

**Charlie Cupp Me262 Incident Crash Flak London Flak House Base Life Musings**

**Erm..your name for the camera and what squadron you with with and what your job was on base? Whenever you're ready.**

My name is Ed Paretti and i was a tail gunner on the Torrance crew, 715<sup>th</sup> bomb squadron, 448<sup>th</sup> bomb group in Seething.

**And can you describe your journey or a little bit of your journey over to England what route did you take?**

Going over to England?

**Yes.**

Well we left the overseas training facility in Charleston, South Carolina and we took the train up to Mitchell Field New York and we stayed there i think two nights and heavy snowfall at that time and we took off for Bangor, Maine and at Bangor, Maine there was about two feet of snow and we were snowed in there for almost a week and then we took off from Bangor, Maine and went to Labrador and we stayed over night at Labrador and from there we went to Greenland and er i that was a little scary flying into Greenland because i was half asleep and i woke up and there mountains on either side of us and if i remember the runway in Greenland was a little uphill with water at the bottom of the hill and i think we took off, we took off down that hill and we landed going up but we stayed there overnight and i can remember aeroplanes coming in and circling and then heading east again and they tell me they were the Canadian twin engined fighter bomb er i can't remember the name of those, you remember the twin-engined fighter bomber made in Canada? The plywood aeroplane?

**Mosquito?**

The Mosquito yeah and evidently they were ferrying them over from Canada and they would circle Greenland and then keep right on going and we stayed there overnight and then we went to Iceland and we stayed in Iceland one night and from Iceland we went to Valley, Wales and i think we stayed at Valley, Wales two nights and from there we went to Seething and we stayed in temporary barracks for a couple of nights and an air raid warning there i think two nights in a row while we were in temporary barracks with another crew and then finally we were settled in our own barracks with a crew piloted by Sam Haley and they had already flown about 15 missions i think. We didn't do anything for three or four days, a week and the first thing you know we were mixing cement and laying side walks out in front of the hut and it was because it was very muddy and after that job was done they gave us a 3 day pass to London. We went down to London for 3 days and when we came back our name was on the board to fly so we flew the next day – the mission was Hanover and on the way out we lost an engine and coming back i don't know whether the navigator got lost a little bit or whatever but they tell me he flew over the Hague and what i thought was hale stones hitting the aeroplane it turned out to be flak i guess the Germans had the mobile guns on the rail road tracks or something at that time. Anyway what you don't know don't hurt you i guess so we landed and the next day the mission was Berlin. There was an awful lot of flak but it wasn't too accurate and i understand that they didn't lose too many aeroplanes that day. Different numbers i heard at one time they only lost 14 and they never really come out with it. No one ever really agrees on the facts.

**What about fighters? Did you come across any fighters on any of those missions?**

Fighters? No. We didn't see fighters that day but then went on we flew i guess six missions i don't

have the missions written down here and then we had another 3 day pass and then we flew 6 more on the 12<sup>th</sup> mission we went to Rouen near the Bordeaux pocket and we dropped the gasoline jelly bombs. And our crew didn't carry guns we didn't have any guns on that trip but i understand talking to other people they did carry guns. They told us we didn't carry guns because the fact...they didn't want with all the gasoline jelly bombs and the fumes we didn't want to cause an explosion or anything. But anyway we got back from Rouen and the next day we were scheduled for....Lipschutt or something like that and we were taking off down the runway and i was sitting in the waist with the machine gun across my....sitting on an ammunition box with the machine gun on my chest looking out the window and i looked at that wheel and it was about 3 feet off the ground and i said "oh no" i said we're only half way down the runway how can we be 3 feet off the ground? And all of a sudden we started to go back down and i yelled to my buddy that – he was a nose gunner at that time and i think he was eighteen years old – to get on the floor and we got on the floor and it went off the end of the runway ammunition is going off some place and fire. We tried to get out of the camera hatch, i couldn't get the camera hatch open myself that's the escape hatch at the back i couldn't get that open and finally this buddy of mine Caruso i said "Gimme a hand with this" and both of us got on that latch and we finally got it open and we're resting on the tail skin and that just gave us enough room to crawl out there. And when we got out my first intent was to run away, you know because of the explosion and we started to run away and all of a sudden we looked up and we saw a pilot coming out of the left window and we went back and from there i don't know just how they got down. I don't know what happened to the other two gunners but Caruso and i stayed together and the crash truck came in and what fire was there they put out and some men got up on top of the aeroplane and started chopping away there and i was stood right in front of the aeroplane at that time you know heavy flying suit and everything on and all of a sudden fire broke out i think on number two engine i guess in that area and all hell broke loose and you could everybody say "get the hell out of here, run, run!" And i dove underneath an ambulance Caruso and i were underneath that ambulance when that blew up and all i can remember is that ambulance jumping up in the air and there was a lot of descriptions, i have some pictures of that by the way what was left there and some tell me there were two explosions no i have no idea how many there were but anyway our co-pilot Calomeni wasn't with us that day he was in sick bay and the story is that he said we flew six missions in a row and our radio operator or engineer wasn't feeling good too and he tried to talk them into going to sick bay but they flew on the mission and in the meantime at that crash the top turret came down and the radio operator and the engineer, the navigator and the bombardier were trapped between the pilot seat and the top turret. And the bombardier had only flown one mission and that was the day before to Rouen and this is his second mission i never really met the guy and he got killed the four of them got killed in that crash the rescue people were talking to the four of them but they couldn't get them out and when that fire blew some of the local people i don't whether Pat Everson remembers the explosion, some of the local people have told me you know the smoke went a mile high. But that was the end of...we had...one of the interesting missions that i recall is...refers to how records get distorted. We were flying on a mission i'm not sure if it was to Buchen according to Ed Chu's books it was Buchen, but it wasn't Buchen that we were on. Anyway on the way in when it came time to transfer the fuel from the Tokyo tanks to the main tank our engineer had trouble so the pilot called the leader to see if we could turn back and he said "no, you can't turn back" after the bomb run, stay on the bomb run because we're getting hit by jets. Stay on the bomb run until after you dropped the bombs then take the shortest route back. Which we did we took the shortest route back. Over the intercom came the pilot and he said "When i ring the bell you fellas bail out cos we're out of fuel" Well i said "how about me Doug?" he said "No you stay in the tail turret you gotta look out for the fighters" I can out the parachute on in the tail turret right? So anyway i got out of the tail turret and i got my parachute on and i kneeled in front of it with my hands reaching in on the guns but i wasn't about to sit in there so anyway we circled down we started to get lower and lower and lower and i turned the tail turret all the way around and when the tail turret is all the way around to one side there's a space about five or six inches where it's open and you can look straight down. I used to look straight down and watch the bombs go down. And i looked down and there was an airfield there. And i had a lot of training in recognition because i had trained to be a pilot at one time

NG AUDIO

and i looked down and i called the pilot and i said "Doug they look like P-47s down there!"  
So...inaudible everybody else looked down....

So everybody confirmed the fact that they were P47s and we went down. It was up in the corner North East Germany or Belgium and territory was all dug up by tanks and armoured vehicles i guess and it was a steel mat runway and we landed on that runway and erm they pushed us off into the, right off the runway into the mud and in no time at all the wheels were in mud about 10,12 inches deep. And they filled it up with fuel now this is where the facts get distorted. They filled it up with fuel and the ground crew didn't want to put the chain on it and pull it out with the engines running and we had a waist gunner he said "i know how to drive that thing" he said "I'll drive the cle-track" and with the engines running. So that was all well good and fine the engines were still idling and it was a ground crew man digging under the right landing wheel and he had a shovle there and with that there was another man up by the nose wheel and he yelled to his buddy "throw me that shovel!" So the guy took the shovel and threw it. And it got caught in the number 2 propeller and went right into the aeroplane as our engineer was coming out the nose wheel hatch, the nose wheel escape hatch right up there some place. So they stopped the engines and it all it did was put a little nick in the propeller no damage at all so with that we got back in the aeroplane and pulled that thing up onto the steel mat and took off for England. When we got back to England it was dark just got dark and one of the offices pulled up in his jeep and came down and he saw that whole and said "ay you got hit!" i said "yeah by a shovel" well he liked...he didn't know whether to believe me or not but anyway the crew chief came over he said "what happened, what happened" Our flight engineer said "i couldn't transfer the fuel" he said "it's amazing i didn't know what to do i could...no matter what i did i couldn't transfer the 250 gallons on each wing tank in" the crew chief said "Oh you gotta do this, you have do that you have to turn the other knob" and this poor flight engineer looked at him and said "Jeez i never studied that model in school" i said "you bum you better go back to school!" We made a joke out of it really. You better go back to school before we fly again. But anyway the fact is that, the story is that, anyway we got back to England the story came out that we were heavily damaged by flak and landed in Belgium Now Ed Chu has that story in his book that we were heavily damaged by flak. The other guy who was a nephew of somebody wrote that big book on the 448<sup>th</sup> he has the same story and i talked to him about that i said that's distorting the facts i said. But that isn't anything Schilling tells a story have you interviewed Schilling?

**I have spoke to him yeah.**

Did he tell you the story about the life raft getting caught in the tale? And they said it was hit by a tree. And this story now in Iraq reminds me of the same thing where they shot this officer and they distort the facts.

**On that mission did you see any jet fighters?**

Well this is – I'm gonna tell you this story and i just can't remember the mission although i do have an air medal that's dated April 5<sup>th</sup> and that aeroplane that's cut in half we were flying a group ahead of that. Now that flight back there was Ed Chu's flight and i always tried the best i could to get around some the facts on this. And i watched those jets come down to my right circle that group and shoot the hell out of them. And one jet came right at us and we were flying in the low right what they call the coffin corner and that jet came at me. And as far as everybody in my flight knows i was the only one shooting at him. And to make a long story short it was posted on the squadron bulletin board that that was confirmed kill. Now i got a call to go into CQs office the next day to go

in there. And this guy said he was a gunnery officer whoever the hell he was. Wanted to know if i would appear at the post theatre the next night to give a talk. And at that time i was reluctant to talk because i wasn't a public speaker and i said i don't go over there so took off and took a walk around the base i never did go there. Now that's a true story. And the only ones that now this story – my co-pilot when i talked to him in Texas he said "Oh jeez, i tell everybody about how you shot down a jet!" Now the crew that was up on top of that flight, second on the left, the top gunner he said he couldn't get a shot at him and he says that that aeroplane went down. Now i didn't see him go down i'm not gonna say he went down all i know is what was on the bulletin board and that they wanted me to appear. Now if i told this to Ed Chu he would say i was full of shit so this is why i don't mention it i mention it to you. But these are facts.

**Can you describe what that was like when that was coming at you?**

We was very, very scared and when the gunnery office said to me you know you're supposed to start firing at 600 yards. He said "when did you start firing?" "it must have been 3 miles out" i said "i started firing when i assumed he was gonna come towards me and i never let up" he said "Good boy!" that's all he said. I never let up and as i'm sitting here he came right over and you can see him and he was smoking like hell. Now whether that was smoke from the jet engine i don't know.

**Could you see him in the cockpit? Could you see the pilot?**

Pardon? Oh yeah! Yeah he was that close! And Ed Chu tells the same story he could see the pilot. Ed Chu opened up, he emptied his machine gun on the guy. Now whether that's the same one that came towards us or even whether it's the same flight? It has to be the same flight because Charlie Cup was the one that got – did you talk to Charlie Cups daughter? He's the one that got out. It's the same flight that they claim i shot down a jet. Now if you want to confirm you ever want to talk to my co-pilot i'll give you his number he's in San Antonio, Texas. I don't have it with me if you give me your address i'll send it to you. He wound up to be a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force as a dentist. I called him when we were in San Antonio i wanted go see him and he had just come out of open heart surgery and he wasn't about to have any company he told me. But he had been to England he met Pat but he doesn't come to any of the meetings and our pilot, our pilot hasn't associated with anyone at all i wrote to him once. Now why that aeroplane that crashed i have no....oh and another thing is the first book that was published by an Englishman over there, used to be very active around the 448<sup>th</sup> but i can't think of his name, distinguished looking guy. I picked up his book one time in the library and he describes that mission where we crashed and he gives the name of a co-pilot. And i've been trying to find out who that co-pilot was nobody ever heard of him. Because when our pilot was sick and we had a substitute co-pilot his name name was Donald E. Francisco Jnr. and to make a long story short i didn't care for him because in my opinion i think he may have caused that crash. In my opinion he may have lifted the flaps instead of the wheels i don't know but i only met him once and that was after the war, after we came back from the rest home. And we were all laying around a bed there in one of the rooms there some place and he didn't impress me too much and aside from that he was a very, very close relative of General Hodges. And there again the facts got distorted the General's relative wasn't flying in that aeroplane.

**Can you describe...did you have any experience with getting hit by flak?**

No the only time flak ever touched us one on that trip back from Hanover. And a couple of small pellets although Ed Chu's article said we were heavily damaged, never touched by flak. Saw a lot of it. Going through Berlin you could just get out and walk on that stuff. If it's all black they say it's not close the only time it's close is when you see the red burst. Berlin was loaded with flak but it wasn't accurate. But i've been on missions going in to the North and watched aeroplanes bombing Frankfurt to the South and i counted parachutes going down i counted parachutes, i counted parachutes going down on many missions that weren't close to us.

**Did you ever see ships going down and explosions?**

The only ship i saw go down was that one that's cut in half there. But the other ones the ones in the distance it's hard to...some of them are hard to see that are hit and you see the parachutes

**So you had a could view of the one...of Charlie Cups?**

Charlie Cups? Oh yeah. He was flying they were...i understand on that mission that some of the aeroplanes went to Weisendorf is it? and some of them went to.....another target. And i believe Ed Chu's crew and our flight were going to different targets even though we were in a different area.

**Charlie Cups plane how long would that event...him going down and that tail coming off can you describe it?**

I didn't see Charlie Cups parachute to tell you the truth i saw the aeroplane cut in half, i saw that one. And at that time we were scared to hell with it.

**What about when you went out on a pass where did you go? When you went out on a pass did you go to Norwich? London? When you were on a pass from base? Where did you spend your free time?**

London? I remember going to the movies there and at that time maybe down around Piccadilly there someplace i remember one time the guy at the back of us had binoculars and they threw him out. Evidently you're not allowed to have binoculars in some of those shows? And the girls can stand nude but they can't move or something? In those days? Yeah i remember i can't remember the name of the theatre it was a big theatre in London.

**What was London like back then?**

Very crowded. Very crowded. And I...when we came back from the rest home the same guy that towed that aeroplane out of the mud was like a Philadelphia lawyer and it was rumoured the war was going to end so he said I'm going down to the flight surgeon and I'm gonna fill his head with some stories that you guys are a nervous wreck you need more time off. His name was Breedy from Spokane, Washington and sure enough he came back with 4 passes. He said "let's get the hell out of here because i think the wars gonna end!" So we couldn't wait to get our bag and run for Norwich to get the train. And we were on the train to London when we got word that the war was over. And when we got to London, man, you've seen those pictures of London on VE day climbing all over those double decker buses and screaming and yelling and my buddy and i went into a bar. We were sitting at a bar drinking and a couple of fellas down to the right of us drinking and i looked down and...ah it can't be them...so they went out and i said to my friend "they're are a couple of guys from my home town in Hastings" i was born in Hastings on Hudson and "they're a couple of guys i know from Hastings" i said and he said "well go get them!" So i ran out quick, i ran down the street and got them two friends of mine Billy Newell and Harold Omer and they were in the ground forces. We met and the four of us went in we had a big dinner a nice fancy restaurant i forget where it was but we all had a big dinner got half drunk again. But the stay in Northport where the rest home was we were in there a couple of weeks and that was a real nice place we were in what they call the Palace hotel, big old Hotel about oh half a mile out of town it was a walk we always walked it. They had a small pitch and putt golf course there and before we went up there the two boys that got killed to radio operator and the engineer they flew on some kind of training flight over to France one time and when they came back they had they had this bottle of cognac. It was still in the barracks and then going away the pilot gave us a bottle of scotch. So we had a bottle of scotch and a bottle of cognac we brought with us. We had it in our room for a couple of days and finally the four of us said we have to drink that booze and they said all right tomorrow after breakfast we'll drink that booze so we had the breakfast we came back to the room, we past the bottle of scotch



around chased it. It wasn't cognac it was champagne. We drank the scotch and chased it with champagne and that bottle kept going around, around, around until both bottles were empty. Caruso and i took a walk to town – how the hell we walked i don't know. We got to town and there was sort of like an inlet there with some water and they rented row boats. Caruso and i got in a row boat and i couldn't row that boat i pulled the oars out of the water and i got him soaking wet and he said "let me try it" so he tried it and jeez he got me wet! So we pulled the boat over to the side and there was a couple of kids there "hey kid you wanna row this boat?" We gave the boat to a couple of kids. Now we got out of there we met two girls at the pitch and putt golf course so we decided to play golf, you can imagine how stewed we were. And we played golf for a little bit with these two girls and they probably saw how drunk we were – they left. We went back and went to sleep.

**Was that in Norwich then?**

Northport. At the rest home.

**I wanted ask you also about...a lot of the other guys said that the whole time they were at Seething they don't remember seeing the sun. How was it for you?**

I know one think all the while i was at Seething whilst i was flying i never had a drink. I said if their going to get me their going to get me sober. My buddy's and Sam Halley's crew they took their bicycles out to that pub every night, they'd wind up carrying their bicycles back they'd wreck them, fall off them. After the war was over they had a squadron party. I don't know whether that party was for the whole field or what but we had this beer party in an open field and er i don't whether i should tell you this story or not. It's humorous. The other crew had a guy named Richard Lawrence Otis. I didn't find out until after the war that he was hitting the emergency kits and taking the morphine was it or something in there? Make him put him...make him high or something. And anyway we all got drunk and Ray this Ray Dennis i guess he was 9 years old at the time he was a very good friend of Otis' he used to take Otis' laundry and they were good friends. Ray was there with Otis and he, 9 year old kid drinking a few beers too i guess. So the first thing you know, jeez i felt something what the hell is that raining? My leg was all wet it was Otis standing behind me he had it in my back pocket! Urinated in my back pocket! That son of a gun! I'll get him! I waited till he was stewed i returned the favour. So on the way back to the barracks Ray said "I'm gonna ask my father if i can sleep in the barracks with you guys tonight" which he used to once in a while. So he's gone to sleep in the barracks and he slept with Otis. Next morning we wake up and there's Otis sleeping on the floor. I said "Otis what the hell happened?" He said "Ray wet the bed last night" "serves you right" i said "you got it double!" But when we came back from the 3 day pass when the war was over everything was lit up/ We come back my buddy and i walk up to the barracks Otis' crew everybody was restricted see we got off the base just in time. The other crew in the barracks they were restricted. INAUDIBLE. We got back there and they were shooting all over and somebody locked the door, one door and Otis had a flare gun. I don't know what the hell made him do it but he took that flare gun and blew a whole in that door i think. He fired the gun at the door jeez everybody that saw it ran but he didn't do any damage. Another time, we used to carry 45s and we were getting ready to go on a mission at 4 O'clock in the morning or so and i was twirling a 45 laying in the bed and "jeez I'd like to shoot a couple of holes in the roof" and someone said "i dares yer" well they no sooner said "i dare yer" and i went pop! Pop! And i used to look at those two holes every morning when i woke up and see the light coming in. And i had read in some of the journals that i wasn't the only guy to put a couple of holes in the ceiling.

**Were you artists at all did you paint any nose art or know anyone who painter nose art?**

No. I don't even remember...the only one that i can remember was Piccadilly *Lily* and we were supposed to fly Piccadilly *Lily* the day we crossed the Rhine and we layed in the bed and you don't

get out of bed unless they wake you. They woke up the crew across from us the 6 men they never woke they never shook us we just layed in bed waiting to be shaken but they didn't shake us. Some command pilot or somebody flew the aeroplane we were knocked off and somebody else flew it and it went down. The day they crossed the Rhine it went down. I'm lucky all around. But there stories and the only thing i can say is there true stories, everything i tell you is true cos of my age i don't have to falsify anything.

**What was the weather like how did you deal with the cold and things like that did that affect you?**

Well they had a miserable winter but i got there in February of '45 and the weather was just getting pretty good. WE had pretty good weather when i was there. But i understand the weather was very..it was one of the first winters they had. December, January. We had fairly good weather.

**What about...so you didn't get too much mud or anything like that?**

Well i told you we started to put those side walks around our hut i don't whether they did around all of them or not but they had a mixer there and i said we worked there for a week or two and they gave us a pass that was unusual to give people a pass before they started to fly but then they'd give a pass before they sent you Berlin. LAUGHS. Parchem. Parchem was the other mission Parkham or Parchem the day that aeroplane was shot down Weisendorf and Parkham or Parchem. They were tough missions Buchem and Parkham and Weisendorf but most of the missions i had it easy compared to most of the crews we had it very easy.

**What about conditions on the plane? How did you feel about the cold? Did you ever get ice freezing?**

No i never had that trouble. No i never had any trouble icing up. The heated suits you get a little warm on your back. We had good equipment and the tail turret was a very good place to be you know good armament, an excellent turret.

**What about you said that the kid... was that the same kid that did your laundry?**

He wouldn't take my laundry he'd take some...he wouldn't take anybody on our crew he said he had enough but even with that i used to bring him stuff from the mess hall either oranges or apples or something we didn't eat we used to give him everything. And his father had a farm right across the street from our barracks i never did see it but i understand it was across the road and when Otis' crew were about to leave you know they said "you're restricted you can't take this, you can't take that and jeez they had 6 45s there they were trying to give away i said i don't want a gun i said I'm too reckless with a gun. I don't need a 45. But anyway they packed a big bag and they put it over a ditch on the other side of the road because they were going to have an inspection and lo and behold when they went to get the bag it was gone so Otis got a hold of Ray the kid, just by chance he said "Ray you go tell your father to bring that bag back" and he did. They sort of sensed that he had taken it you know? But he maybe thought that maybe somebody had just left it.

**What about Jimmy Stewart, Clark Gable or any of those guys you ever meet any of those guys?**

No. No it was uneventful.

**What worried you most when you were flying? Was there one particular thing that concerned you more than anything else?**

I don't really know what you worried about. It's amazing how you go through all this training and i think the majority don't worry about anything just this is what we're gonna do and just you do your

job i guess. You're scared no question but if you have superstitions you go through the rigmarole you know if you have a superstition. I had a hat, like the officers where the crushed cap you know? And i always wore that hat on landings and take offs. That was my superstition and i went through the crash i still had that hat on!

**What about...some of the guys mentioned that most of the guys were superstitious and not really overly religious,,,did you ever crews that prayed a lot?**

At that time i wasn't overly religious I've become more religious in older age but the girl i married was very religious. But I've been religious since I've been married but before that i wasn't. Most of the guys on our crew went to service before they went up and i didn't. I'm not bragging about it but i didn't. I said a few prayers in there i probably said a few prayers in an aeroplane but i didn't go to any special service.

**How did you find the English people? What were you thoughts about what the English people were like back then?**

Well they took the war real serious and they'd been through a lot and it showed they very obliging and i think they're still that way they..i think they appreciated what was done for them more than the people in this country do. They know more about the war than the people in this country do because they were affected more by it. People in this country were never affected by a war except the civil war which was brutal but since then newer generations World War II they are forgotten pretty quick. Over there you have all those memorials and stay active in them especially up around Norwich with those 54 bomb fields . It's a little different. Here people don't know that Norwich was heavily bombed before London around that time it's insignificant.

**What about buzz bombs? Did you ever hear a buzz bomb drop near the base?**

One time when i was in London yeah i heard one come over, yeah. I don't know whether any of these stories are any good to you or not?

No. I'm just thankful that i got out of it alive and the 4 men that got killed, Jim Gleason was the radio operator and he was my closest friend and he was from Boston. Herman Merrill the flight engineer was from...Asheville, North Carolina and both of those boys were going to get married when they got home they had girlfriends and the navigator i think he was a school teacher, he was married i spent one night over at his house when we were in Charleston. He had a very pretty wife. What's his name McNeil or something like that. And the bombardier they say he only flew the one mission and his name was Beanland and his grave is still over in Maddingley. The navigator and the flight engineer and the radio operator their bodies aren't there any more because when i...my daughter went over she took pictures and that time the only one she could find was Beanland and then when i went over in '95 the other 3 weren't there either they had taken them back to the States.

Paddington? Very impressive, very impressive. Yeah they did quite a job over there.

**Is there anything else you want to mention?**

No i don't think so i talked too much already. But they're interesting stories. But if you ever want to call this guy Ecumenical about that jet he he he might be able to inform you or something. The pilot - well all those fellas.