

Suzanne

From: Patricia Gemmell <pgemmell@tpg.com.au>
Sent: Sunday, October 22, 2017 3:29 AM
To: Suzanne
Subject: Re: Sidney Casden

Importance: High

My mother always said that the American airmen were very handsome!!

I will attach the scans of a newspaper article, that probably appeared in a New Jersey paper. I have tried in the past to find the original article because my mother censored some of it with her scissors!!

It also contains a photo of her at the time - 1947.

Tricia

American Airman Shot Down Over France Reunited With Underground Aide On Visit



MRS. HELEN GILL

Photo by Harcourt, Paris

A little more than four years ago during the German occupation of France, two grounded American airmen, disguised as peasant workers, were guided through enemy lines by a French underground operative to a hiding place in Paris. Several days later the Americans were successfully smuggled across the English Channel by French patriots into England.

One of the fliers was Andrew Hathaway, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hathaway of 1429 Munn avenue, but who now resides with his wife, Nina and 20-month old son, Andrew John, at 61 Myrtle avenue, Irvington.

Arrived Saturday

The incident was vividly recalled by the Hathaways entertained by Mrs. Gill, and her seven-year-

old son, Daniel, at their home Tuesday. Mrs. Gill, who arrived from France Saturday on the S. S. De Grasse, was the underground worker who heroically shuttled Hathaway and scores of other allied airmen to safety across enemy occupied country.

A petite attractive blonde, Mrs. Gill told in flawless English, that she was enroute to Sidney, Australia

But let's return to Hathaway's adventure and subsequent meeting with Mrs. Gill.

On November 26, 1943, Hathaway, a technical sergeant and chief engineer on an Eighth Air Force B-17 was on his first bombing mission over the continent when the plane was disabled in a surprise attack by a pack of German fighters. Unable to keep his plane in formation, the chief pilot ordered the crew to bail out over German occupied France. Two men were killed during the descent, four taken prisoner by the Germans and the other four, who included Hathaway, escaped.

Aided By Farmer

After three days of wandering in a dense forest during which he subsisted solely on milk tablets, Hathaway, suffering from head wounds, was given refuge by a French farmer. Supplying the former Hillside with old clothes, the farmer got in touch with the French underground, who made arrangements to shuttle Hathaway from town to town until he reached safety.

It was in a small suburb outside of Paris that the glamorous underground worker enters the story.

"I was told to pick up two American fliers in a town about 25 miles from Paris," she said. "I still remember the date, it was January 13, 1944. And one of the men was Andrew" (Hathaway).

Son Avoided Suspicion

Accompanied by her small son, she met the Americans and brought them back to Paris by train.

"I sat with Daniel, on the train, quite apart from the soldiers," she said. "That way the Germans would not get suspicious seeing one woman sitting with two roughly dressed men."

"I always took Daniel along, too," she added. "Germans like children and his presence made my lot easier. The Germans never suspected that a woman traveling with a child would be an underground agent."

Hidden In Attic

In Paris, she took the Americans to a flat, where they were hidden in the attic for several days. When necessary false identification cards and passports were completed, Hathaway and three other Allied Soldiers were taken from the French Capital to a small town on the Channel coast and transported safely by boat across to England.

"Yes, the Germans knew of my underground activities," she declared. In fact they had my picture on hundreds of posters all over Paris demanding my arrest. They said shooting was too good for me. If I was caught, I'm sure they would have subjected me to a more brutal death than one by a firing squad.

She revealed that the Gestapo

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She revealed that the Gestapo had laid numerous traps for her, but each time they were outwitted when Mrs. Gill received calls from associates warning her to stay away from specific locations. She said the phrase used by the underground to warn of impending danger was: "Your mother is very ill and has been taken to the hospital; do not go home."

Pleased by U. S.

Most of the soldiers she aided still correspond with her. She said Hathaway and a Jersey City resident were the only two Jerseyans she helped to escape.

Everything about the United States pleased her. The large selection of women's shoes impressed her the most.

"In France, we just can't get shoes," she explained. "Even on the black market they are scarce." Lifting her foot to display a crepe soled saddle shoe she said: "This is the kind of shoes we wear over there."

She said Daniel was especially pleased by the large stock of toys in the stores. "Toys are the scarcest things found today in France," she explained.

Her visit to the Hathaways included a trip to a super market, a five and dime store and several other retail establishments.

"America is wonderful," Mrs. Gill concluded, except for that snow.

Helene Gill

