wrote since they were imprisoned together until 29 April 1945. On 3 July, at 3:00 am, Hap, Vic, and other prisoners:

left in a bus for Paris to begin our trip into Deutschland. In Paris I could see the “Arc de Triumph”, Eiffel Tower, the side worth cafes, the parks and monuments that I had read

about and seen pictures. All that day we remained in a room in the railroad station. At about 4:30 we were placed on a train to (Frankfurt). The French looked like they really wanted to help me, but would do nothing for me but smile and make the “V” for victory sign with their finger. We were told we would be on a train for 1½ days, so for our food ration we were given a piece of sausage 1 inch in diameter and 5 inches long, and 1.3 loaf of the same terrible bread. We left Paris at nitefall but awoke the next morning to find ourselves still in Paris. The railroad had been bombed so heavily that only one line was still open, so we had to take a road about way. We stayed on the train 4½ days with only that food and I was never so hungry in all my life, and hope I never will be again. One Englishman collapsed from hunger. As we passed through...a Frenchman gave us a pack of cigarettes, it staved off our hunger for a while, and he also gave us a box of sugar which the Germans tried to take from us but were unsuccessful. We passed through...Metz, Nancy, then over the Rhine into Germany and into (Frankfurt) on the Main. The town and railroad yards were in shambles. It did my heart good to see them like this. We were placed on a street car and carried out to Dulag Luft where we were interrogated. After interrogation they told us if we did not answer their questions we would remain there until we did, but still we refused and were shipped out the next day to Wetzlar, and stayed there about 3 hours and left for Sagan and arrived there July 10, 1944.³²⁸

After arriving at Sagan (Stalag Luft III), “We are living in block 36, combine 2-1. Vick and I are still together with 8 other men. We do our own cooking with the German Rations and our Red Cross Parcels, and sleep in 3...bunks” with “paper sacks filled with straw. In this compound there are 11 barracks, 2 cook houses, 1 library, and a theater which is seldom used. We have our own band and conditions are not too bad.”³²⁹



Image 61- Vic Romasco's ticket to the Stalag Luft III theater.

³²⁸ James H. Chandler diary, “It Can Happen,” circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³²⁹ James H. Chandler diary, “It Can Happen,” circa 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

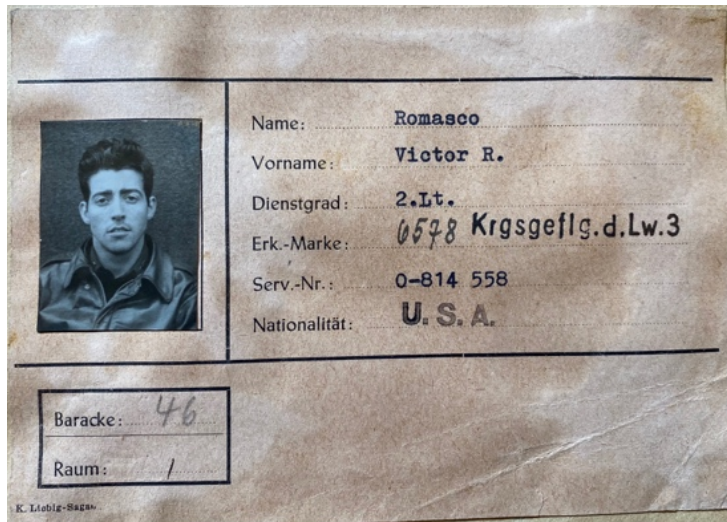


Image 62- Vic Romasco's Stalag Luft III card.

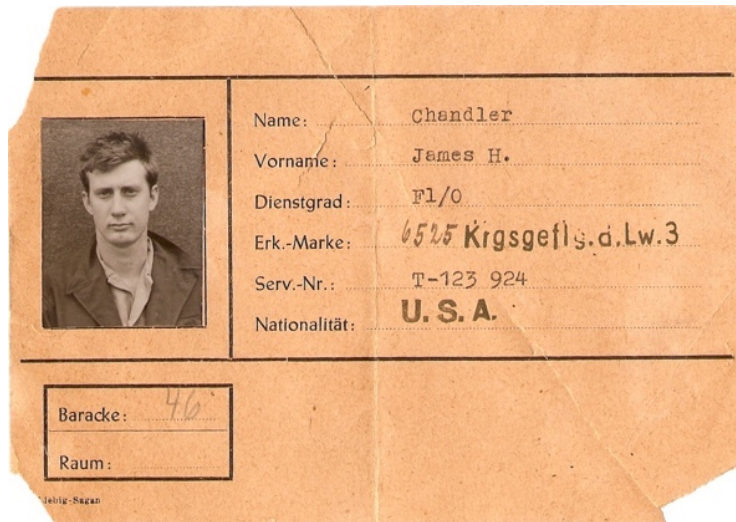


Image 63- Hap Chandler's Stalag Luft III card.



Image 64- Stalag Luft III.

Hap's next diary entry was on 29 November. In the entry, Hap wondered:

Will this War ever end??? I am beginning to doubt it. The Americans went like wild fire through France and stopped at the Rhine, the Russians started through Poland, only to stop a Warsaw. So this is the eve of Thanksgiving!!! What the hell have I to be thankful for except that I am alive, and sometimes I think I would be better off dead. But then, maybe I am dead and this is hell, but if it is, it sure is cold. We have already had two snows this winter. I must have been born under the wrong star. Some of the boys are playing guitars and clarinets and singing, but I am in a bad mood and can't stay here much longer until I go crazy, if I haven't already. Now I know how it is to be hungry, cold, tired, and homesick as hell. I have had no mail and haven't seen a woman for 5 months. This is no life for a young fellow like myself. Before I came here I never smoked except an occasional cigar, and now I am almost a chain smoker. I have made some friends here, also a few enemies.³³⁰

On Christmas Eve, 24 December, Hap reminisced that:

At 9:30 one year ago today, I was just graduating from Hondo as a Flight Officer. At 9:00 six months ago I was floating down in a parachute outside of Tours, France. The invasion then only a few weeks old. Since then our Armies have taken all of France, and Belgium, but seem to be stalemated now at the Siegfried Line. The Germans have started a drive toward the Channel in order to show the Allies their power, in hope of getting an honorable peace, but I would rather stay here six months more than to give them an honorable armistice. And have to have my sons come back over here 25 years from now and do the same thing all over again. To night we had a Christmas program after a fashion. Then Vick went to Midnight Mass, after that we fried some potatoes, sausage, and drank some coffee to issue in Christmas morn. I must say this was a merry Christmas. The first one I have ever spent away from home. I got home last year about 8:00 Christmas night. I hope that I'll never spend another Christmas away from home. I got in bed about 4:00 this morning and the tears were rolling down my face when I got to thinking about home.³³¹

The next day, 25 December, Hap mentioned:

This is the first white Christmas I have ever seen even though the snow did fall back in November, it has been so cold that it hasn't melted off yet. This is the coldest place I have ever seen. It has already been 16 degrees below home and the cold weather isn't even here yet, I am cold all of the time. It hasn't been stove frying now in over a month. I have a slight cold now. I hope the folks at home are alright. This is without a doubt the

³³⁰ James H. Chandler diary, November 29, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³³¹ James H. Chandler diary, December 24, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

worst place I can think of being in on Christmas...This is really a dull place. Nothing to do but read, play cards, or sleep, and that really gets old. I have all of my life lined around boys older than myself. I was flying (operations) before I was 20 yrs old, as an officers. I was the youngest officer in the group. Now I am the youngest one in this camp. After doing all of these things I wonder if I will return to college. I have been so many places and done so many things in my short life that hundreds of thousands of Americans never do. I hope that the war will end and I will be in the States by April 27, 1945 so that I can properly celebrate my 21st birthday. I have planned on that for the last 3 years so I hope that I will be able to carry it out.³³²

On New Year's Eve, Hap and Vic had "a New Years Eve Party. We had the Bard in the block. They introduced another of Roy Cogmans songs, 'I went home last night', but it can't compare with his real hit, 'Don't Move.' I am sure that someday wthey will be hits in the U.S. At the party Vick, Hirsch, Bocge, and myself were all dressed as bar-maids. We sure did look like bags. Nothing much doing."³³³

Twenty days later, 19 January 1945,

the camp is quite excited, on the 13th the Russians began their drive, and since then they have taken Warsaw and a large number of smaller places. They are now fighting in the streets of Krakow and Littmanstadt which is only about 125 miles from here. According to the Geneva Convention of 1929 P.O.W.'s are not supposed to be within 150 miles of the from the front lines, so we are expecting to be moved at anytime. More than likely we will be forced to march out on foot. But I hope not. At last we are back on full parcels, now we will get almost enough to eat.³³⁴

On 27 January, at about 9:30 pm,

the order came from the General to prepare to evacuate by 11:45. We were ready to leave at that time, but didn't move until 6:00 A.M. on the 28th. The snow was about 18 in deep + still snowing. It was about - 6 degrees. We walked about 17 kilometers. We have to carry what little food we have. I carried 1 can of meat, 1¼...Cheese, 1 can jam, 1 can of coffee, 1 lb of sugar, 3½ (ration) D bars. 21 crackers in a blanket roll. Since I left the Goons have only given us ¼ of a loaf of bread. All I have left is ½ (ration) D bars + ¼ lb sugar, and I don't know when we will get any more food from the Goons. We spent the

³³² James H. Chandler diary, December 25, 1944, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³³³ James H. Chandler diary, January 1, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³³⁴ James H. Chandler diary, January 19, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

1st night in a church in Halbau. It was really crowded, more than 2000 men in a small church. I got very little sleep. About 6:00 A.M. on the 28th we moved out. That day we marched about 18 kilometers to a small village just past Friewaldaw. There more than 550 of us spent the night in a barn. Vick, Barnhill, and I slept under the same blanket and kept fairly warm. We rested all the next day, and did we need it. My ankles were quite swollen. On the morning of the 31st before dawn we moved out and marched 32 kilometers to another town and arrived there long after dark. We slept in a pottery factory. Today we are meeting in this factory. We were supposed to catch a train of some kind here but as of yet we don't know for sure. Who knows what the future holds for us? My ankles are swollen double, my food is nearly gone, I have a terrible cold, and I am running a slight temperature. I do not intend to shave until I am ordered to do as. The only thing we can hope for is that the war will be over soon, and if I ever get back to the States I do not intend to ever be hungry or cold again, even in I have to use a gun to do so.³³⁵

On 12 February, Hap wrote in his diary about what occurred during the previous few weeks:

On the 2nd we again laid over in the factory, I really needed it. Up until now we have marched in snow storms and blizzards. My feet were still frozen... On the 4th we marched out headed from (Spremburg). We marched 20 kilo that day and spent the night in a barn. Conditions are still quite bad. We have had only 1 hot meal in 8 days. On the 5th we marched on 19 kilo. Into (Spremburg) out at Wermacht Camp. That night they put us in 40 + 8 box cars, 10 men to a car, which gave each man about 2 sq ft in which to carry all of his belongings, eat, sleep, and so everything else. The condition was slightly alleviated by 14 men swinging hammocks and 4 escaping, I had planned to leave but I was ill most of the 3 nights + days in the box car. We traveled thru (Nuremberg), Augsburg + Munich. And they let us off at Stammlager VII A. The conditions here are horrible, deplorable, and almost unbearable. I have had chills, fever, dysentery, and have been vomiting also. For 3 days + 4 nights we slept in a sort of barn on the floor which was wet + muddy. If a man lives through this without contracting Pneumonia, Influenza, + T.B., it will be a wonder. My feet are always wet. On the night of the 11th they gave me a hot shower, the first one in over 3 weeks, and this was the first time my feet have thawed out and they pained me terrifically. Then they placed me in dirty, wet, filthy, cold barracks. These conditions are quite unbearable. If the war doesn't end soon we shall be lucky to live through it. There are men of almost every nationality in the war here. Americans, Canadians, Poles, Russians, French, English, East Indians, Welsh, Scotch, Australians, Africans, and quite a number of other races. I only wish that I were back

³³⁵ James H. Chandler diary, February 1, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

flying missions again, I would make as many Germans as possible pay for their duds to American soldiers + officers. On my return to the states I plan to visit Capt. White who is in charge of some German P.O.W's and see if I can have something done. In America I have never seen cattle or sheep herded as we Americans have been treated since we left Sagan. I always thought that Sagan was a perfect hell hole, but compared to this place it was closer to Heaven. I have never been in a worse physical, mental, and moral condition in all of my life. I would give \$10,000 to return to the states. I hope I have the strength, + stamina to live through it. The food they give us besides our R.X. Parcels are mostly inedible. I have never seen in all my life gods that were as badly fed. How long can a man live on this?³³⁶



Image 65- Stalag Luft VII-A.

Hap did not like Stalag Luft VII-A. Writing about his feelings about living in the camp,

Hap mentioned:

At 0830 they ordered us out of the barracks, and we refused to leave the barracks and about 30 minutes later they had about 30 more guards with guns and 1 dog. They turned the dog loose in one barracks and he tore a few men's clothing but they failed to hurt any men. They finally need force and got us out of the barracks but we failed to fall in for the count. We all milled around, watched around for about two hours until we had won our points, and the Germans cleaned out the latrine, the incinerators, and gave us an issue of salt. (1 table spoon for 6 men). They also promised a few other things. Whether we will get them or whether we will go on strike again I don't know. But I do know that so long as there is a civilized race of people, it will never be forgotten the indignation and shame

³³⁶ James H. Chandler diary, February 12, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

and suffering forced on the American Officers since leaving Stalag Luft on Jan 28. It will never be forgotten the scandal and the disgrace of treatment of the American Flying Officers. This afternoon the Germans gave all of the Americans and British an opportunity to join the German Army and fight against the Russians. I was lucky enough to get the propaganda sheet for a souvenir.”³³⁷

Hunger was rampant for Hap and his fellow prisoners. On 5 March,

we have started our starvation diet now. Everyone is hungry, no more Red Cross parcels merely because the Germans will not transport them in. We are all very depressed, and in a very bad physical, mental, and moral condition. I haven't (been) too well for the last week so I haven't made any entries in my book...It has been snowing for the last 3 days and everything is cold and sloppy. The coal ration the Germans give us is amazing, we get 1 lump of coal about 4 inches long, 2 inches wide, and 2 inches thick, each day for 108 men. This is for cooking and keeping warm. Well, I guess we can be thankful warm weather is coming soon.³³⁸

Two days later, 7 March, Hap wrote that:

It is now about 12:45 and the Germans haven't brought us any soup at all so for today, and it usually comes in about 11:15. No hot water came in this morning, so I am beginning to think that maybe they intend to starve us to death. It is still amazing and deathly cold. This morning at appell (roll call) one of the men in our 6 man combine passed out and fell in the gravel and cut his face pretty badly. He passed out from lack of vitamins and malnutrition. I am afraid there will be more as the days go by, and also a few more will go crazy. I had rather not go home than to go home crazy like some of these boys. We are Air Corps officers supposed to be the Cream of American Youth, treated like dogs + cattle. Men from the ages of 20 to 28 all looking 8 to 10 years older than we really are. The soup just came in, it is the usually horrible stuff, but we look forward to it as if it were steak. I never thought I would wait for or eat this slop. At home this wouldn't even be fed to the hogs!!!³³⁹

That night, the Germans forced the prisoners to:

stand in mud and water, and it was snowing violently for the hour and 20 minutes we had to stay outside. Everyone's cold is worse, everyone is sniffing and cold, we have had no

³³⁷ James H. Chandler diary, February 20, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³³⁸ James H. Chandler diary, March 5, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³³⁹ James H. Chandler diary, March 7, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

heat in the barracks for over a month. To tell the truth we have not been in heated barracks since we left Sagan. Nearly everyone is out of cigarettes, they are trading and raffling off clothes, watches and everything but food for cigarettes, when I run out I will stop smoking. The Germans say soon we will get no more hot meals because of the coal shortage, and it is still snowing and are we cold. I am really going to eat when I return and make up for all of the things I am missing.³⁴⁰

Three days later, 10 March, Hap wrote that it was:

still raining and sneezing, the weather is horrible. We are still on this starvation diet. I never thought that I would be eating the slop out of a tin can. Every meal I eat is out of a tin can. I will really be glad to eat out of plates again and drink out of glasses instead of cans. I have never known (of living) this bad, 12 men to a bed, 5 cans of soup and 1/7 loaf of bread, 5 potatoes, and a very small slice of blood currant which I wouldn't feed to dogs in the States. The people in the States, very few of them really know what hunger, cold, misery, and suffering really is, but I know that I do. And I never will forget it either.... I am afraid I will be very bitter toward all of these boys who have never been to combat and had easy jobs in the States. I will never be cold or hungry again nor anyone very close to me.³⁴¹

On 14 March,

The weather has finally broke and the sun is shining at least, the moral is higher all around now with the sun shining. Allies crossing the Rhine and a few Red Cross Parcels. I never thought that I would have to see the day that American Officers would be packing up cigarette butts off the ground, and scraping the food containers where everyone can see them. I know that they are no hungrier than the rest of us. There is also quite a lot of food stealing going on among the...officers. We had our last can of coffee staler last night, it is a shame and a disgrace. The Germans have sent out food rations on soup and about ¼ less, as if we weren't hungry enough already. I will predict that the war will end by my birthday at the latest.³⁴²

On 24 March, Hap noted that “a year ago today we landed in the E.T.O, and 9 months ago I came into captivity. It certainly seems longer than that, but that is all...The soup the Germans feed us isn't fit for dogs, since I have been here we have found dead rats + mice in it,

³⁴⁰ James H. Chandler diary, March 8, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴¹ James H. Chandler diary, March 10, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴² James H. Chandler diary, March 14, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

also the jaw bone of some animal that we couldn't recognize. But one thing I can assure you is, that I have never turned down any yet. I can also assure you that horse + mule meat isn't half bad, and I know!!!"³⁴³

Six days later, on 30 March, Hap felt that "the Allies are really ralling now. Yesterday they were in the area of Schweinfurt which is about 175 mile northeast of here. If he would only swing south now we might get liberated, or if the other armies keep ralling the Germans may see that their struggle is useless, and surrender and we could all get started home. That will be the happiest, most wonderful day of my life. We have burned the steps and the floor braces for fire to cook our meals, so if the war doesn't end soon we will have no place to live!!!"³⁴⁴

On 8 April,

Things are starting to happen. They are putting up tents for the influx of Kriegies (prisoners) coming from Nuremburg, since the Allies are so close. Those are 5 tents up here and they are moving out the infected men so they will have room for the officers that are coming here. Nothing much to do here except eat and sleep, and we don't do much eating. We haven't had any soup for the last 2 days at noon but I hope we will start in again tomorrow, but (due) to having so many more men in now than before that the Germans can't take care of them, but I don't guess we will starve. The Allies are less than 100 miles from here now, so it won't be too long until the Allies are here or until we are moved again. I hope the next move is to Marseilles, France, and then to home, but the Germans will more likely move us into Northern Italy, if possible, in order to keep us from being liberated. I often wonder if it would not have been better to have stayed with the ship, then I would be worried about when the war will end, I don't believe it can last too much longer if the Allies and the Russians keep moving. I pray to God that they will and this war soon so I can get home.³⁴⁵

Two days later, on 10 April, Hap noted that:

Conditions here are really bad now. Yesterday they moved in 2500 more officers into the tents that have been set up in...our barracks. This more than doubled the number of men in the small compound. The compound is about the size of 300 4 city lots and contains

³⁴³ James H. Chandler diary, March 24, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴⁴ James H. Chandler diary, March 30, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴⁵ James H. Chandler diary, April 8, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

more than 4500 men. Last night there were men sleeping on the ground outside, in the latrines, on the tables, anywhere they could find room to sleep. It is horrible the way the Germans are treating American officers. I know that they, in the states, are not treating the German P.O.W's this way there. They have cut our food rations again as if they weren't small enough as it is. We had 1/8 of a loaf per man tonight, and no potatoes and we are back on ½ parcels again. I don't know the reason for it though, except that I do know that there are plenty of parcels and the trucks are running every day, unless it is because of so many P.O.W.'s coming in from (Nuremberg) and Vienna.³⁴⁶

On 13 April, Hap wrote that:

Today has been a very black day in more than one way. We received the message that President Roosevelt had died. Honestly, I felt like all the world was gone, so insecure, and the tears welled in the eyes of every man as he heard the bad news. I felt as though someone in my immediate family had died. He was the greatest man of his times, I do not think Truman will be able to fill his shoes. Another bad thing is that it is raining today and a number of men are outside with no shelter to get under. But we also had our good news, the Allies are in Magdeburg, which is on the Elbe River and only 125 kilo from Big B...But it can't come too soon for me.³⁴⁷

Hap Chandler's last diary entry was made on 22 April:

Yesterday things began to happen here. They began moving in all of the P.O.W.'S from (Nuremberg) here and there are almost 18,000 here...I really was glad to see some of old crew 517 again, and from them I heard one of the saddest stories I have heard about the war. Also a number of boys came in that I had known before. The fortunes of war, a few days ago I was feeling very sorry for the boys that had to sleep outside and now I am among them. C'est La Guerre. Out of the crew at Alex 50 % are here and about 40% are dead. It seems a pity to hear of such fine boys having given their lives, but maybe they are better off than us!!! Who knows.³⁴⁸

On 29 April, seven days after Hap's last diary entry:

At 10:00, a P-51 buzzed the camp at 100 feet. P-47s divebombed Moosburg, only a mile away. We could hear gunfire just down the street from our main gate, and some of our guys were hit. At 11:45, several large American tanks and some line soldiers arrived at our main gate. German soldiers were at the other end of the camp, and a small skirmish erupted. A camp officer named Gladovitch...ran out waving a white flag. At 12:42, the

³⁴⁶ James H. Chandler diary, April 10, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴⁷ James H. Chandler diary, April 13, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

³⁴⁸ James H. Chandler diary, April 22, 1945, in possession of Harris Chandler.

American flag was raised over the town of Moosburg. A few minutes later, we raised the American flag over the main gate of Stalag VIIA!³⁴⁹

After 309 days of being prisoners of war, Vic and Hap were finally free. When they were leaving the camp, Hap was asked if he wrote about his experiences in his diary and if so, the government told him they would hold it for him. Hap stuffed the diary in his jacket and lied that he did not have it.³⁵⁰ After the prisoners were liberated, they were sent to Camp Lucky Strike, near Janville, France. At the “cigarette camp,” the liberated men were processed before going back home.³⁵¹ Vic and Hap did not go to Camp Lucky Strike. Instead, they went to the recently liberated Paris.³⁵²

The Lives of Vic Romasco, Hap Chandler, and Dick Oberlin After Liberation

In July 1945, Vic married his fiancée, Muriel, in Uxbridge, Massachusetts.³⁵³ After meeting on a blind date, Hap married Alice Barham.³⁵⁴ Vic and Hap had children and grew their families with their wives. Hap, a charismatic man and a good storyteller, worked in sales following the war.³⁵⁵ In October 1945, Vic resumed working for Whitin Machine Works as an expeditor. In spring 1965, after several promotions, Vic was appointed Production Control Manager of the Whitinsville Division of the company.³⁵⁶ Both Hap and Vic did not really talk

³⁴⁹ Alexander Jefferson and Lewis H. Carlson, “Stalag VIIA and Liberation,” in *Red Tail Captured, Red Tail Free: Memoirs of a Tuskegee Airman and POW, Revised Edition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 114.

³⁵⁰ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 15, 2020.

³⁵¹ “The Cigarette Camps: The U.S. Army Camps in the Le Havre Area,” SkyLighters, accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.skylighters.org/special/cigcamps/cmplstrk.html>.

³⁵² Cheryl Herzog, interview by author, in person, February 2, 2020.

³⁵³ Society Editors, “July Gatherings,” *News From Home* 3, no.9 (July 1945), accessed January 24, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/newsfromhome1942keel/page/n325/mode/2up>.

³⁵⁴ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 15, 2020.

³⁵⁵ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 15, 2020.

³⁵⁶ “Organization Changes,” *The Whitin Profile*, April-May 1965, accessed January 24, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/whitinspindle1965unse/page/n47/mode/2up>.

about the war or their Peak crew members, probably because both subjects were too painful to reminisce about. Although at times, Hap would mention his camp experiences when his children would complain about food.³⁵⁷ One time, he said he would eat the family dog if the worst came to the worst. He told his children that one time, he had been so hungry while a prisoner that he ate a cat found in camp.³⁵⁸

Vic and Hap remained friends following their liberation. They would talk once a year on 29 April, the anniversary of their liberation. Hap would call Vic up and begin the conversation by asking “do you know what today is?”³⁵⁹ Vic died from a heart attack on 23 September 1969 in Whitinsville, Massachusetts.³⁶⁰ On 29 April 1970, Hap called the Romasco home and was informed Vic had died. Hap began crying and when his children asked him why he was crying, Hap told them “my best friend from the war, he’s dead.”³⁶¹ Hap died on 26 June 2002 in Memphis, Tennessee.³⁶² Vic and Hap’s daughters carry on the tradition of calling each other on the anniversary of their father’s liberation.³⁶³

On 24 June 2017, the seventy-third anniversary of *The Betty L* getting shot down, the town of Vallères held a ceremony and established a memorial in honor of *The Betty L* crew.³⁶⁴

³⁵⁷ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019.

³⁵⁸ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, March 15, 2020.

³⁵⁹ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019.

³⁶⁰ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019; and “Victor Roger Romasco,” Ancestry, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/162275453/person/252113532083/facts>.

³⁶¹ Ali Powell, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 2, 2019.

³⁶² “James Harris Chandler,” FindaGrave, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11898245/james-harris-chandler>.

³⁶³ Cheryl Herzog, interview by author, in person, February 2, 2020.

³⁶⁴ “B-17G ‘The Betty-L’ 24 Juin 2017- Inauguration de la Stele du souvenir,” Les Ailes du Pacifique en plus petit, June 26, 2017, accessed March 28, 2019, <https://lesailesdupacifique.blogspot.com/2017/06/b-17g-betty-l-24-juin-2017-inauguration.html>.

They invited the families of the crew and a few of them including some of Vic and Hap's daughters came. This marked the first time Hap and Vic's children met in person. They also met a man who witnessed *The Betty L* getting shot down.³⁶⁵

Dick Oberlin returned to the United States on 11 June 1945.³⁶⁶ Being reunited with his family was "a thrill for me, I'd never seen my daughter...She was 10 ½ months old. She saw me and she walked over to me, and said, 'Daddy.'"³⁶⁷ Even sixty years after coming home, Dick would still tear up reminiscing of that moment.

After he returned home, Dick wrote the families of his crew members to inform them about what happened to their soldier.

In July 1945, he wrote Minnie Rockey:

Max and I were very close friends as I know that he has mentioned me before in his letters. We were always laughing, joking, and having a good time when we weren't flying. He told me all about you folks and we had plans of visiting each other when we returned...It was hard to write this, but being the only living member of my crew I made up my mind to do my best. I am feeling fine now and sure am happy to get home again. Sure wish the other boys could have come back too.³⁶⁸

Years later in 2005, one of Max's sisters, Betty, talked to Dick on the phone and "had several conversations since and now consider themselves friends."³⁶⁹ It was hard for Dick to write the letters to the families as he had to relieve the trauma of being shot down and losing his friends



Image 66- Memorial in Vallères for *The Betty L* crew.

³⁶⁵ Cheryl Herzog, interview by author, in person, February 2, 2020.

³⁶⁶ Oberlin, Richard D.- File Number C2017173, Box 29, Entry 139, World War II Prisoners of War, Missing in Action, and Detainee Intelligence Files, Record Group 319.

³⁶⁷ Allison, "Milk Run is ordeal of death, determination," *The Bryan Times*.

³⁶⁸ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

³⁶⁹ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother."

and crew members. Four months after writing a letter to the Rokey family, Dick wrote Hannah Osterberg:

I'm terribly sorry I haven't written to you sooner and that I have to write you this kind of letter. I seem to write one of these letters and then I can't seem to get ahold of myself for a couple of weeks to write another. Will try to tell you a few things that you probably want to know. I am the only living member of the crew that Allen was a member so it is my obligation to do this for you folks who had such sorrow... Well that is a sad story that I hated to tell you.³⁷⁰

Living in West Unity the rest of his life, Dick and his wife had two more children. For ten years, Dick was employed by the A&P Tea Company in Bryan, Ohio, where he worked as a meat cutter and produce manager.³⁷¹ Dick then worked for the United States Postal Service, serving as the Postmaster of the West Unity Post Office. In 1983, after 30 years of service, Dick retired.³⁷² In 2004, Dick was named West Unity's Citizen of the Year.³⁷³ Dick remembered his Peak crew members, the 22 June 1944 mission, and his prisoner of war experience the rest of his life. He talked to groups and his crew member's families about his war experiences.

Like Hap Chandler and Vic Romasco, Dick remained close with his Stalag Luft buddy, Glen Naze. When Naze and his wife "were on vacation (always driving), they would stop in Ohio to see Dick. In 2006, Naze began "calling Dick every Sunday evening. They may have missed a few, but not many. They talked about what they were currently doing, not ever about the past."³⁷⁴ On 31 December 2012, Dick died in Toledo, Ohio.³⁷⁵ Naze "was so sad... he had

³⁷⁰ Letter, "Richard Oberlin to Hannah Osterberg," November 1, 1945, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

³⁷¹ Demaris Rice, "Richard Oberlin is Citizen of the Year," *The Bryan Times*, November 10, 2004, accessed September 22, 2019, <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10604-908964/the-bryan-times?s=310818851&snippet=4f4849becc1b671f6d0cfed47d9a5330>.

³⁷² "Richard Delno 'Dick' Oberlin," FindaGrave, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/117202208/richard-delno-oberlin>.

³⁷³ Rice, "Richard Oberlin is Citizen of the Year," *The Bryan Times*.

³⁷⁴ Nancy Rawerts, e-mail to author, April 1, 2020.

³⁷⁵ "Richard Delno 'Dick' Oberlin," FindaGrave.

now outlived everyone that he knew from prison camp. He really wanted to go to the funeral but neither him” or his wife’s “health allowed it.”³⁷⁶ In memory of Dick, Naze donated money to the American Ex-Prisoners of War’s General Fund.³⁷⁷

The War Department Regrets to Inform You

On Thursday 7 July, two weeks after they were shot down, the *Spare Charlie* crew member’s next of kin were notified that their soldier “has been reported Missing in Action since Twenty Two June over France.”³⁷⁸ Within the next few weeks, articles were published about each man missing in their local newspapers. In the article about Robby Scharff, it was also mentioned that “Robert’s family hope for his safe return and feel good news is ‘right around the corner.’”³⁷⁹

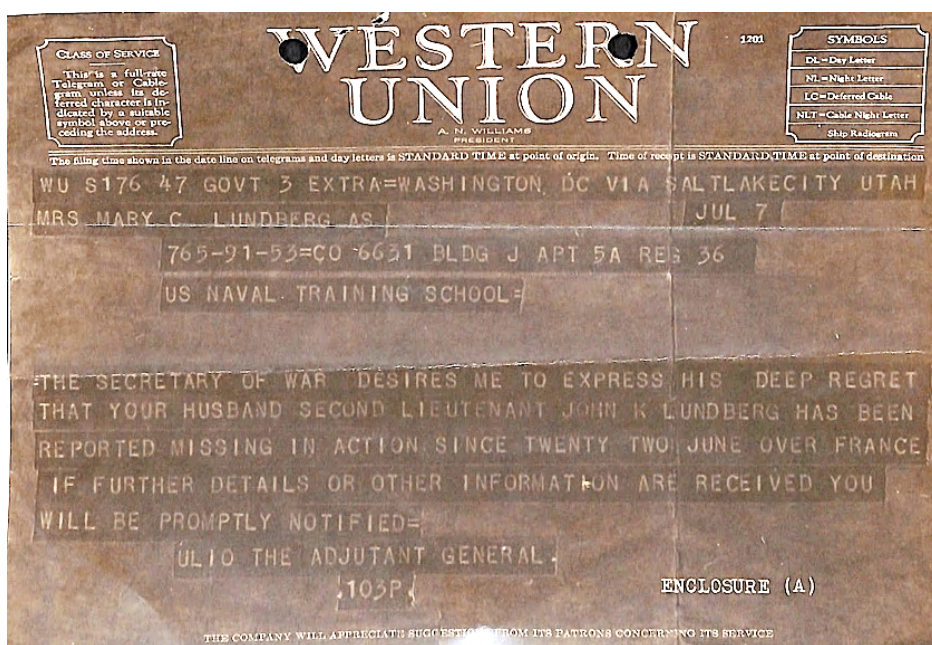


Image 67- Missing In Action telegram sent to Mary Catherine Lundberg, wife of Jack Lundberg.

On 29 July, the families received a letter with more information. The following is from the letter Mary Catherine Lundberg received, but the wording in the letter was the same in all the letters sent to the *Spare Charlie* families.

³⁷⁶ Nancy Rawerts, e-mail to author, April 1, 2020.

³⁷⁷ “General Fund,” *Ex-Pow Bulletin: The Official Voice of the American Ex-Prisoners of War* 70, no.5/6 (May/June, 2013): 31, <https://www.axpow.org/bulletins/may-jun13.pdf>.

³⁷⁸ Telegram, “J.A. Ulio to Mary Catherine Lundberg,” July 7, 1944, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

³⁷⁹ “Missing on 23rd Bombing Mission,” unknown newspaper.

Further information dated June 22nd has just been received which indicates that Lieutenant Lundberg was a crew member of a B-17 (Flying Fortress) bomber which departed from England on a bombardment mission to Abbeville, France on June 22nd. Full details are not available, but the report indicates that during this mission, about 7:00 p.m., southeast of Boulogne, France, your husband's plane sustained damage from enemy anti-aircraft fire and left the formation. The crew members of accompanying planes were unable to furnish any further details relative to the disappearance of this Fortress. Due to necessity for military security it is regretted that the names of those who were in the plane and the names and addresses of their next of kin may not be furnished at the present time. The great anxiety caused you by failure to receive more details concerning your husband's disappearance is fully realized. Please be assured that any additional information received will be conveyed immediately to you by The Adjutant General or this headquarters.³⁸⁰

Grace Lundberg, mother of Jack, wrote a poem after receiving the Missing In Action telegram. She felt that news of his death would follow.

Sitting here Jack dear
Bring memories clear
Of all the days we spent
Together with enjoyment.
Then war came, you said farewell
To Father Mother sister brother
Two years passed on, I heard the bell
Messenger, said he, sad news mother
Missing in action, Tears are falling
Hearts are breaking, while I hear the news
Ringing in my ears. Sail On Sail on.

One year more and I too know
The deadening ache to me that grows –
Yet Jack We love you, more and more
Dad, Brother Sister and I
Kneel in prayer and pray
Silence will never dim your step
Don't let him down, Oh God
Bring peace and joy³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Letter, "E.A. Bradunas to Mary Catherine Lundberg," July 29, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

³⁸¹ Poem, Grace Lundberg, circa July 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

There was not much correspondence from the government to the *Spare Charlie* families between July and October, except for two occasions. On 15 July, the Germans reported information that included details about the *Spare Charlie* crash, that Dick Oberlin was a prisoner of war, and that Frank Welke was killed.³⁸² But, the Germans did not report what happened to Frank's body or if he was even buried. The government notified Frank's parents of his death by 5 August and that was the only information the Welke family had.³⁸³ Months later, on 6 May 1945, the government wrote to the Welke family that captured German "records indicate that on 22 June 1944, his B-17 (Flying Fortress) bomber was shot down near Abbeville, France. These records do not indicate the time and place of interment...May the knowledge of your son's valuable contribution to our cause sustain you in your bereavement."³⁸⁴ Social work scholar Joan Beder noted that:

deaths in which there are no remains to bury and no definitive confirmation of death can extend the grieving period for mourners, can produce complicated or pathological responses to bereavement, and can cause prolonged family and personal anguish...For many, the ability to move into and beyond the pain of a loved one's death is seriously compromised by the lack of confirming evidence of their loss and the ritual of a funeral.³⁸⁵

In September 1944, Marion Welke, Frank's mother, wrote the government "am writing to find out if you can tell me anything about my son's effects...Any information will be greatly appreciated."³⁸⁶ In reply, Marion was told that "the Army Effects Bureau has not yet received

³⁸² Kampfflugzeug Unterlagen (KU) 2351 Report, July 15, 1944.

³⁸³ "Announce Death Of Frank Welke," *Nassau Daily Review-Star*, August 5, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, <http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83031113/1944-08-05/ed-1/seq-15.pdf>.

³⁸⁴ Letter, "Leon W. Johnson to Frank Welke Sr.," May 6, 1945, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁸⁵ Joan Beder, "Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help," *Families in Society* 83, no. 4 (Jul, 2002): 400, <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.2>.

³⁸⁶ Letter, "Marion Welke to unknown," September 16, 1944, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

any of you son's property."³⁸⁷ On 6 March 1945, Marion again wrote the government "can you at this date, give me any information about my son's personal effects?"³⁸⁸ The Welke family did not receive Frank's effects until mid-summer 1945, a time during which Frank was still not identified. Marion probably wanted to have Frank's possessions because they could have been confirming evidence that Frank had died. Perhaps, when she finally received them, she was able to have some closure about Frank's death.

Late in August 1944, "Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rockey, whose son, Sgt. Max Rockey, was reported missing in action several weeks ago, have received word from the government that Sgt. Rockey is now believed to be either a prisoner of war or being taken care of by people friendly to the Allies. The plane in which he was reported has been found, and had not crashed. Bodies of other members of the crew were found, the parents were informed."³⁸⁹ It is not known why this information was given to the Rockey family, but it contained false information. First, Max was killed on 22 June. Second, the plane did indeed crash. Third, in August 1944, Abbeville was still occupied by the Germans, so how did the government receive this information? Regardless, this false hope given by the government must have played a role in the grief felt by the Rockey family when they were informed that Max had indeed died on 22 June.

There is no doubt that the *Spare Charlie* families were in a constant state of anxiety and uneasiness about their soldier during this time of ambiguity. In September 1944, Grace Lundberg wrote to her son Chick "I worry so about Jack. From the time he went in, I knew oh God yes I

³⁸⁷ Letter, "A.F. Timms to Marion Welke," October 4, 1944, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁸⁸ Letter, "Marion Welke to Quartermaster Department," March 6, 1945, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

³⁸⁹ "Springport Flier Now Believed Safe," *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, August 19, 1944, accessed July 18, 2019, www.newsbank.com.

knew and had a most deep hurt inside me...sometimes I feel one more gulp and my life would gulp right on out.”³⁹⁰ Beder writes that:

in situations of ambiguous loss (situation that occurs when there is no verification of a missing person’s status), it is the uncertainty of the death that makes this the most distressing of all types of human losses. In such situations, grievors are more prone to feeling helpless, and more prone to depression, anxiety, and relationship strain...The third explanation for feelings of depression and strain reflects the fact that the family is denied the rituals that attend death in their culture. There cannot be a funeral or other ritual as there is no body; thus the usual rituals afforded a death do not legitimize the experience of the loss...the individual’s “assumptive world is violently shattered” when there is sudden, unexpected death. Finally, for those who are caught in ambiguous loss, do not have the closure that other deaths afford and the uncertainty becomes physically and emotionally exhausting.³⁹¹

Undoubtedly, the families most likely felt worry about their soldier, such as Grace Lundberg did, with the lack of information and uncertainty of what happened to him and if he was alive.

On 18 October, the government wrote the *Spare Charlie* next of kin that “for reasons of military security it has been necessary to withhold the names of the air crew members who were serving with your” soldier “at the time he was reported missing. Since it is now permissible to release this information we are inclosing a complete list of names of the crew members. The names and addresses of the next of kin of the men are also given in the belief that you may desire to correspond with them.”³⁹² At least four families (Lundberg, Oberlin, Osterberg, and Peak) communicated with each other after receiving this information.

Although Allen Osterberg was identified in September 1944, the government wrote Hannah Osterberg in January 1945 that:

It distresses me to have to inform you that no report of any change in his status has yet been received. If at the expiration of twelve months a missing person has not been

³⁹⁰ Letter, “Grace Lundberg to Chick Lundberg,” September 12, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller.

³⁹¹ Beder, “Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help,” 401.

³⁹² Letter, “Clyde V. Finter to Hannah Osterberg,” October 18, 1944, in possession of Delta County Historical Society.

accounted for, all available information regarding the circumstances attending his disappearance is reviewed...at which time a determination of his status is made. Before the twelve months' period has elapsed all data or evidence obtainable from any source which may be of any significance in the case is carefully considered. Occasionally relatives and friends of missing personnel receive communications containing pertinent and reliable information not officially reported to the War Department. If you have received such communications and will send them or photostatic copies of them to this office, it will be greatly appreciated. After their review they will be returned to you if you so desire. The War Department is mindful of the anguish you have so long endured and you may rest assured that, without any further request on your part, you will be advised promptly if additional information concerning your loved one is received. Should it become necessary to establish his status in accordance with the provisions of the law cited, you will be notified of the findings shortly after the expiration of the twelve months' absence. You have my heartfelt sympathy in your sorrow and it is my earnest hope that the fortitude which has sustained you in the past will continue through this distressing period of uncertainty.³⁹³

Between December 1944 to April 1945, the next of kin of the *Spare Charlie* crew members received letters from the government about their soldier's Air Medal and "since these awards cannot be formally presented to your" soldier "at this time, the decorations will be presented to you."³⁹⁴ In February 1945, Hannah Osterberg and Mary Lou Petroski were awarded Allen and Bob's Air Medals at Selfridge Field, Michigan. As seen below, even though they were probably proud of their soldier, they equally look quite sad. Perhaps receiving the Air Medal was even more of a reminder to both women that their soldier was still missing and they were living with uncertainty of whether he was alive or not.

³⁹³ Letter, "J.A. Ulio to Hannah Osterberg," January 26, 1945, in possession of Kay Shapy.

³⁹⁴ Letter, "Robert H. Dunlop to Viola Berte," December 23, 1944, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.



Image 68- Hannah Osterberg receiving Allen's Air Medal.



Image 69- Mary Lou Petroski receiving Bob's Air Medal.

The *Spare Charlie* families were notified of their soldier's death at different times. Since Sam Peak and Allen Osterberg were identified in September 1944, their families were notified of their deaths in late April 1945.³⁹⁵ The other six crew members were declared dead on 23 June 1945 because "in view of the fact that twelve months had expired without the receipt of evidence to support a continued presumption of survival, the War Department terminated such absence by a presumptive finding of death."³⁹⁶ In an attempt to console the families, the government added in letters to the families that:

I realize the burden of anxiety that has been yours since he was first reported missing in action and deeply regret the sorrow this later report brings you. May the knowledge he made the supreme sacrifice for his home and country be a source of sustaining comfort. My sympathy is with you in this time of great sorrow."³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Telegram, "J.A. Ulio to Hannah Osterberg," April 23, 1945, in possession of Kay Shapy; and "Leesville Pilot Killed in Action," *The Times*, May 4, 1945, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/220898027>.

³⁹⁶ Letter, "Unknown to Mary Catherine Lundberg," August 18, 1945, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

³⁹⁷ Letter, "J.A. Ulio to Hannah Osterberg," April 26, 1945, in possession of Kay Shapy.

When the Lundberg family was notified of Jack's death in June 1945, "at that time there was to it as there were no details at all, just that he had died."³⁹⁸ A memorial service and requiem mass was held for Jack a few weeks later on Thursday 12 July in the Cathedral of the Madeline, where Jack and Mary had married a year and a half before. Mary flew from her station in Alameda, California, to attend the services.³⁹⁹ It is speculated that the other *Spare Charlie* families probably held some type of memorial service for their soldier after receiving news confirming his death.

After being notified of the government's presumptive finding of Robby's death, Barbara Scharff desired to get a flag. She wrote the government "in the book...they say if your son was killed in action you will receive a flag. We haven't received an application or form to fill out as yet and is it may have been overlooked I thought to remind you."⁴⁰⁰ The government replied to tell her that:

The policy of the War Department regarding the issuance of flags is to furnish a regulation flag at this time to the legal next of kin of military personnel whose remains have not been recovered or were buried at seas. After the cessation of hostilities when the remains of our military personnel which are buried overseas are returned to the United States for final interment, the flag which will drape the casket containing the remains will be presented to the legal next of kin...Since a Report of Burial for your son has not yet been received in this office, it will be necessary for an investigation to be made concerning the recovery of the remains before the proper decision can be made regarding the furnishing of a flag...Please accept my sincere sympathy in the loss of your son.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ Autobiography of Charles O'Malley Lundberg, transcript, 1988-2007, 21, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/KWCT-D8M>.

³⁹⁹ "Rites Set for Soldier Killed in France," *Salt Lake Telegram*, July 2, 1945, accessed November 9, 2018, <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s62v3qgv>.

⁴⁰⁰ Letter, "Barbara Scharff to unknown," July 13, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁰¹ Letter, "C. C. Pierce to Barbara Scharff," July 30, 1945, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Barbara probably wanted to receive the flag as it was essentially a confirmation that her son had died, even though no one knew where he was buried at the time. She might have also wanted the flag as it was a symbol of the sacrifice Robby made.

Although Robby Scharff was declared dead with the rest of the crew in June 1945, he had still not been found by then. After he was found and identified in January 1947, his death date was permanently changed to 22 June 1944. In June 1947, the Scharff family was notified that Robby had been found, identified, and was buried in the Blosville temporary cemetery.⁴⁰² It was probably also at this time that Barbara finally received a flag.

In 1946, 1947, and 1949, the government wrote to the families of the *Spare Charlie* crew members buried in the St. André de l'Eure temporary cemetery with their burial locations in the cemetery. It took a few years for some families to receive this notification because of the long identification process for Frank Welke, Max Rockey, and Murl Simmons. After Max Rockey was initially identified, the government wrote his parents that:

your son's body has been recovered and buried in a United States Military Cemetery in France...I realize how futile any words of mine may be to assuage your grief but I trust that the knowledge of your son's heroic sacrifice in action may be a source of sustaining comfort to you in your sorrow.⁴⁰³

One year after sending the first initial letter to the families, the government sent another letter with a photo of the cemetery along with the statement:

It is my sincere hope that you may gain some solace from this view of the surroundings in which your loved one rests. As you can see, this is a place of simple dignity, neat and well cared for. Here, assured of continuous care, now rest the remains of a few of those heroic dead who fell together in the service of our country.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² "Battle Casualty Report," June 6, 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁰³ Letter, "Edward F. Witsell to Fred and Minnie Rockey," August 26, 1946, Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁰⁴ Letter, "G.A. Horkan to Mary Catherine Lundberg," May 5, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives, Saint Louis, Missouri.

Permanent Burials

Following the end of the First World War, President Warren Harding signed legislation that created the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). The agency was responsible for constructing monuments honoring American forces. In 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order that transferred the responsibility for the management and maintenance of permanent cemeteries overseas to ABMC.⁴⁰⁵ In 1947, the United States began the process of selecting fourteen permanent American cemeteries whose locations corresponded with the course of military operations. The St. Laurent Cemetery (now known as the Normandy American Cemetery) was formed through the consolidation of then temporary cemeteries, including St. André de l'Eure, in the region established during Operation Overlord and the campaign inland.⁴⁰⁶

During the planning and process of creating the Normandy American Cemetery in 1947, the government reached out to the next of kin asking if they desired to keep their loved one buried in France or to bring him home, free of charge. The next of kin were selected by their soldiers and were typically a spouse or parent. If a widowed spouse remarried, the next of kin would change to the soldier's parents or siblings. Out of the eight *Spare Charlie* next of kin, five chose to keep their soldier buried in France, while three selected to bring their soldier home. The next of kin's reasons and decisions to bring their soldier home or keep him in France is discussed below.

In August 1947, Robby Scharff's mother, Barbara, wrote the government, "I would like to let my Boy rest in peace where he is. However should there be a chance for me to go to the U.S. Military Cemetery Blosville to visit his grave I would get great satisfaction, so please, if the

⁴⁰⁵ "History," American Battle Monuments Commission, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history>.

⁴⁰⁶ American Battle Monuments Commission, *Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial* (Washington, DC: American Battle Monuments Commission, nd), 7, <https://www.abmc.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Normandy%20AC%20Cemetery%20Booklet.pdf>.

War Dept. has such an arrangement let me know.”⁴⁰⁷ In response to her query, the government informed Barbara that “I regret I must inform you that the United States Military Cemetery, Blosville, France, has not been designated as a permanent American Military Cemetery for our heroic dead of World War II.”⁴⁰⁸

The next month, Barbara changed her mind and decided to have Robby brought home and buried in Farmingdale, New York. When she notified the government of this decision, Barbara also wrote “can you tell me if I will be notified when the Body of my boy arrives and can the family attend the burial at the National Cemetery at Farmingdale, N.Y.”⁴⁰⁹ The next year, Barbara informed the government that she bought a plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, located in Bronx, New York, and wanted Robby “there so that one day I may be buried with him.”⁴¹⁰ After departing Cherbourg, France, on 26 April 1948, Robby’s body was transported to the United States on the USS *Lawrence Victory*.⁴¹¹ On 13 May, Robby arrived in New York and a private burial was held for him in Woodlawn Cemetery.⁴¹² Barbara was buried with Robby after she died in 1964.



Image 70- Robby’s grave at Woodlawn Cemetery, where he is buried with his mother Barbara. “Beloved Son” is inscribed above his name.

⁴⁰⁷ Letter, “Barbara Scharff to United States War Department,” circa August 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁰⁸ “Correspondence Action Sheet,” circa July 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁰⁹ “Request For Disposition of Remains,” September 12, 1947, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹⁰ Letter, “Barbara Scharff to United States War Department,” April 13, 1948, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹¹ “Record of Custodial Transfer,” Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹² “Receipt of Remains,” May 13, 1949, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Although it is not known why Allen Osterberg's mother, Hannah, chose to bring him home, it can be surmised that she just wanted her son home. One of Allen's nieces remarked that "my grandmother and another uncle passed away in California, and they were both brought back home to Michigan. Allen is resting by his parents and three siblings. It was just what the family did. There are seven family members in total resting together."⁴¹³ On 14 October 1946, Hannah visited her local office of veterans' affairs and "requested that we make the proper contacts for the purpose of having her son's remains returned to this country from the US Military Cemetery St. Andre, near Paris, France."⁴¹⁴

After departing from Cherbourg, France, on the USAT *Haiti Victory*, Allen's body arrived home in Escanaba on 24 May 1949.⁴¹⁵ The following day, Allen was buried in the Osterberg family plot in Gardens of Rest cemetery, located in Wells, Michigan. Full military services were held, with the Gladstone, Rock, and Escanaba American legion posts participating.⁴¹⁶ During the service, "Rock of Ages" and "God's Way Is the Best Way" were sung by C. Arthur Anderson.⁴¹⁷



Image 71- Allen's grave in the Osterberg family plot at the Gardens of Rest Cemetery.

⁴¹³ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, November 14, 2019.

⁴¹⁴ Letter, "Robert E. LeMire to Quartermaster General," October 14, 1946, Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹⁵ "Record of Custodial Transfer," Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky; and "Receipt of Remains," May 24, 1949, Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹⁶ "Body of Lt. Osterberg Returned For Reburial," *The Escanaba Daily Press*, May 1949.

⁴¹⁷ "Obituary," unknown newspaper, 26 May 1949, from Kay Shapy.

It is surmised that the Welke family felt it best that their son be brought home and probably because it would give them closure over Frank's death. In February 1947, Frank Welke Sr. wrote a letter to the government asking "to get more information about when my son will be sent home from France."⁴¹⁸ He chose to bring Frank Jr. home in June 1947. On 4 April 1949, Frank Sr. again wrote a letter to the government "please let me hear from you as to when I can expect his remains."⁴¹⁹ Twenty-two days later, Frank's remains departed from Cherbourg, France, on the USAT *Haiti Victory* for New York.⁴²⁰

The *Haiti Victory* arrived a few weeks later and Frank's funeral was held at 3 pm on 25 May 1949 at Greenfield Cemetery in Uniondale, New York. Frank Sr. did not wish to have burial honors at Frank's funeral in Uniondale and the flag was presented to Frank Sr. at home by the escort of Frank's body.⁴²¹ After Frank's parents passed away, they were buried next to him.



Image 72- Frank's grave at Greenfield Cemetery.

In December 1945, Juanita Peak, Sam Peak's widow, married Louis Epplett.⁴²² The government, not aware of this, sent Juanita, Sam's next of kin, the form to decide where Sam would be buried. On 19 June 1947, Juanita wrote the government "I understand I am not the next

⁴¹⁸ Letter, "Frank Welke Sr. to Quartermaster General," February 6, 1947, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴¹⁹ Letter, "Frank Welke Sr. to Thomas B. Larkin," April 4, 1949, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁰ "Record of Custodial Transfer," Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²¹ "Escort of Deceased Personnel Report," May 25, 1949, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²² "Dr Louis Edward Epplett," FindAGrave, accessed November 13, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11128772/louis-edward-epplett>.

of kin since my re-marriage” and notified the government that Sam’s mother, Betty, was now Sam’s next of kin.⁴²³ The following year, Betty submitted her decision to have Sam “be interred in a permanent American Military Cemetery Overseas.”⁴²⁴ It is guessed that Betty decided to have Sam buried overseas as he had a family history of serving the United States. She probably felt that it was the right and patriotic thing to do for her son.

On the form about overseas burials, the government had Sam’s Army Serial Number incorrect. Betty corrected this mistake and in response the government official wrote that he was greatly embarrassed and “I assure you that this was a typographical error and that the correct serial number of your son is on file in this office. It is of the utmost concern that information released to the families of our honored dead be absolutely accurate and it is sincerely regretted that this error was made.”⁴²⁵ On 20 April 1949, Sam was permanently buried in the Normandy American Cemetery in Plot A, Row 4, Grave 30.⁴²⁶

Bob Petroski’s wife, Mary Lou, was his next of kin. When she was contacted in 1947 to decide if she wanted to bring Bob home or to let him remain in France, Mary Lou chose to keep Bob there with the crew.⁴²⁷ On 19 April 1949,



Image 73- Sam’s grave at the Normandy American Cemetery.

⁴²³ “Request For Disposition of Remains,” June 19, 1947, Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁴ “Request For Disposition of Remains,” May 24, 1948, Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁵ Letter, “Richard B. Coombs to Betty Peak,” July 15, 1948, Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁶ “Disinterment Directive,” Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁷ Bob Krausmann, phone interview, notes by conversation, July 14, 2019.

Bob was permanently buried in Plot A, Row 15, Grave 42 in the Normandy American Cemetery.⁴²⁸

In June 1947, Mary Catherine Lundberg, Jack Lundberg's wife and next of kin, chose to keep her husband in France.⁴²⁹ A couple of months later, Mary wrote the government:

A few months ago an article appeared in the newspaper saying that President Truman would endeavor to make possible pilgrimages to the military cemeteries overseas. Do you have any information on that possibility yet? It would be my desire to make such a voyage if it materializes as the account described. Would the next of kin be notified of the service conducted at the permanent cemetery at the time of internment in time to be present? Would it likewise be permissible to place a headstone on the grave of one's own choosing, or are there uniform regulations which prohibit such an installation in the cemetery?⁴³⁰

Mary was informed that "while the Government interposes no objection to your attending the final burial of the remains of your husband in the permanent overseas cemetery, there are no funds available which will permit the Government to pay the cost of your travel to and from France and your expenses while there."⁴³¹ The author believes that Mary did not make the trip to France to attend her husband's burial. On 12 April 1949, Jack was permanently buried in Plot B, Row 10, Grave 17 in the Normandy American Cemetery.⁴³²



Image 74- Bob's grave at the Normandy American Cemetery.



Image 75- Jack's grave at the Normandy American Cemetery.

⁴²⁸ "Disinterment Directive," Robert Frank Petroski Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴²⁹ "Request for Disposition of Remains," June 19, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴³⁰ Letter, "Mary Catherine Lundberg to Thomas B. Larkin," September 26, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴³¹ Letter, "Richard B. Coombs to Mary Catherine Lundberg," October 8, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴³² Letter, "H. Feldman to Mary Catherine Lundberg," June 3, 1949, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

Since Murl Simmons was not identified until February 1949, his next of kin did not decide about where he would be buried until June 1949. His mother, June, wrote the government that she decided to have Murl buried in France.⁴³³ She probably chose to keep Murl in France because she had the strong belief in leaving him where he fell and would not have wanted his remains disturbed in any way.⁴³⁴ On 7 October, 1949, Murl was permanently buried in Plot B, Row 2, Grave 18, just eight rows and one grave away from Jack Lundberg's grave.⁴³⁵

In June 1947, Minnie Rockey, Max's mother, signed the form that she wanted Max buried in France.⁴³⁶ Max's parents did not



Image 76- Murl's grave at the Normandy American Cemetery.



Image 77- Max's grave at the Normandy American Cemetery.

want Max's body sent back home because they desired that Max was left where he was taken. They thought that is what Max would have wanted.⁴³⁷ Max was permanently buried in Plot D, Row 13, Grave 34 in the Normandy American Cemetery on 14 April 1949.⁴³⁸

⁴³³ "Request For Disposition of Remains," June 2, 1949, Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴³⁴ Tina Hogle, Facebook message to author, March 24, 2020.

⁴³⁵ "Disinterment Directive," Murl Francis Simmons Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴³⁶ "Request For Disposition of Remains," June 19, 1947, Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴³⁷ Heather Esterline, Facebook message to author, February 2, 2020.

⁴³⁸ "Disinterment Directive," Max Lamar Rockey Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.



Image 78- Normandy American Cemetery. Pilot Samuel “Sam” Peak Plot A, Row 4, Grave 30. Co-Pilot Robert “Bob” Petroski Plot A, Row 15, Grave 42. Navigator John “Jack” Lundberg Plot B, Row 10, Grave 17. Engineer and Top Turret Gunner Murl Simmons Plot B, Row 2, Grave 18. Tail Gunner Max Rockey Plot D, Row 13, Grave 34.

Correspondence, Miscommunication, and Misinformation

Surviving communication between the *Spare Charlie* crew members, their families, and the government reveal a plethora of information about how correspondence affected the families. It is very likely that more communication occurred than what will be discussed. However, as time progressed, these letters most likely became lost or forgotten. The following analysis is based on what the author could find.

There is no doubt that the *Spare Charlie* families received a surplus of misinformation. For instance, in three articles about Sam Peak’s missing in action status and eventual killed in action status, it was reported in June 1944 that “after completing 24 missions and earning the Air

Medal with three oak leaf clusters,” Sam was “reported to be missing in France.”⁴³⁹ On 28 May 1945, after Sam’s death was conveyed to his family, the *Fort Worth-Star Telegram* reported that Sam “had completed 22 missions and held the Air Medal with three clusters.”⁴⁴⁰ However, on 12 May, the *Weekly Town Talk* of Leesville, Louisiana, reported that Sam “was a B-17 pilot and was returning from his 25th mission when killed the war department said.”⁴⁴¹ As seen in this example of the different amount of missions Sam flew, the government possibly gave varying information to the *Spare Charlie* families, which probably played a role in how they reacted to the news about the death of their soldier.

Most of the *Spare Charlie* crew members wrote home within a week of their deaths. Murl Simmons wrote his last letter on 17 June, which was received by his family 2 July. It is not known what Murl wrote in that letter or any other previous letters. However, it can be surmised that he did not write about or mention his missions. In a newspaper article about his missing in action status, it was mentioned that Murl “had been instructing newly arriving crewmen. His family was not aware he was in action.”⁴⁴² The news that Murl was shot down during a mission probably came as a great shock to his family since they believed he was not flying missions. This unexpected information might have also affected the impact of his death on his family. Perhaps it might have been easier to grieve Murl’s death if his family had known he was flying missions.

As previously mentioned, when Dick Oberlin was liberated and came home, he wrote letters home to his crew member’s families. The author believes that he wrote every family of the Peak crew but did not write the Petroski or Lundberg families since that was the only time Bob Petroski or Jack Lundberg ever flew with Dick and the Peak crew. It is known that Dick

⁴³⁹ “Lt. Samuel Peak Missing in Action,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

⁴⁴⁰ “Lt. S. L. Peak Is Reported Killed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

⁴⁴¹ “Leesville Pilot Killed in Action,” *Weekly Town Talk*.

⁴⁴² “Said Missing...,” *The Tribune Press*.

wrote the Osterberg and Rockey families. The Scharff family probably received a letter too. In a family scrapbook for Robby Scharff, it is mentioned that “there was one survivor in the plane crash. He did not remember much as he was not conscious much. He did remember people in the area taking bodies away from the site.”⁴⁴³

In April 1949, Frank Welke Sr. wrote a letter to the government asking “let me know how he (Frank Jr.) lost his life.”⁴⁴⁴ This inquiry is quite interesting because it brings up some questions. One wonders if Dick Oberlin wrote the Welke family a letter? If so, what information did Dick share and was a lack of information from Dick the reason why Frank Sr. asked the government how his son died? Or did Dick Oberlin not write a letter to the Welke family? But if so, why did he not write and send a letter to the Welke family when he probably knew Frank well as they had trained at Alex and flew their missions together? Regardless, by all accounts, it seems that within a span of five years of Frank’s death, the Welke family was never given full details as to how Frank died other than the fact that his plane was shot down.

Although it was a noble gesture to write his crew members families, Dick Oberlin did share misinformation, although it was not intentional. In his letter to Hannah Osterberg, Dick mentioned that on 23 June, the next day after getting shot down, the Germans “took me to a jail in Poix, France. I had to lay on top of boxes that contained the bodies of my crew members. If you will get a large and complete map of France and look for Poix you will find where Allen is resting. It is just a small town located a short distance south of Abbeville.”⁴⁴⁵ In addition, in his letter to Minnie Rockey, Dick wrote that “the Germans got me as soon as I got to the ground. The next day I rode on top of boxes that contained the other men from my crew. We went to

⁴⁴³ Robert Scharff scrapbook, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

⁴⁴⁴ Letter, “Frank Welke Sr. to Thomas B. Larkin,” April 4, 1949, Frank Albert Welke Jr. Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁴⁴⁵ Letter, “Richard Oberlin to Hannah Osterberg,” November 1, 1945.

Poix France when I was put in jail and I imagine that is where the boys were buried. If you can find a good map of France and find Poix, I think you will see just about where Max is resting.”⁴⁴⁶

As discussed earlier, all of the *Spare Charlie* crew members were buried in Mareuil-Caubert, except for Jack Lundberg and Robby Scharff. It is not known why Dick believed he was forced to sit on boxes that contained his crew members bodies. However, the author theorizes that the Germans tried to scare and intimidate Dick by making him think that the bodies of his crew members were in those boxes. In addition, it is believed that Dick saw Frank Welke’s identification tags and assumed Frank and the others were in boxes. Regardless, Dick believed that he was taken to Poix with the bodies of his crew members until the day he died.

Dick Oberlin may have also contacted the Petroski family. On a Sunday morning, around the time Bob was declared dead, his mother, Marie, was getting ready for church when a man in a black suit came with the news that Bob was dead. However, he did not give Marie an explanation as to the circumstances of Bob’s death. A few years after Bob’s death, Marie moved to Houghton Lake, Michigan, where she ran a bar. One day, a young man came into the bar to talk to Marie. He claimed to be the survivor of Bob’s crew and told Marie information that was incredibly similar to what Dick Oberlin wrote to Minnie Rockey and Hannah Osterberg.

The young man spoke of how the plane got hit and was under fire. And as it spun to the ground, he was thrown out of the plane and his parachute opened. Then before he hit the ground, the plane exploded. However, this man also mentioned that the Germans looked for body parts the next day, 23 June. Marie was not sure if this man was telling the truth or if he was a con artist, but the information that the Germans picked up body parts affected her and the Petroski

⁴⁴⁶ Chuby, “Recalling a Brother,” *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

family.⁴⁴⁷ Because of that information, they always wondered if Bob was truly found, identified, and buried in Normandy. Or did someone find a finger and assume it was Bob's finger and bury that in Normandy?

It is not known if the young man who visited the bar in Houghton Lake was Dick Oberlin, but most of what he told Marie was consistent with Dick's account of what happened. Bob's parents were also told that his plane went down in the English Channel and that his body was never found.⁴⁴⁸ It is not known when and who told this information to Bob's parents, but it no doubt affected them deeply. At times, Marie would cry and ask "where is he?"⁴⁴⁹ The uncertainty and lack of information about Bob's death and burial greatly impacted his family. They were never the same. Bob's death was a prominent cause of his parent's divorce in 1949.⁴⁵⁰ It is also not known why there was miscommunication between Mary Lou, Bob's next of kin, and his family about the circumstances of Bob's death and his burials in St. André de l'Eure and the Normandy American Cemetery. Nonetheless, his family did not know much information about Bob's death and the burials.

With a lack of information and some misinformation, Marie spent the rest of her life trying to get Bob's military records to know what happened to him. However, the government would not give her access to them. The response from the government and all of the unanswered questions about Bob's death left his parents with much rage and resentment towards the United States government. Both Frank and Marie died not knowing the complete circumstances of Bob's death.⁴⁵¹ It was not until November 2019 that Bob's military files were received. The files

⁴⁴⁷ Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 9, 2019; Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, November 8, 2019.

⁴⁴⁸ Russell Post, e-mail to author, July 4, 2019.

⁴⁴⁹ Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 9, 2019.

⁴⁵⁰ Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 9, 2019; and Marie Petroski and Frank Petroski, Michigan, Divorce Records, 1897-1952, from *Ancestry.com* (accessed September 26, 2019).

⁴⁵¹ Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 9, 2019.

revealed that Bob was correctly identified from his identification tags and wedding ring. In addition, his body was relatively intact when he was permanently buried in the Normandy American Cemetery.⁴⁵² This information brought some closure to Bob's family, who wondered for over seventy-five years if his body was the right one buried in Normandy.

Historian Doris Weatherford suggests that the ambivalence and uncertainty about a missing in action status "did allow for hope. Naturally families were inclined to exaggerate that hope, to cling to any straw."⁴⁵³ In addition, Beder adds that "denial, the most frequently used and most primitive of the defense mechanisms, serves the adaptive function of protecting the individual from thinking the worst fate of the missing person. Not knowing, or denying the reality of death, allows the person to remain hopeful and even optimistic."⁴⁵⁴ These statements are exemplified in a letter written by Juanita Peak, wife of Sam Peak, to Mary Catherine Lundberg, wife of Jack Lundberg, in October 1944.

I was so glad to hear from you, it gives me courage to think of others who are hoping with me, and I just know we will hear some good news soon. I wanted to write and tell you that I had heard from Mrs. Oberlin, and that her husband was reported a prisoner on Aug. 6, he is in a camp in Prussia, surely if he had a chance to bail out, so did the others. Do you believe in fortune tellers? I can't say I believe them, but sometimes they seem to hit some things, anyway, my sister went to a fortune teller in Houston, who is supposed to quite good and she told her that Sam and two other fellas were hiding out in France, and I can't help but believe that Sam might be with the French Underground. I wish I could join some part of the service as you have done to help what little I could, but as you know, I have a little daughter, and needless to say, she keeps me quite busy. Did I tell you in my last letter about the boy that went over the same time as Sam that came back and brought some of Sam's personal things. He said that they saw at least three chutes open from his plane before it went out of sight and possibly more. I wish I had some other information to give you, maybe it won't be so long now.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² "Disinterment Directive," July 15, 1948, Robert Frank Scharff Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁵³ Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1990), 297.

⁴⁵⁴ Beder, "Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help," 401.

⁴⁵⁵ Letter, "Juanita Peak to Mary Catherine Lundberg," October 30, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

Juanita hoped her husband was alive so much so that she went as far as clinging to the hope from the news from the fortune teller. This was not the only instance in which ambivalence and uncertainty affected the hopes that some of the men might have survived. Mary Catherine Lundberg noted that there were multiple accounts as to what happened on the mission.

Three officers who were crew members on accompanying planes during the mission reported that the plane had been hit, burst into flames, went into a dive and passed out of sight. Two of the officers stated that no parachutes were seen to come out of the plane, yet one survivor was thrown away from the plane by force of the explosion and was captured immediately. Some say the plane went behind a cloud and some even spoke of seeing three parachutes open. Another reported that one wing caught fire and the ship left the formation under control.⁴⁵⁶

With various witness statements that there were multiple parachutes, it is highly likely that some family members used this information to hold out their hopes that their soldier was still alive.

There were other ways in which families reacted to their soldier's missing in action and eventual killed in action statuses. Writing of reactions to ambiguous loss, Beder mentions that:

as with any sudden, unexpected death, certain responses can be anticipated. Each response is heightened by the lack of clarity of the missing person's status in situations involving ambiguous loss. The individual's capacity to cope is diminished as they are assaulted with the reality that the loss does not make sense, and that there is no chance to say good-bye or finish any unfinished business...The additional anticipated reactions with ambiguous loss include denial, blurred boundaries, continuous information seeking, and emotion swings reactive to information...The continuous information seeking that will help clarify the situation of those struggling with ambiguous loss is never ending. Often there is no information available or there is conflicting information that can alternately shatter or invigorate one hungry for news. The roller coaster quality of this search for information can be maddening.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Mary Catherine McBroom, "Nostalgia at Normandy American Cemetery," circa 1984, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

⁴⁵⁷ Beder, "Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help," 401-402.

Mary Catherine Lundberg “clung to every clue in the hope that somewhere John lived.”⁴⁵⁸ She corresponded with families of the *Spare Charlie* crew. Surviving letters and documents indicate that Mary probably wrote to each family to try to figure out what happened to Jack as well as to receive any updates with more information. It is not known how many families she got in contact with, but she did correspond with at least the Osterberg and Peak families. There is also a high possibility that the other *Spare Charlie* families wrote to each other, but there are no surviving letters or documentation to indicate this.

In addition to writing to the *Spare Charlie* families, Mary wrote to John Houston and Bill Scruggs, the pilot and co-pilot in Jack’s crew. In November 1944, Houston informed Mary that:

When John and I began flying combat missions we each wrote letters home with the understanding that if either of us were forced down in enemy territory the letter would be dispatched by the other. Security regulations prevented my sending John’s letters from abroad, but I saw nothing which outlawed bringing them to this country with me, along with some things Bill and I knew were important to John but might be overlooked with the persons charged with packing his things for shipment to the States. I cannot tell you much which might add or detract from the optimism Ginger tells me you so strongly feel, but it occurs to me you might want to know all you can, good news or bad, so I’ll just tell you what I saw. John flew with us on fifteen missions before his talents were recognized. He was then taken off the crew and trained for the position of lead navigator. We were flying in the lead squadron right next to John’s ship on a mission to Abbeville, France (John’s first as lead navigator) and had just released our bombs when the lead ship took a direct hit of anti-aircraft fire. One wing caught fire and the ship left the formation under

1st Lt. Samuel L. Peak	Mrs. Juanita P. Peak, (wife) 5th and Union, Box 375 Leesville, Louisiana.
1st. Lt. Robert F. Petrocki	Mrs. May L. Petrocki, (wife) 17151 Chandler Park Drive, Wayne, Michigan. <i>10916 Fernwood Detroit, Mich.</i>
2nd Lt. John K. Lundberg	Mrs. Mary C. Lundberg, (wife) 340 11th Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah.
2nd Lt. Allen Osterberg	Mrs. Hannah Osterberg, (mother) Rural Free Delivery #1, Gladstone, Michigan.
S/Sgt. Murl F. Simmons	Mrs. Isabella J. Hall, (mother) 8 Water Street, Gouverneur, New York.
S/Sgt. Frank A. Wallis, Jr.	Mr. Frank A. Wallis, Sr., (father) Kimore and Dillon Avenue, RFC #1 Newstead, New York.
S/Sgt. Robert F. Scharrf	Mrs. Barbara Scharrf, (mother) 4247 Palisade Avenue, 2527 West New York, New Jersey. <i>Valentine Ave. Brooklyn, N.Y.</i>
S/Sgt. Richard D. Oberlin	Mrs. Elizabeth H. Oberlin, (wife) West Unity, Ohio. <i>Box 194</i>
S/Sgt. Max L. Rookay	Mrs. J. E. Oberlin, (mother) P. O. Box 145, West Unity, Ohio.
	Mrs. Mimmie Rookay, (mother) Route Number 1, Springport, Michigan.
	<i>Mrs. Jeff D. Peak Box 469 Mayfield Heights, Ohio. Cincinnati, Ohio</i>

Image 79- *Spare Charlie*’s next of kin list. Mary Catherine Lundberg’s hand writing next to some names.

⁴⁵⁸ Mary Catherine McBroom, “Nostalgia at Normandy American Cemetery,” circa 1984.

control so far as I could see it. Sergeant Herrin, our ball turret operator, said that he could see nothing which he could say was definitely a parachute, but this is often the case with men who turn up despite the fact that parachutes are not seen by anyone. I wish I could tell you more Mary. Anything else I could say would be pure supposition; I feel optimistic, as you do, and pray that good news will be coming your way before long.⁴⁵⁹

In response to Mary's questions about what happened to her husband, Bill Scruggs wrote "the little information I have would be of no aid to you as you know all about John- that is as much as I do...I understand Pappy wrote you upon his return, and explained the best he could. He was on that mission and flew near the plane John was in, but I did not go on that mission and I all know is hear say. I wish I could give you more news, but honestly, all we know is that his plane was hit by 'flak' and caught fire, it went behind a near by cloud before anyone could see any chutes."⁴⁶⁰

By all accounts, the Lundberg family is the only family to have a letter from Sgt. Neil Rasmussen, the man who helped identify the remains of Jack Lundberg. It is not known when or to whom Sgt. Rasmussen sent the letter, but it is guessed that he sent it to Mary Catherine Lundberg. The letter contained information about what happened on the 22 June mission as well as how Jack was found, identified, and buried.

A Bomber flying too low, made a vain attempt to bomb the railroad station of Abbeville, France, 22 June 1944. Hit by a storm of Flack from Ack Ack guns of the Germans, stationed behind the Hotel La Gare, The plane burst into flames and crashed two kilometers from the city. Part of the plane fell on the Abbeville side of the Somme River and part fell on the opposite side. Due to the boundaries set up by the Germans the bodies recovered from the opposite side were buried in another village, Mareuil Caberet. The bodies of six of the crew members were gathered and buried by the Germans in the civilian cemetery of Mareuil Caberet. These bodies were disinterred by this unit and taken to St. Andre del Eure US Military Cemetery, France for reburial. 26 June 1945...The story of the crash was told to me by a French girl who remembered the incident vividly, as she and her family were watching the plane very closely as it seemed

⁴⁵⁹ Letter, "John Houston to Mary Catherine Lundberg," November 20, 1944.

⁴⁶⁰ Letter, "Bill Scruggs to Mary Catherine Lundberg," November 25, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

that it was attempting to drop its bomb load directly upon them. She also visited the scene of the crash.⁴⁶¹

If the families of the other *Spare Charlie* crew members had received this information from Sgt. Rasmussen, it is highly likely that they would have had much more closure about their soldier's death. There is no doubt that this letter helped Lundberg family cope from Jack's death by knowing the circumstances of his death, the discovery and identification of his body, and of his burial in St. André de l'Eure.

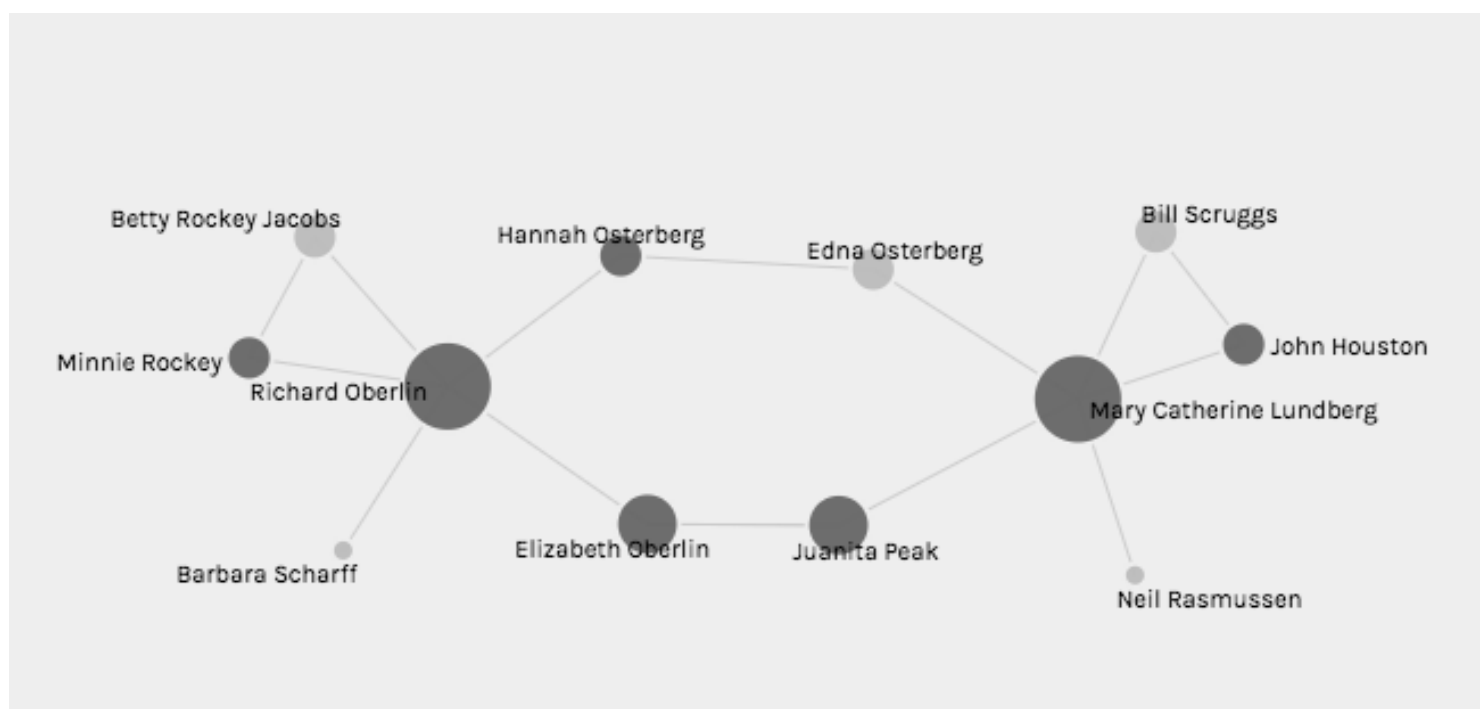


Image 80- Social Network Analysis (SNA) of known communication (letters) between family members and crew members. This SNA shows the individuals (that the author knows of) who communicated with each other about the *Spare Charlie* crew members. The lines link everyone who communicated with each other. The larger circles mean that those individuals had more communication with others.

A common occurrence experienced by the *Spare Charlie* families was the lack of communication about the burials of their soldier. On 30 August 1946, Hannah Osterberg wrote the government “would appreciate your informing me the place of burial of my son...I have

⁴⁶¹ Letter, “Neil Rasmussen to unknown,” unknown date.

received no report from the War Department as to the place of burial of my son.”⁴⁶² A few days later, she received the letter about Allen’s burial in St. André de l’Eure and that “you may be assured that the identification and interment have been accomplished with fitting dignity and solemnity.”⁴⁶³ It took a little over one year, since Allen’s burial in St. André de l’Eure, for the government to notify Hannah that her son had been identified and buried. This was also the case for the other *Spare Charlie* families. Living with the uncertainty about their soldier’s burial location for over a year no doubt affected the families, who probably were in a constant state of anxiety, worry, and concern during that period.

On 1 June 1947, Betty Peak wrote the government “I would like to know where my son Lt. Samuel L. Peak...is buried. You wrote his wife that his burial place is some where in France...she remarried in Dec. of 1945 and I don’t hear from her so I don’t know anything that you may have written to her in regard to my son. I would like very much to hear from you in regard to any thing concerning my son.”⁴⁶⁴ A few weeks later, Juanita notified the government that Betty was Sam’s next of kin and Betty received all future correspondence about Sam. However, it must have been frustrating for Betty to know that her son had died but not know any information about where he was buried.

After the death of her husband, Mary Catherine Lundberg moved from California to Utah. Because of this, she did not receive information about Jack’s burial in St. André de l’Eure. In a plea for information, Mary wrote the government in January 1947:

⁴⁶² Letter, “Hannah Osterberg to Office of the Quartermaster General,” August 30, 1946, Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁶³ Letter, “T.B Larkin to Erick Osterberg,” September 3, 1946, Allen Hilding Osterberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

⁴⁶⁴ Letter, “Betty Peak to United States War Department,” June 1, 1947, Samuel Lewis Peak Individual Deceased Personnel File, United States Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Attached hereto are two communications for which you asked in seeking further information as to the whereabouts of the remains of my husband. The first one, the telegram announcing his 'Missing in Action' status, was followed by letters describing the details of the bombing missions from which he failed to return and certain other facts as they were discovered. There was nothing definite other than that an explosion took place in midair near Bologne, France. The other communication is the last one I have received, which was preceded by a notice of the finding of death, supposedly made upon the termination of a year's duration without further news. No word has come to me in all of that time of the burial or finding of his remains.⁴⁶⁵

In a memo about the letter, it was mentioned that "this has resulted in a great deal of mental anguish and conflict to Mrs. Lundberg...She has received no notification of the burial place of her late dearly beloved husband."⁴⁶⁶ The information about Jack's burial in St. André de l'Eure was sent to Mary again, which possibly gave her some comfort with the knowledge of knowing her husband was found, identified, and buried.

In August 1956, Jack Lundberg's mother, Grace, wrote to the government that:

my son was killed in action during World War II, but as he married prior to going overseas, I was not listed as next of kin. Therefore, his widow, who has long since remarried, made the decision to have the remains permanently buried in Europe. It is presumed that she has full information as to the site of the burial, although I have never been informed as to its location. The purpose of this letter is to learn the grave number and name of the cemetery of his permanent burial location.⁴⁶⁷

Similar to Mary, Grace had moved to another location when the information about Jack's burial in the Normandy American Cemetery was sent to her. Within months of Grace's August 1959

⁴⁶⁵ Letter, Mary Catherine Lundberg to Lt. Col. Robert K. Blair," January 30, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁶⁶ Letter, "Robert K. Blair to General Quartermaster," January 31, 1947, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁶⁷ Letter, Grace Lundberg to Major General Hastings," August 29, 1956, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

letter, the government shared the information about Jack's burial location as well as photos of his grave and the Normandy American Cemetery.⁴⁶⁸

Although Mary knew the information about Jack's burial in the Normandy American Cemetery, Grace contacted the government instead of Mary as her relationship with Mary had soured due to Jack's death. In July 1946, the government reached out to Grace because:

The Army Effects Bureau has received from overseas some personal property of your son, Lieutenant John K. Lundberg. To make proper disposition of this property, it is necessary that we have the present mailing address of Lieutenant Lundberg's widow, Mrs. Mary C. Lundberg. We have tried to contact her at Com Fair, Naval Air Station, Alameda, California, but all correspondence directed to her at that address has been returned marked "Unclaimed". Therefore, it will be greatly appreciated if you will furnish us with this address so that prompt disposition of the property may be made.⁴⁶⁹

In response, Grace wrote "inasmuch as I have not heard from my son's wife since the Memorial Services which were held for him on July 5, 1945, I do not know her whereabouts. However, if you would forward my son's personal effects to me, Mary would have them here, should she contact me in the future."⁴⁷⁰ What occurred between July 1944 to July 1945 for Jack's mother and wife to not talk to each other? There are a few theories.

Although he was the youngest son in the family, Jack Lundberg felt compelled to ensure the welfare of his family, especially his mother, Grace. To Jack, Grace was "the greatest Mother in the World" and he always had concern for her wellbeing. In September 1943, he wrote a letter to his brother, Rich, regarding their mother. He desired that Rich and their other brothers would give her "companionship and the enjoyment from life which she so richly deserves." Believing

⁴⁶⁸ Letter, "Edmund Bogaski to Grace Lundberg," September 13, 1956, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

⁴⁶⁹ Letter, "C.H. Essert to Grace Lundberg," July 16, 1946, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

⁴⁷⁰ Letter, "Grace Lundberg to C.H. Essert," July 23, 1946, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File, National Archives and Records Administration, Saint Louis, Missouri.

he should not be supporting Grace alone, he asked Rich if he would “jointly assume this obligation” and “give Mom the security she deserves in her old age” in addition to visiting her and giving her company. Jack swore Rich to secrecy to not mention it to anyone, including Rich’s wife or Grace. Regardless of what Rich or their other brothers decided, Jack declared “one way or the other I shall see that Mom does not want.”⁴⁷¹ It seems that Jack followed his own suggestion in not communicating to his wife that he financially supported his mother.

In August 1944, Grace mentioned to a daughter-in-law that:

Mary had written the War Department about the bonds.... You see, Jack had them made out to your Mom (in case of his death) before he was married and Mary's claim is that she is his legal heir now. And the sad part about the whole affair is that she will probably get them if it should go to court. Your Mom said Walker Bank wouldn't cash them for her, and sent her to the Federal Bank. They are doing some investigating or something in the “red tape” line, and now that Mary has taken it up with the War Dept. there'll no doubt be more red tape. If your Mom just had a letter of Jack's stating that she should cash them, things would be simpler, but he told her verbally. It has all rather upset her, and she feels badly to quarrel with Mary.⁴⁷²

It was also in the air that Grace was not happy that Mary chose to keep Jack buried in France. Regardless, there is no doubt that both women were hurting and grieving a dearly loved son and husband. Although Mary’s relationship with Grace did not end well, Jack’s brothers did keep in touch with and remained friends with her. Some of them even visited her later in life.

The Reactions of the *Spare Charlie* Wives

There is no doubt that the *Spare Charlie* wives were deeply in love with their husbands and vice versa. All three wives sacrificed much during and after the war. They were incredibly

⁴⁷¹ Letter, “Jack Lundberg to Richard Fox,” September 22, 1943, in possession of Steve Fox.

⁴⁷² Letter, “Virginia Lundberg to Chick Lundberg,” August 28, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller.

supportive of and dedicated to their husbands. Academic Emily Yellin notes that instead of being separated from their husbands during training,

many women rebelled against the idea that they had to accept such exile from their husbands. Many decided they were going to have as much time together as they could while their husbands were still in the United States. These women were often called “camp followers” because they followed their husbands from military base to military base...They found whatever housing they could, as near to their husbands as they could be, and took whatever time he had left over after the military got their allotment of him.⁴⁷³

It is not known if Juanita Peak, the wife of Sam Peak, was a camp follower. However, the wives of Lieutenants Bob Petroski and Jack Lundberg were camp followers.

Following their wedding on 20 February 1943, Mary Lou Petroski stayed with her husband in Georgia during his training at Turner Field.⁴⁷⁴ Following his graduation at Turner Field, Bob was assigned to Lockbourne Army Airbase in Columbus, Ohio, for transition pilot training. Mary Lou followed and stayed with Bob in Ohio. Bob completed his operational training at Alexandria Air Base in Alexandria, Louisiana. Here, Bob trained with the crew he would fly many missions with in combat. When Bob and his crew were activated in November 1943, Mary Lou went back to Detroit, Michigan, and moved in with her parents.⁴⁷⁵



Image 81- Mary Lou Petroski and Bob Petroski during Bob’s training at Turner Field. Circa April 1943 in Albany, Georgia.

⁴⁷³ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 16.

⁴⁷⁴ Bob Krausmann, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 14, 2019.

⁴⁷⁵ Bob Krausmann, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 14, 2019.

On their wedding night, 15 November 1943, Jack Lundberg and Mary Catherine Lundberg drove to Hondo, Texas, where Jack was a navigation instructor.⁴⁷⁶ Sometime between November 1943 and February 1944, Jack was transferred from Hondo to Rapid City Army Air Base in South Dakota.⁴⁷⁷ Typically, men at Rapid City trained with their future crew before being sent off to Europe. Jack trained with the John Houston crew. Jack lived off the base with Mary and would commute into base every day. Mary spent much time with the wives of pilot John Houston and co-pilot Bill Scruggs while their husbands were training.⁴⁷⁸



Image 82- Jack Lundberg and Mary Catherine Lundberg at the Alamo Grounds in Texas. Circa winter 1943-1944.

On the day the Houston crew left Rapid City to begin their tour of duty,

we were going out...we had to leave home about five thirty in the morning, six o'clock, to get out to the base to start the day, and I got in the cab, and the cab driver told us, says, "Well, did you kiss your wives goodbye? Because you won't be coming back in tonight." I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "Well, when you get to the base, you'll have orders that you're leaving." We couldn't believe him, so as soon as we got to the base and had our formation, they gave us the orders that we were secured to the base. They want security. They didn't want anyone to know about us moving. And we had to take care also...they said, "You can call your wives and tell them you just won't be there tonight." And so we all called, and they knew... everyone in town knew.⁴⁷⁹

Jack and Mary did not have the type of farewell that they probably wanted or planned to have. It is highly likely that this parting played a role in Mary's grief after realizing that her husband

⁴⁷⁶ "Mary Catherine Maher Weds in Military Rites," *Salt Lake Telegram*.

⁴⁷⁷ "Last Will and Testament of John K. Lundberg," February 21, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

⁴⁷⁸ Captain William Scruggs Interview, May 10, 2000, in possession of Florida State University, accessed January 28, 2020.

⁴⁷⁹ Captain William Scruggs Interview, May 10, 2000.

would never come back home to her. She never got to have the closure of having a final goodbye with Jack.

Mary enlisted in military service around the time that Jack was sent overseas. She served in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), a unit of the Naval Reserve. WAVES job positions included aviation mechanics, photographers, control tower operators, intelligence personnel, secretarial and clerical work.⁴⁸⁰ Yellin writes “when they decided to volunteer, these women were given indefinite assurances that they would be doing something worthwhile...the Navy wanted to emphasize that these women were not drafted but volunteered for service.”⁴⁸¹ When Jack died, Mary was training at Hunter College in Bronx, New York.⁴⁸² As a WAVE, Mary, ranked as Seaman First Class, was stationed at the Alameda Naval Air Station in California from 1944 to 1945. After Jack’s death she requested to be released from service because she found it very hard to be in an environment that constantly reminded her of him.⁴⁸³

Professor Carol Acton writes that “although letters can go some way towards compensating for their (husband and wife) separation, they are, equally, tangible evidence of their absence from each other and the loss of the time they should have together...wartime mobility of populations across huge distances at home and abroad meant that many relationships were sustained only by letter.”⁴⁸⁴ There is no doubt that the married members of the *Spare Charlie* crew wrote their wives while serving overseas. However, little to no letters have

⁴⁸⁰ C. Peter Chen, “WAVES: Women in the WW2 US Navy,” WW2DB, accessed January 4, 2019, https://ww2db.com/other.php?other_id=24.

⁴⁸¹ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*, 137.

⁴⁸² “War Casualty Lists Show Five From Davis County,” *Davis County Clipper*, August 4, 1944, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6dz13fb>.

⁴⁸³ Letter “M.M. Rubin to unknown,” October 11, 1945, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

⁴⁸⁴ Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 71.

survived since the war. The author only found one letter written from a *Spare Charlie* husband to his wife.

On 19 May 1944, six days after he arrived at Ridgewell, Jack Lundberg wrote two letters to his family and wife. Jack understood that his chances of returning home were “quite slim” and he wanted to express his love and gratitude to them. In the letter Jack wrote his wife, he mentioned of the time he and Mary should have had together, but lost because of the war.

I have asked that this letter be delivered to you in the event that I am unable to return to you. Only one occurrence can prevent our reunion: if mishap does befall me I want you to know that I love you to the utmost of human capacity to love. Since you entered my life everything in life has taken on a new and dearer meaning. The most commonplace activity, if shared with you, has been a joyful adventure. I am not a complete personality when we are separated. I have thanked God many times for permitting me the privilege of being your husband. Due to the war we were never able to lead the normal, happy, eventful life that our marriage promised us. But even the few short months that we were together foretold a completely successful marriage and made me realize even more fully what a truly wonderful and beautiful wife was mine. Together, in days of peace, we would have undoubtedly led an exemplary married life and I am positive that with your inspiration I would have realized my most cherished ambitions. It is difficult to write such a letter as this—for I am now very much alive and very much in love with you—but nevertheless one must face the contingency of death under these circumstances and I do so want you to know now and forever of my devoted love for you. Mary, if I do not come back do not grieve unduly for me. You are still young, still beautiful, still desirable, still wonderful and much too great a woman to let such an even affect your complete life. Remember me always—yes: but do not lose sight of that which life has to offer you. You are one of the finest girls on the face of this earth in all respects and you deserve and undoubtedly will receive the best of everything that life has to offer. My most fervent wish is that this letter is never delivered!⁴⁸⁵

This letter Jack wrote to Mary has since been lost. One theory about the letter’s disappearance is that Mary was so heartbroken about the death of her husband that she disposed of the letter. Both of Jack’s letters to his family and Mary were anonymously published in the 381st Chaplain

⁴⁸⁵ Brown, *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All, A Chaplain’s Inside Story on the Men of the 381st Bomber Group*, 408-409.

James G. Brown's book *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All, A Chaplain's Inside Story on the Men of the 381st. Bomber Group*, which is where the letter to Mary was discovered.

The three *Spare Charlie* wives treated the memory of their deceased husbands in similar ways. They were twenty-one-years-old and twenty-two-years-old when they became widows. Juanita Peak and Mary Lou Petroski were already mothers. All three wives were remarried by 1950 and had more children with their second husbands. They did not talk about their first husbands and if they did, it was rather rare. Juanita Peak "rarely mentioned her first husband, Lt. Sam Peak" and did not "elaborate on any details of their marriage and/or his death."⁴⁸⁶ Bob Petroski's death was very devastating and heartbreaking for his wife Mary Lou. Even many years after Bob's death, she still refused to talk about him because it was too hard. In one instance when their son was telling his step-father about Bob Petroski, Mary Lou began crying and told Bob Jr. to stop talking about Bob because he was dead.⁴⁸⁷

Mary Catherine Lundberg's children only knew that she was married to a man named John Lundberg who died in the war.⁴⁸⁸ In addition, they had never seen and "haven't been able to find any pictures of John" until 1998, when Lt. Lundberg's brother shared photos of him with Mary's children.⁴⁸⁹ Around 1984, Mary wrote an essay "Nostalgia at Normandy American Cemetery," in which she mentioned that "forty years ago I experienced the anxiety of losing a loved one, husband, listed 'Missing in Action' in the European Theatre of World War II." Her daughter visited the Normandy American Cemetery, where she:

Looked up the name and gravesite of my mother's first husband. I really wasn't sure of his name but thought it was John Lundberg. Sure enough, the date was 22 June 44 and from Utah....I put some flowers on the grave while the curator put some dust on the

⁴⁸⁶ Richard Epplett, e-mail to author, October 13, 2019.

⁴⁸⁷ Bob Krausmann, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 14, 2019.

⁴⁸⁸ Ralph McBroom, interview by author, phone call, November 2019.

⁴⁸⁹ Letter, "Jim McBroom to Chick Lundberg," December 1, 1999, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

letters so that they would show up better. I said some Our Fathers and Hail Marys, then took some pictures. I didn't exactly know how to feel. I have so many mixed emotions—feeling happy that I had found it, yet sorrowful for my mother and the pain that she must have felt when she lost him—at my age no less?⁴⁹⁰

As examined above, all three of the *Spare Charlie* wives were similar in their response to their husband's deaths and rarely spoke of them. One explanation for this is that they lost promising futures and security when their husbands died and had to navigate these issues while also grieving the deaths of their husbands. Discussing this, Beder mentions that:

Altered boundaries refers to the new configuration of roles that emerge after a death. When a wife loses her husband, she becomes a widow...In the case of ambiguous loss, these roles are not certain and the boundaries of self-definition are blurred. Am I still a wife? Even if the remains of my husband are not found and his death is not certain?...This lack of clarity makes the transitional state or new role assumption particularly difficult and prolonged."⁴⁹¹

The ambiguous status of their husbands no doubt affected the wives and was traumatic for them. Out of all the *Spare Charlie* family members, Mary Catherine Lundberg, Juanita Peak, and Mary Lou Petroski were perhaps the most affected and impacted from their husband's deaths. They did not just lose their husbands, but for Juanita and Mary Lou, they also lost the father of their child. They had to reinterpret their roles as wives and mothers, and for a short time, also fulfill the roles of both mother and father for their children. Both women needed to re-figure and re-plan their lives in order to support themselves and their children since their husbands were dead. When they thought back to this time in their lives, they probably associated these complications they experienced with also losing their beloved husbands. This could be one reason why it was so hard for the wives to talk about their deceased husbands as these issues they dealt with possibly made their husband's deaths even more emotionally painful.

⁴⁹⁰ Mary Catherine McBroom, "Nostalgia at Normandy American Cemetery," circa 1984.

⁴⁹¹ Beder, "Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help," 401-402.

Wartime propaganda also influenced how the *Spare Charlie* wives remembered their husbands. Women were expected to cultivate and exhibit cheerful and positive attitudes. They were not to display negative emotions that could lower war morale. Carol Acton notes “official and unofficial propaganda encouraged silent acceptance of such losses, requesting men in the forces, women at home or in war work and evacuated children to hide emotions behind a cheerful exterior.”⁴⁹² In an anthology of women’s war writing in the Second World War, Jenny Hartley mentioned that:

grief seems strangely absent from women’s war writing. In the public arena at least, women seem to have felt the pressure of male codes of behavior, to the extent of being unable or unwilling to show grief openly...Public grief would have been unpatriotic, feminine, weak...Part of women’s public war language must be silence. This was almost national policy, with restraint and suppression impressed upon wives writing to their husbands away on active service.⁴⁹³

In the August 1943 article “Back Home To Mother,” author Patricia Davidson Guinian stressed that “perhaps most important of all, *don’t mope!*”⁴⁹⁴ One 7-Up advertisement reminded women “Happy homes are built on a determination to magnify the pleasant things and forget the unpleasant. Keep in a good-natured mood...get the habit of smiling!”⁴⁹⁵ In Ethel Gorham’s 1942 book, *So Your Husband’s Gone to War!*, she acknowledged that that a wave of grief would descend on war wives, but then “admonished them with the prevalent idea that their duty was to buck up, meet the challenges, and surprise everyone, including themselves.”⁴⁹⁶ Although this

⁴⁹² Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, 69.

⁴⁹³ Jenny Hartley ed., *Hearts Undefeated: Women’s Writing of the Second World War* (London, Virago, 1994), 7.

⁴⁹⁴ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*, 15.

⁴⁹⁵ Melissa A. McEuen, “Sacrifice and Agreeability: Cultivating Right Minds” in *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 199.

⁴⁹⁶ *Our Mothers’ War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II*, 14.

propaganda was aimed at keeping up morale for the war, it unintentionally affected the *Spare Charlie* wives far past the end of the war.

Suppression of emotions was important for war morale. Sociologist Tony Walter argued that “mass bereavement through war tends to lead to the dead being left behind: there are so many of them and there is a war to be fought. By the same token, emotions have to be suppressed if the war effort is to continue, and with multiple loss and emotion switching off may be a natural defense mechanism when suppression of emotion becomes a national necessity during war, it may have a knock-off effect in the following peace.”⁴⁹⁷ In a culture where they were expected to suppress their emotions, it is no wonder that it was too painful for the wives to talk of their husbands during the rest of their lives.

There is no doubt that grief, ambiguous loss, altered boundaries, wartime propaganda, and societal expectations played a role in the *Spare Charlie* wives’ reactions to the deaths of their husbands. The war was undoubtedly a traumatic period for all of them. Their lives were put on hold during the war and after their husbands’ deaths. The wives had to reinterpret and re-navigate their lives. Since it was expected for them to carry on with their lives and not focus on unpleasant feelings, their feelings were internally suppressed. Losing a loved husband is hard, but not being able to fully process one’s grief and emotions can result in painful feelings when reminiscing of him.

Scholars Judy Barret Litoff and David Smith noted that “never having her husband come home in any form, however made the process of grief much harder for a widow; the lack of burial for some meant that the death was a chapter never closed.”⁴⁹⁸ All three of the *Spare*

⁴⁹⁷ Tony Walter, *On Bereavement: The Culture of Grief* (United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill Education, 1999), 132.

⁴⁹⁸ Judy Barret Litoff and David C. Smith, eds., *American Women in a World at War: Contemporary Accounts from World War II* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1997), 293.

Charlie husbands are buried in Normandy. Although two of the wives, Mary Lou Petroski and Mary Catherine Lundberg, chose to have their husbands buried in Normandy, there is a possibility that all three wives did not have complete closure due to not having their husbands be brought and buried at home.

The *Spare Charlie* Children

The lives of the two *Spare Charlie* children were greatly affected by their fathers making the ultimate sacrifice. They did not get to really know their fathers. They did not have their fathers' influence and guidance while they grew up. It is obvious that their fathers loved them, and although the *Spare Charlie* wives did not really talk of their husbands, both children knew about their fathers. Sam Peak's daughter, Patricia, passed away in 2009 and as such, could not be interviewed by the author. It is not known how her father's death affected her. But, at least to her half-brother, she did not discuss Sam Peak. She did have Sam's Purple Heart. Interestingly, Sam's slide rule was given to Juanita's son from her second marriage. He used Sam's slide rule in college.⁴⁹⁹

Bob Petroski's son, Bob Jr., has never forgotten the father he never knew. He dearly loves his father. In a way, Bob Jr. is incredibly similar to his father and has been described as sounding and looking identical to his father.⁵⁰⁰ Bob Jr. has worn his father's wedding ring for over eighteen years.⁵⁰¹ In the 1970s, Bob Jr., went to France. For the first time, Bob Jr. "met" and visited his father at Normandy American Cemetery. While at the cemetery, Bob Jr. met a Frenchman, who lived in a neighboring village, and after explaining that he was the son of one of

⁴⁹⁹ Richard Epplett, e-mail to author, October 13, 2019.

⁵⁰⁰ Pam Feighner, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, July 11, 2019.

⁵⁰¹ Bob Krausmann, e-mail to author, August 6, 2019.

the men buried in the cemetery, the Frenchman invited Bob Jr. to come to his village later that evening. The village's café was opened and the entire village came to meet Bob Jr. They threw a party for Bob Jr. because of the ultimate sacrifice his father made for their liberation and freedom almost thirty years earlier.⁵⁰² These French civilians did not know Bob Petroski but were incredibly thankful for all he did on their behalf.

The Spare Charlie Mothers

The special bond between a mother and son can be quite strong. This was no exception for the *Spare Charlie* crew members and their mothers. Some examples include the following: Sam Peak most likely named *The Betty L* after his mother Betty. In addition, Betty's middle name was Ann, which is the same middle name Sam gave his daughter Patricia. While overseas, Bob Petroski wrote home with concern about his mother. Barbara Scharff wanted to and was buried with Robby and on their grave "Beloved Son" is inscribed above his name.

During his training and military service, Jack Lundberg financially supported his mother Grace. On 8 June, fourteen days before Jack died, Grace sent him a V-mail letter. In it she told him about life back home "and Jack dearest! I have an abundance of California poppies planted and blossoming for you, they too are colorful. Jack I love you truly unselfish I love you, remember always you are mine. God bless you and take care of you, are always in my prayers each day. Xoxoxo. I love you, mom."⁵⁰³



Image 83- Grace and Jack at Camp Roberts, California. September 1941.

⁵⁰² Bob Krausmann, phone interview, notes by conversation, July 14, 2019.

⁵⁰³ V-mail, "Grace Lundberg to Jack Lundberg," June 8, 1944, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

There is no doubt that the *Spare Charlie* crew loved their mothers and vice versa. The deaths of their beloved sons undoubtedly affected them for the rest of their lives.

But how exactly did the lives of the *Spare Charlie* mothers change after the deaths of their sons? Historian Doris Weatherford writes that “there were hundreds of thousands of mothers” whose “sons never came home. These women lived out their lives with the Gold Star of his memory shining from their front doors, carefully filling up their days with enough detail to numb, and weeping their quiet tears alone decades after everyone else had forgotten.”⁵⁰⁴ Out of the eight *Spare Charlie* mothers, at least five were Gold Star Mothers. Interestingly, this fact was mentioned in most of their obituaries. This shows just how important being a Gold Star Mother was to them.

By being a Gold Star Mother, the *Spare Charlie* mothers were allowed to channel their grief into something tangible while also processing and making sense of the deaths of their sons. It also served the government’s goal of maintaining war morale by giving the mothers a reason and purpose for their sons’ deaths. Carol Acton suggests:

Dependent upon the willingness of its population to accept death either for themselves or for others, a wartime culture must be particularly vigilant in constructing grief and mourning behavior in a way that supports rather than undermines the state’s pursuit of war aims....When images of the war dead are connected with the grief of their families, especially mothers, receiving their bodies, they become particularly potent in their ability to undermine wartime aims...In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the bones as pure abstraction become the gold star and flag that has covered the coffin, offered to the mother or wife in place of the ‘bloody body’, following a military funeral that has transformed the dead son or husband into a military hero...Prescribing and controlling grief through consolatory rhetoric that emphasizes the meaning of the death in the service of the state thus becomes an essential element in the overall ‘manufacture of consent’ through which the state persuades its citizens to participate in war....The ‘bloody body’ is thus transformed as it carries the ideologies that elevate its service to the state; death and

⁵⁰⁴ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 301.

mutilation are translated into sacrifice and duty, affirmations in which the families as well as the dead themselves are allowed to partake.⁵⁰⁵

Although she was born in Germany, Barbara Scharff felt that the United States was her country and her kids would fight for the United States.⁵⁰⁶ Participating as a Gold Star Mother further cemented that belief for her. Being a Gold Star Mother was important for the *Spare Charlie* mothers even years after their sons' deaths. In 1956, twelve years after her son died, Grace Lundberg wrote the government "I have been informed that as a Gold Star Mother, I may be awarded a label button and certificate by the Department of the Army, and if true, information pertaining to this matter would also be appreciated."⁵⁰⁷ Grace and her daughter, Grace, also participated in their local American Legion and Gold Star Mother events.⁵⁰⁸

There were other ways in which the *Spare Charlie* mothers coped with losing their sons. Marie Petroski found solace from Bob's death by joining the Jehovah's Witnesses.⁵⁰⁹ About a year after Frank Welke Sr. died in 1956, his wife, Marion, sold her house in East Meadow and moved into her widowed daughter, Marie's, house with her other son Edward. She and Marie shared a bedroom, Edward was given his own bedroom, and Marie's two daughters shared the third bedroom. One of Frank's nieces recalled that "life went on, and nobody seemed to talk about our deceased family members" or at least in the front of Marie's daughters.⁵¹⁰

Ambiguous loss affected the mothers' process of grieving their deceased sons. Writing of this, Acton mentions:

⁵⁰⁵ Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, 2-3.

⁵⁰⁶ Bettyann Mariano, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, February 19, 2020.

⁵⁰⁷ Letter, Grace Lundberg to Major General Hastings," August 29, 1956, John Keith Lundberg Individual Deceased Personnel File.

⁵⁰⁸ "Gold Star Mothers Honored by Legion Auxiliary," *Davis County Clipper*, October 6, 1950, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/file?id=1350947>.

⁵⁰⁹ Pam Feighner, e-mail to author, February 5, 2020.

⁵¹⁰ Kathy Colquhoun, letter to author, December 2019.

It is not surprising then that response to news of a soldier dead or missing would take the form of a letter distilling grief into a leave taking and creating a site of mourning in the absence of a body or a grave. Where definite news of a death is confirmed, the bereaved can begin the process of grieving even in the absence of a body or a grave, but when an individual is listed as missing, even where death is almost certain, then there can be no final enactment of a leave taking.⁵¹¹

During the period when Max Rockey was not identified, and therefore was still considered missing, his mother, Minnie, kept his car in the garage for several years after the war hoping that Max would still come home.⁵¹² Max's death was particularly upsetting for his mother for a few reasons. When the town found out that Max had died, they did not offer her much support as they thought Minnie would not miss Max due to the fact that she had other living ten children.⁵¹³ Prior to Max's death, his older brother, Glen Delbert Rockey, died from pneumonia in 1940.⁵¹⁴ In four years, Minnie lost two children, which was no doubt difficult for her.

The other reason why Max's death was hard for Minnie occurred in July 1945, when she received Max's effects and clothing. His clothing was particularly horrifying for Minnie to see since they were so torn and ripped. Minnie was upset the government sent the tattered clothing to her.⁵¹⁵ Max's sister, Betty, remarked that the letter Dick Oberlin sent her mother was "all we heard. We never pursued anything. Mother didn't want to. I wasn't sure if I wanted to either."⁵¹⁶ There might have also been other factors that affected Minnie, but regardless, Max's death was quite sad for her. It was hard for her to talk about him.

Some mothers never stopped talking about their deceased son, even though they probably felt pain when reminiscing. June Simmons often talked of her son and would tell stories about

⁵¹¹ Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, 71.

⁵¹² Bruce Rockey, e-mail to author, June 29, 2019.

⁵¹³ Heather Esterline, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, January 27, 2020.

⁵¹⁴ Glen Delbert Rockey Certificate of Death, from *Ancestry.com*, (accessed August 30, 2019).

⁵¹⁵ Heather Esterline, Facebook message to author, February 2, 2020.

⁵¹⁶ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

Murl to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.⁵¹⁷ In June's 1998 obituary, it was mentioned that "a son, Murl F. Simmons, died in action during World War II, when his plane was shot down over France on June 22, 1944."⁵¹⁸ Murl never disappeared from her thoughts and memories. One Sunday afternoon in 1960, Grace Lundberg told her granddaughter-in-law about "Jack's life and demise, which was very much on her mind after the many years of losing him to the war. When she was finished, she threw up her hands and said 'Well, Jack came into the world with a Bang! He dropped out on the kitchen floor and he left this world with a Bang!'"⁵¹⁹ Grace used storytelling, perhaps at times embellished, and humor as one way of coping and expressing her feelings about the death of her son.

The Spare Charlie Fathers

Throughout the author's research, a common theme occurred in terms of the *Spare Charlie* fathers. Almost no information was received as to how the fathers reacted and coped with their sons' death. It seems that scholarship on fathers and their grief resulting from their sons' death during war has not been focused on by academics. In her study, "You Can Never Fill the Gap That's Left': Expressions of Brotherly Loss in the Second World War," Linda Maynard mentions that with "societal demands favouring the 'stiff upper lip'---the ultimate masculine display of self-restraint...men showed an accurate awareness of the need to demonstrate emotional mastery by restricting their displays of emotion to private spaces and through their readiness to prioritize military and familial obligations over their own personal

⁵¹⁷ Tina Hogle, e-mail to author, October 10, 2020.

⁵¹⁸ "Isabelle June Hall," *Gouverneur Tribune-Press*.

⁵¹⁹ Shirley Fox, e-mail to Mike Fox, January 31, 2019, shared with author.

grief.”⁵²⁰ It can be safe to assume that the *Spare Charlie* fathers subscribed to societal expectations about masculinity and held their grief internally. This could explain why there is a lack of information about the *Spare Charlie* fathers as they most likely never talked about their feelings about the deaths of their sons. However, it is highly likely that they had just as much grief as the wives, mothers, and siblings of the *Spare Charlie* crew. It is known that one father took to drinking heavily to assuage his grief about his son’s death in addition to the guilt he felt for the discipline he had given his son. Out of respect to the family, the father will not be identified.

The *Spare Charlie* Siblings

The death of a sibling leaves a large void that is often never filled. How did the siblings of the *Spare Charlie* crew cope with the loss of their brother? Every member of the crew, except Dick Oberlin, had at least one brother who also fought in the war. These brothers were affected by the death of their *Spare Charlie* brother both during and after the war. Sam Peak’s younger half-brother, William Peak, also flew B-17s but as a waist gunner and armorer. He was captured by the Germans, reported missing on 14 January 1945, and held at Stalag Luft II.⁵²¹ When William was processed into the German prisoner of war system, he was surprised to learn how much the Germans already knew about him. They were the ones to inform him of Sam’s death.⁵²² Bob Petroski’s brother, Don, served in the Army and was in Luzon, Philippines, when Bob died. When word reached home about Bob, Don was sent back to state side and finished the

⁵²⁰ Linda Maynard, “‘You Can Never Fill the Gap That’s Left’: Expressions of Brotherly Loss in the Second World War,” *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 8, no. 1, (February 2015): 57, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1752628014Y.0000000014>.

⁵²¹ “Lt. S. L. Peak Is Reported Killed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

⁵²² William Peak, Ancestry message to author, July 19, 2019.

war there.⁵²³ All of the *Spare Charlie* parents were probably even more affected by their sons' deaths as they had other sons fighting the war. They were probably anxious and worried for their other boys and hoped that they would not have more children killed during the war.

Though time goes on, grief never goes away. At the time of this writing, it has been almost seventy-six years since the *Spare Charlie* crew was shot down. Three men, Max Rockey, Murl Simmons, and Bob Petroski, still have siblings living. Although it has been over seven decades since the deaths of their brothers, the pain is still there, and it feels like they lost their brother the day before. It is still hard for these living siblings to talk of their brother and the author is very appreciative that despite this pain, they have told the author stories and memories of their brother. All of the *Spare Charlie* crew members had a special place in their siblings' hearts.

As the ninth of twelve children, Max Rockey had many siblings and they were a close-knit group.⁵²⁴ During his training, Max came home at one point for a visit. One of his younger sisters, Zella, was very proud of Max and looked up to him.⁵²⁵ Another sister, Betty, remembered when the Springport Village Saxon came to her family's house in summer 1944 to inform them about Max. "It was just so sad," she said. She paused and then started to cry. "That's all I can say. It was so very sad...I really just would have liked for Max to have come home. But every little bit helps with the pain" such as getting Max's Air Medal and placing flowers at a local memorial.⁵²⁶

Some of the *Spare Charlie* siblings have been affected by their brother being buried in Normandy. Beder states that "for individuals and families who cannot have a funeral, the period

⁵²³ Pam Feighner, e-mail to author, October 11, 2019.

⁵²⁴ Bruce Rockey, e-mail to author, June 29, 2019.

⁵²⁵ Heather Esterline, interview by author, notes of conversation, phone call, January 27, 2020.

⁵²⁶ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

of uncertainty and disorientation that the situation provokes can be extremely stressful. For them, the loss is incomprehensible as there are no remains to focus the grief; many people need the concrete experience of seeing a body in order to make the death real to them. Without it, the death becomes difficult to believe, accept, and move on from.”⁵²⁷ For some siblings, it was hard to accept their brother’s death since they did not necessarily have and attend a funeral for him. Since he is buried in Normandy, it felt as if he could still walk through the door. This was also probably the case for some of the *Spare Charlie* parents.

Edna Osterberg, sister of Allen, wrote Mary Catherine Lundberg “at least it was sudden + they didn’t have to suffer torture of any kind. John and Allen won’t have to suffer the trials and tribulations of this life but I wish I could have gone instead as I know I have so much less to contribute towards living than they.”⁵²⁸ Edna collected and kept Allen’s possessions, which were donated to the Delta County Historical Society after her death in 2012.⁵²⁹



Image 84- Some of Allen’s wings and insignias at the Delta County Historical Society Museum.



Image 85- Allen’s gold lieutenant bars, identification tags, and other insignias at the Delta County Historical Society Museum.

⁵²⁷ Beder, “Mourning the Unfound: How We Can Help,” 401.

⁵²⁸ Letter, “Edna Osterberg to Mary Catherine Lundberg,” January 16, 1946, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

⁵²⁹ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, July 29, 2019.

Robby Scharff was the youngest of nine children. As one family member wrote, “I doubt that anything ever hit the family as hard as his untimely death at the age of 22 years. He remains in our hearts forever.”⁵³⁰ In 1985, Robby Scharff’s brother, Edwin, received confirmation that Robby’s name “is eligible for the inclusion in the Roll of Honor. I am pleased to tell you, therefore, that the Registrar of St. Paul’s Cathedral has informed me that SSgt Scharff’s name will shortly be inscribed in the American Roll of Honor.”⁵³¹

Jack Lundberg’s wishes that his mother, Grace, be taken care of were honored and fulfilled by his brothers. They bought their mother a home in Bountiful, Utah, to live in along with their sister, Grace.⁵³² Honoring Jack, his brothers each named one of their sons after him. They never stopped talking about Jack and although never too detailed, it was enough for their children “to know our uncle was a hero.”⁵³³ Their children and grandchildren know about Jack and some have visited him in Normandy. In 1963, Jack’s sister, Grace, went to France and visited his grave. Recalling the incident, Grace wrote:

Here it was raining with a vengeance I set out doggedly to walk to Jack’s grave-thankful for being at last ENROUTE + grateful for my raincoat. Luckily for me, a Frenchman in a car came along when I was about halfway-freezing, teeth chattering, definitely sad + WET when he offered a lift. His name was Albert. He could not have been more caring. He escorted me to the American in charge- walked with me to Jack’s grave once we had directions- Just as we turned into Jack’s row, the rain stopped. I knelt down + prayed + my new found friend joined me. He took the pictures... This was the most peaceful of places-classic beauty overlooking UTAH Beach, since God called Jack then-no place could have been more apropos. (He) then insisted I come + be the guest of him + his wife for dinner in a tiny hotel in this minute village which they owned. I walked with them + their children- they saw me to the train in the late afternoon enroute to Cherbourg.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Robert Scharff scrapbook, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

⁵³¹ Letter, “A.B. Rowley to Edwin Scharff,” February 1, 1985, in possession of Bettyann Mariano.

⁵³² Rich Fox, e-mail to author, January 7, 2019.

⁵³³ Rich Fox, e-mail to author, January 13, 2019.

⁵³⁴ Letter, “Grace Ellen Lundberg to Ann and Pat Kronmiller,” May 16, 1992, in possession of Ann Kronmiller, given to author, can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

Although the Normandy American Cemetery overlooks Omaha Beach, Utah Beach is still close to the Cemetery. Still, Grace probably found the experience comforting about her brother's death.



Image 86- Grace Lundberg at the Normandy American Cemetery in 1963.

“We Will Remember Them”

Although it has been over seventy-five years since their deaths, the *Spare Charlie* crew members have not been forgotten. They are remembered in various ways. Allen Osterberg's family has never forgotten him and he “holds a special place in our hearts.”⁵³⁵ A great-niece wrote a historical fiction version of Allen's life for her undergraduate work, which qualified for submission to a writer's conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.⁵³⁶ When Murl Simmons' mother, June, passed away in 1998, Murl's military items, including his Purple Heart were donated to the Gouverneur Museum.⁵³⁷ His items are viewed by the Museum's visitors and in a way, Murl is remembered.

On 28 February 1946, Springport's local Veterans of Foreign Wars post was named Rockey-Adams in honor of Max Rockey.⁵³⁸ Since Max is buried in France, his family puts

⁵³⁵ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, July 8, 2019.

⁵³⁶ Kay Shapy, e-mail to author, July 10, 2019.

⁵³⁷ Tina Hogle, e-mail to author, October 7, 2019.

⁵³⁸ Heather Esterline, Facebook message to author, February 25, 2020.

flowers on the Springport Veteran's Memorial to honor him.⁵³⁹ In 2013, one of Max's nephews visited him in Normandy. He was escorted by a Frenchman who "thanked my Uncle Max and all of those who served and died to free France from occupation."⁵⁴⁰ In addition to Bob Petroski's son visiting him, his brother, Don, also travelled to the Normandy American Cemetery and went to Bob's grave.⁵⁴¹ The five *Spare Charlie* crew members buried in Normandy will forever be visited and honored by loved ones, students, and strangers, all of whom are thankful for their sacrifices.

Hap Chandler and Vic Romasco had great respect for Sam Peak and Allen Osterberg.

There is no doubt that Sam was dearly loved by his men. Both men did not talk often about Lieutenants Peak and Osterberg but it was obvious that they had been close. In all likelihood, it must have been painful for Vic and Hap to think and talk about their close friends who were killed in the war. When he arrived at Stalag Luft III, Hap Chandler was given a diary to write in. He dedicated it to Sam and Allen.

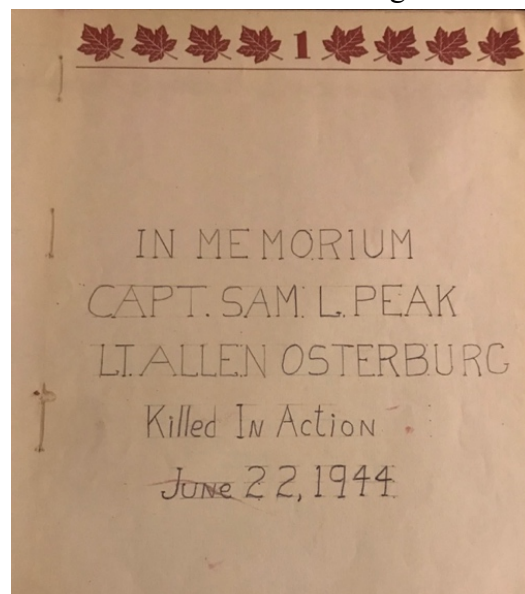


Image 87- Hap Chandler's dedication to Sam Peak and Allen Osterberg in his diary.

When one of Frank Welke's great-nieces was in third grade, she decided to learn the violin. Her grandmother and Frank's sister, Marie, had his violin in its case residing in her basement. Marie gave her granddaughter Frank's violin and in turn, she performed in the school string orchestra. Eventually, she became a string orchestra teacher and recently began her twelfth year as string orchestra director at a middle school. In

⁵³⁹ Chuby, "Recalling a Brother," *The Battle Creek Enquirer*.

⁵⁴⁰ Bruce Rockey, e-mail to author, June 29, 2019.

⁵⁴¹ Russell Post, e-mail to author, July 4, 2019.

addition, she also performs in a local community symphony orchestra and an event quartet for parties and weddings.

Frank's great-niece still plays his violin because of its great quality of sound.⁵⁴²

Robby Scharff's brother, Harold, and sister-in-law, Rose, were expecting a child while he was training at Alex.

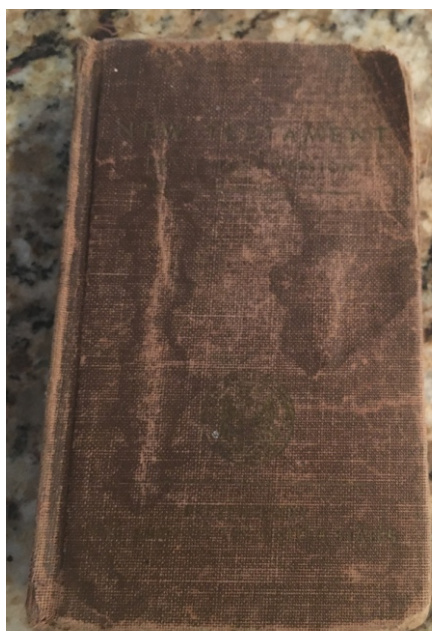


Image 89- Robby Scharff's Bible.

Robby was to be the godfather of his future nephew or niece. On 26 March

1944, Robby wrote "Well mom by

this time Rose must have had the blessed event. Let me know what it is,

Boy or girl."⁵⁴³ Robby's niece and goddaughter was born while he was

overseas. It is obvious that Robby was very excited to be a godfather to

his future niece or nephew. And in turn, it seemed most fitting that his

goddaughter would receive and keep his items, including his Air Medal and Bible.



Image 88- Frank Welke's violin.

Generations of Lundbergs have read and know the last letter Jack wrote his family. The letter has been treasured and preserved by them. It has been used by many of Jack's family members for school history projects. One niece remarked that "it makes the war very personal."⁵⁴⁴ In the letter, Jack wrote:

Now that I am actually here I see that the chances of my returning to all of you are quite slim, therefore I want to write this letter now while I am yet alive. I want you to know how much I love each of you. You mean everything to me and it is the realization of your

⁵⁴² Kathy Colquhoun, letter to author, December 2019; and Catherine Colquhoun, e-mail to author, April 1, 2020.

⁵⁴³ V-mail, "Robby Scharff to Scharff family," March 26, 1944.

⁵⁴⁴ Cathy Free, "A Soldier's Letter Gives War a Face," *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), March 9, 2000, accessed February 11, 2019, <https://www.deseretnews.com/article/747987/A-soldiers-letter-gives-war-a-face.html>.

love that gives me the courage to continue. Mom and Pop-- we have caused you innumerable hardships and sacrifices— sacrifices which you have both made readily and gladly that we might get more from life. I have always determined to show my appreciation to you by enabling you both to have more of the pleasures of life—but this War has prevented my so doing of the past three years. If you receive this letter I shall be unable to fulfill my desires, for I have requested that this letter be forwarded only in the event I do not return. You have had many times more than your share of illness and deaths in the family—still you have continued to exemplify what true parents should. I am sorry to add to your grief—but at all times realize that my thoughts are of you constantly and that I feel that in some small way I am helping to bring this wasteful war to a conclusion. We of the United States have something to fight for—never more fully have I realized that. There just is no other country with comparable wealth, advancement, or standard of living. The U.S.A. is worth a sacrifice! Remember always that I love you each most fervently and I am proud of you. Consider Mary, my wife, as having taken my place in the family circle and watch over each other.⁵⁴⁵

When this letter was received by the Lundberg family, it probably helped give them some comfort about Jack's death. They were able to essentially know Jack's last words and understand what was most important to him for them to know. In 294 words, he comforted and consoled his family over his impending death. Jack let them know that he understood and supported the cause that he would eventually die for. In a way, he informed them that he came to terms with dying and never seeing his family again. Knowing that Jack had made peace with dying must have had provided some consolation for the Lundberg family. Jack's letter was published in historian Andrew Carrol's *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars*.⁵⁴⁶ In 2004, Jack was honored in a D-Day exhibit at the Mémorial de Caen museum, where his letter was displayed.⁵⁴⁷ The forty-third United States President, George W. Bush, quoted Jack in a speech about sacrifice.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Letter, "Jack Lundberg to Lundberg Family," May 19, 1944.

⁵⁴⁶ Jack's letter can be found on pages 245-246.

⁵⁴⁷ Mike Fox, e-mail to the author, March 7, 2019.

⁵⁴⁸ Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Michael R. Gordon, "Bush Invokes the Fallen, Past and Present," *The New York Times*, May 30, 2006, accessed December 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/30/us/30veterans.html>.

Jack is dearly loved by his nieces and nephews. Since Mary was named as Jack's next of kin, she received the flag used to drape Jack's casket during the burial ceremony in the Normandy American Cemetery, along with his war emblems. After Mary died in 1998, her children found various items of and related to Jack. Some of them, including documents, letters, and emblems were sent to the Lundberg family. However, the flag was not among the items sent to them. It was purchased at an estate sale by a historian who sold it on eBay. One of Jack's nephews came across the eBay listing and with his brother, got in touch with the historian. But, the flag was sold. The nephews were able to get in contact with the buyer who subsequently sold it back to them.⁵⁴⁹ The flag is now in their possession.



Image 90- Jack Lundberg's Flag. February 2019.

Conclusions

The *Spare Charlie* crew members all lost something due to their premature deaths. Sam Peak and Bob Petroski never got to kiss their wives again and see their children grow up. Jack Lundberg did not get to have a family with his wife and could not “realize” his “most cherished ambitions.”⁵⁵⁰ Allen Osterberg wrote that he hoped his nephew Dale “is as lively as ever and “is a big boy by the time I get back to see you all.”⁵⁵¹ Allen never got to see Dale grow up or meet more of his nieces and nephews. Murl Simmons did not have the chance of fulfilling his ambition to be Roger Taylor's stand-in. Frank Welke never returned home to his loving family

⁵⁴⁹ Mike Fox, e-mail to the author, January 14, 2019.

⁵⁵⁰ Brown, *The Mighty Men of the 381st: Heroes All, A Chaplain's Inside Story on the Men of the 381st Bomber Group*, 108.

⁵⁵¹ V-mail, “Allen Osterberg to Jay and Mary Osterberg,” March 31, 1944.

or ever played his violin again. Robby Scharff did not get to join his siblings in becoming a spouse and parent. Max Rockey never had the opportunity to marry his girlfriend and be a sports star. One can only wonder what other accomplishments these men would have achieved had they lived.

The Second World War was traumatic for everyone. The Peak and *Spare Charlie* crews were not the only ones who sacrificed something. Their families did too. Not only did the families lose precious time with their loved one while he was training and fighting the war overseas, they had to live in the unknown about what happened to him, if he had died, and where he was buried. Then, for the majority of them, they had to live the rest of their lives without him. Children grew up never knowing their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers. Most of the men predeceased their parents, which is no doubt every parent's worst fear. In some ways life went on for the families, but for others it stopped and changed when their loved one died. Despite this, the *Spare Charlie* families continued on with their lives and endured despite their grief and heartbreak, which takes much strength to do so.

Every member of the Peak and *Spare Charlie* crews were and are still dearly loved by their families. Although some of the men have not been talked about as much as others by their families, all of them are known by their families. They each hold a special place in their family members' hearts and for some, a connection is felt between the soldiers and younger generations of their family. When the author communicated with the each of the families of the Peak and *Spare Charlie* crews, at least one family member expressed great interest and curiosity in their soldier. Perhaps for some families, their soldier is somewhat of a mystery and hopefully this thesis answers any questions family members might have. Many of the families are proud of and

honor their soldier and the sacrifices he made. The Peak and *Spare Charlie* crew members are heroes to their families and many others, including the author.

Communication had a considerable influence on the reactions of the *Spare Charlie* families about their soldier's death. By writing letters, the members of the *Spare Charlie* crew were able to communicate their last words to their families. In most of their letters, the men expressed concern for various family members. It is obvious that although they were thousands of miles away, their families and loved ones were never far from their minds. For some families, the men's letters probably brought some closure about their deaths. For others, letters from other crew members and the government provided information that helped family members understand what happened to their soldier. This in turn contributed to some easing of pain and grief.

However, there were also negative effects on the families from communication. The prolonged time between correspondence and lack of answers from the government certainly worsened the anxiety, pain, and grief felt by the families. Incorrect and varied information resulted in confusion and worry, which lasted years far beyond the end of the war. Some family members had a lack of closure by not knowing the full circumstances of how their loved one died. Wartime propaganda and an emotionally closed culture conveyed messages of suppressing and internally holding in one's grief. Because of their repressed feelings, some family members could not talk about their soldier for the rest of their lives as those feelings were still incredibly raw and painful. Although it would have been hard, if those family members had expressed their emotions and feelings, they most likely would have been more comforted about their soldier's death and perhaps it would have been easier to talk about him.

The United States government should not have been so slow to give information about the crew. Yes, it makes sense that information would be transmitted slowly during the war.

However, in today's times, this should not be the case. A good majority of the information used by the author in this thesis was derived from the *Spare Charlie* crew members' Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPF). The IDPF consists of documentation about any American soldier who was missing and killed in various wars. This information includes the circumstances of death, burial, identification, and communication between the soldier's families and the United States government. In the past few years, the United States made WWII IDPFs last names A-M available to the public. These records are stored and maintained by the National Archives and Records Administration in St. Louis, Missouri. The WWII IDPFs last names N-Z are still under the custody of the United States Military and generally cannot be accessed by the public. It takes at least a year to receive an IDPF from the National Archives and at least two years from the military.

It took three months for the author to receive the *Spare Charlie* crew's IDPFs from the military. And they were received quickly due to aid from the author's congressman's office. On the other hand, the author also received the military files for the Australian pilot, Reginald Cowan, within two weeks of requesting them. One wonders why it has taken the United States over seventy years since the Second World War to allow IDPFs to be accessed and viewed by the public. In addition, why does it take such a long time to receive the files, when files from the Australian Archives are received quite fast? Regardless, these files should have been made available to the public (or at least to family members of soldiers killed in the war) earlier, especially when the majority of the *Spare Charlie* families were alive. Receiving and viewing these files would have probably brought closure to some of the families, especially for the Petroski family, who spent years trying to receive Bob Petroski's military files.

Perhaps the most important thing anyone can do for a deceased loved one is to talk about them and write down their history. By doing so, that loved one will be remembered by future generations. They will not become forgotten as time progresses forward. Although it can be quite painful even years after a loved one's death, not talking about them will result in their stories and memories being gone. They will become forgotten. The author recommends to anyone reading this thesis to preserve any important items, give information about those items, and if possible, to digitize those items. By doing so, not only will family members have access to the information about those items and the individuals who owned them, but that information could greatly benefit researchers and the general public. In addition, it will guarantee that the individual's life experiences, story, and memory will live on forever.

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Images in Paper:

Image 1: Unknown photographer. "Sam Peak." Photograph, 1943. From 1943 Enid Army Air Field Yearbook.

Image 2: Unknown photographer. "Vic Romasco." Photograph, circa 1943. From Cheryl Herzog.

Image 3: Unknown photographer. "Lieutenant Victor Romasco receiving gift." Photograph, circa 1943. From Cheryl Herzog.

Image 4: Unknown photographer. "Thomas Tracy." Photograph, circa 1944. From Delta County Historical Society.

Image 5: Unknown photographer. "Allen Osterberg." Photograph, circa 1943-1944. From Delta County Historical Society.

Image 6: Unknown photographer. "Allen (left) and two other bombardier cadets at Victorville." Photograph, circa 1943-1944. From Delta County Historical Society.

Image 7: Unknown photographer. "Murl Simmons." Photograph, circa 1943. From Tina Hogle.

Image 8: Unknown photographer. "Frank Welke Sr." Photograph, circa 1917-1919. From https://www.2manitowoc.com/milit/welke_frank.jpg, (accessed April 5, 2020).

Image 9: Unknown photographer. "Frank Welke." Photograph, circa 1942. From <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54356513/frank-albert-welke>, (accessed July 18, 2019).

Image 10: Unknown photographer. "Robby Scharff." Photograph, circa 1942. From Bettyann Mariano.

Image 11: Unknown photographer. "Robby (left) and buddies." Photograph, 1942. From Bettyann Mariano.

Image 12: Unknown photographer. "Redin Kilpatrick." Photograph, circa 1943. From "Gunnery of the Week." *Tyndall Target*. October 23, 1943. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0024307/00079>. Accessed May 6, 2020.

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Image 14: Unknown photographer. "Max Rockey." Photograph, circa 1944. From Delta County Historical Society.

Image 15: Unknown photographer. "Some officers training at Alex." Photograph, circa 1944. From Cheryl Herzog.

Image 16: Unknown photographer. "Some officers training at Alex." Photograph, circa 1944. From Cheryl Herzog.

Image 17: Unknown photographer. "Sam Peak Crew." Photograph, circa 1944. From Delta County Historical Society.

Image 18: Unknown photographer. "Hap Chandler." Photograph, circa 1943-1944. From Ali Powell.

Image 19: Unknown photographer. "Hap's Hondo graduating class 43-18-2." Photograph, circa December 1943. From Ali Powell.

Image 20: “Map of Ridgewell.” From Gaillard, Ernest. *Flight Surgeon: Complete and Unabridged Combat Diary of Medical Detachment, 1943-44, 242nd Medical Dispensary, Eighth Army Air Forces, 381st Bomb Group, Station 167, Ridgewell, Essex, England*. Edited by William N. Gaillard. Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2005. From Photos and Images section.

Image 21: Unknown photographer. “Huts at Ridgewell.” Photograph, January 6, 1945. From <https://www.fold3.com/image/32042537>, (accessed March 21, 2020).

Image 22: “Flight plan for 28 April mission and the Peak crew’s position in the high squadron.” From Gaillard, Ernest. *Flight Surgeon: Complete and Unabridged Combat Diary of Medical Detachment, 1943-44, 242nd Medical Dispensary, Eighth Army Air Forces, 381st Bomb Group, Station 167, Ridgewell, Essex, England*. Edited by William N. Gaillard. Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2005. Page 121.

Image 23: “Flight plan and position of the Peak crew on 12 May.” From Gaillard, Ernest. *Flight Surgeon: Complete and Unabridged Combat Diary of Medical Detachment, 1943-44, 242nd Medical Dispensary, Eighth Army Air Forces, 381st Bomb Group, Station 167, Ridgewell, Essex, England*. Edited by William N. Gaillard. Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2005. Page 128.

Image 24: Unknown photographer. “*The Betty L.*” Photograph, May 30, 1944. From <https://www.fold3.com/image/55663727>, (accessed November 11, 2018).

Image 25: Unknown photographer. “Getting ready for D-Day.” Photograph, June 6, 1944. From <https://www.fold3.com/image/32145416>, (accessed November 11, 2018).

Image 26: Unknown photographer. “Getting ready for D-Day.” Photograph, June 6, 1944. From <https://www.fold3.com/image/32040344>, (accessed November 11, 2018).

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Image 29: Noel, Camille. Creator. “Missions flown by the Peak crew.” Image, May 6, 2020. From Camille Noel.

Image 30: Unknown photographer. “1st Lt. Robert “Bob” F. Petroski .” Photograph, circa October 1943. From Marion Petroski Post.

Image 31: Unknown photographer. “2nd Lt. John “Jack” K. Lundberg.” Photograph, circa 1943-1944. In possession of Ann Kronmiller. Given to author. Can be reached at <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/memories/MRJD-ZC9>.

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