



World War II Memories of Bill Beasley

Tail Gunner - Harris Crew 707

The following story was written by Bill Beasley, tail gunner on the Harris Crew 707.

I was born in Denver, Colorado on April 13, 1922, and attended schools in Denver from Elementary through Junior and Senior High School. I was a member of the ROTC while attending South High School. Following graduation I worked at Davis Brothers' Drug Company (a wholesale drug company) and at Swift & Company. It was while working at Swift & Company I met Norma who later became my wife.

I enlisted in the Army in October 1942 and was sent to San Antonio, Texas early in 1943 for basic training. I was sent to El Reno, Oklahoma for primary flight school. From there I was transferred to Salt Lake City, Utah in December 1943 and was assigned to a crew in the 492nd Bomb Group. From Salt Lake City I went to Biggs Field, Texas and then to Alamogordo, New Mexico. While we were in Alamogordo, an MP had parked his motorcycle next to one of the planes in our group. That crew decided to take the motorcycle with them and used the bomb hoist to lift it into the bomb bay. The plane took off with the crew and the motorcycle. The MPs were waiting for that crew in Herrington, Kansas and were taken off the overseas list.

In early April we left Alamogordo, New Mexico for Herrington, Kansas. From Herrington we flew to West Palm Beach, Florida, and then to Puerto Rico. Trinidad Island to Belem Brazil, Senegal West Africa to Marrakech French Africa. From Marrakech we flew to Nutt's Corner, Ireland and then to North Pickenham, England. The 492nd Bomb Group was stationed in North Pickenham, England.

The base was originally built for the RAF and when we arrived the RAF turned it over to us. There was little time to see much of North Pickenham; however, when we had a rare opportunity to leave the base we visited the Blue Lion Pub, which is still in business. We never had time to become acquainted with the people in the village.

I flew 17 missions and was shot down on June 20, 1944 on a mission to Politz, Germany. That was my second time over Politz. A horrible day for our Bomb Group. We lost 14 planes that day. We were fortunate our crew made it to Sweden and was interned in Sweden until the first part of November, 1944. Norma and I were married December 26, 1944 and went to Santa Monica, CA. From there I was sent to Kingman, AZ and then Pueblo, Colorado before being discharged in October 1945.

I earned the Air Medal with one oak leaf cluster, European Theater of Operations with five bronze battle stars representing the Air Offensive of Europe, Normandy Campaign, Southern France Campaign North France Campaign and the Rhineland Campaign. The French Jubilee of Liberty Medal awarded to me by the French government. I have attached my mission list.

After being discharged in October 1945 I went to work for Public Service Company. I enlisted in the Reserves and held the commission of Second Lt until contracting polio which rendered me ineligible to continue to serve in the military.

We have three sons and six grandchildren and counting daughters-in-law we have a family of 12 presently. In conclusion, I was proud to serve with the 492nd Bomb Group and continue to enjoy the camaraderie of the members and their families to this day.

Internment in Sweden

20 June 1944 to 1 November 1944

A single engine Swedish fighter picked us up on the Swedish coastline and escorted us into Bultofa Airfield in Malmo, Sweden. Landing became tricky because we had no hydraulic pressure and the gear wouldn't come down. Due to various circumstances we had no opportunity to make more than 1 pass at the field. We dug the tail in the dirt to slow the plane down. The tire on the main landing gear, starboard was flat. The Swedes took us to their mess hall at Bultofa and gave us a meal. I remember vividly there was a huge bowl of spinach soup and pitchers of real unpasteurized milk. We hadn't had fresh milk for so long it was a wonderful treat. From there we marched downtown accompanied by guards with machine guns, to the city jail. We spent the night there. The following day we were transferred to Falun and Framby, the military stockade. The United States Government then gave the Swedes our parole. We were assigned to hotels and we were sent to town to buy clothes. We remained here for approximately one month.

There were only a few German airmen... lots of spies, however. We went to Freilesgarten for a party and there met Swedish Count Bernadotte who was eventually assassinated in Jerusalem.

Various camps were set up in Sweden. We were sent to a pensionat in Muls'jo until such time as we were repatriated (November, 1944). We were given limited freedom and were permitted to swim, sail, and bike as well as play ball. In order to leave, we had to have a pass. Some of the Americans were assigned to repair the downed planes. One of the escapades the radio operator, Don Paulson, and I got into was the day we took out a sailboat. Neither of us were skilled at sailing. The wind came up, the boat capsized and we went down under the boat. We had a dickens of a time getting out from under the sail but did manage to free ourselves from the sail and were pretty exhausted and a lot wiser in the ways of sailing, believe me.

Our orders for repatriation were issued November 1, 1944. We were sent to Stockholm and ultimately flown out of Sweden to Valey Wales and home to the USA. Elvern Seitzinger, 856th Squadron, landed right after we did and the next time I saw him was the jail in Malmo and after that the reunion of the 2nd ADA in Pheasant Run, out of Chicago, Illinois - July, 1986.

End

