

## War Era Story Project 2012

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After bombing near Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr, we were hit by flak and fighters. We lost our number four engine and the right wing fuel tank. The back of the aircraft was shot up and the four men jumped. We couldn't keep up and gradually fell back. I was wounded slightly by fragments in my spine and left leg. We went down to treetop level and tried to make it back. Two ME-109 fighters flew on our wings and tried to force us back.

Finally, it was decided that we had to crash land while we still had enough fuel for control. Johnson found the only level spot and greased it in. At the crash, I left the radio gunner because he was going into shock. We were just inside Holland. We took our escape kits and I pointed south and said "Spain is that way." Johnson, Weir and I took off to one side and Dickinson and Broyles also headed south, a little to our right.

In five minutes we were in a thick forest and we stayed in it for a mile or so, then decided we could make better time on a path. That evening we just happened to join up with underground forces. We got civilian clothing and started on our way again. The two gunners were captured in Belgium and Johnson was caught in Paris. My copilot and I were loose for twenty-one days.

When we got to the Belgian border, it was decided that our next guide was compromised, so we headed back north to the Hague and a boat was to take us over the next morning. That afternoon we walked into a Gestapo trap and ended up in Scheveningen in the Federal Prison. We found out that all the other prisoners were Jews on their way to Auschwitz. After about ten days in solitary and daily interrogation, we were taken to Stalag Luft III, southeast of Berlin.

Fast forward fifty-nine years: Unknown to us, somebody had taken a photo of our plane. In 2002, the man's son found the picture in a box, e-mailed our war department and got in touch with the 92<sup>nd</sup> BG. They called me and I got in touch and he sent me a copy of the negative. The fighter pilots are standing in the picture.

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