

Interviews with Frank Bertram

By Linda Alice Dewey

In 2011, I had the honor of interviewing Frank Bertram by phone on three separate occasions. Although we already had Frank's account of the Kassel Mission, we did not know much about Frank's life, training or his POW experience.

First Interview: September 7, 2011, 4:30 p.m. EDT

Tell us about your family background – did you come from a military family? Where were your father and mother from?

My father was a longshoreman in San Francisco, and my mother was a foreman at the Doherty silk mill in NJ, largest in the world. Good job during the whole Depression there. They met when he was in the service. I think they met in SF, she was out visiting and they got married in SF.

I had no other siblings. My dad was about 31 and my mother about 28 or 29 when they were married. She worked after they got married. He stayed a longshoreman. They separated, and we lived in NJ. I didn't even know I had a father until I was 11 years old. Then they got back together. It was great; I liked it. I lived in Patterson, NJ before that. We took a bus out to SF from NJ when they decided to be together--Did all the things the other kids did—slid sleds down hills, played checkers on the sidewalk, kick the can, threw rocks through windows – I ended up in juvenile court for that, hitting some tenement windows around the corner.

Did your family punish you?

Oh God. Did you ever hear of a cat o' nine tails? I got that. My grandmother and my mother would chase me all around the room to catch me and zambo. Cat of nine tails. Or soap in the mouth for swearing.

We lived in a flat, a big one, with my grandfather and grandmother. I was a choir boy at St. John's Catholic school--a little angel throwing rocks through windows, taking piano lessons from the nuns, I was ready for the stage.

[Before that], she worked at silk mills after they were married. After we moved out to be with my father, my mother never worked. In San Francisco, it took awhile to make new friends. We lived far from any great development; then we moved and lived closer to the city when I was 12 or 13 and I made lots of friends, went to St. Joseph's school.

What kind of a student were you?

Not too popular, very studious, got straight A-s all the way through Catholic school, then I went to public school the last two years of high school. I went to a public school and started to get D's. I went to Commerce High School in San Francisco—a public school, because that's all they had at the Catholic School there. I met too many friends, played baseball and basketball, and thought I knew it all already.

What were your favorite subjects?

Mathematics, business math.

Were you good with girls?

Never went out on dates, I was never a womanizer, never wanted to get married; I fought Mary off until she knocked me down. Never chased any girls.

I graduated in 1938 and went one year to San Francisco Junior College, SFJC. General education—mathematics, banking, bowling, tennis, econ, history. Did pretty well, maybe a little above average.

Then I knew I had to go to work. You see, when I graduated, I looked like I was 12 years old and must have weighed 125 pounds. I'd just turned 17. Do you want to know a funny story? Two doors down from me in this condo where I live now is a girl I graduated with; she was 16. She's twice the size now that she was then.

I worked for the John Breuner company, a furniture store. They started me out as an elevator operator. Not tough at all. I could pull that lever left or right. They would move you around in the different departments. I ended up the in the carpet department. Even after the war, I went to work for them in the carpet dept as a salesman. It was the highest class store—most expensive furniture store—in San Francisco. I loved it. Until I asked for a raise, and then I quit. That was my first job.

Where did you work after that?

I worked for Coty Cosmetics in the warehouse, shipping and receiving. I loved it. It was a busy, busy place. You never so saw so much perfume disappear in your life. They were shipping stuff to the PXs in the Pacific.

Then I joined the Air Corps.

Were you married when you went into the service?

No, I was not married.

Were you drafted?

Not drafted. I was way down the list, [near] the last number. I enlisted in August of 42.

Why did you enlist?

Where I was working in San Francisco, we had big window expanse in the back; and you could see all the P-38s flying around. Everybody wanted to fly a P-38 because they were different, [and they were all] training down at Moffatt Field. "Oh boy," I said, "that's the job for me."

I didn't want to fly as a kid. I was 19 or 20 before the bug hit me. Besides we heard the pay was better.

Was it?

Oh sure. It was. Once you got your wings it was real good.

They called me in February of 43.

Such a wait!

They had 50,000 guys waiting to get in.

Did you work at Coty in the meantime?

Yes. I worked 40 hrs-a-week at a buck an hour, 8-10 hrs/week overtime at a buck and half, and all day Saturday at a buck and a half. \$75 week, which was fantastic.

Did you buy yourself a car?

Never learned to drive until I was 21. My father never had a car either. Who could afford a car in the Depression?

Were you affected by the Depression?

Didn't bother me a bit. I had plenty to eat. What did kids know about the Depression? We were self-centered.

Tell us about enlisting and early training.

I [had] to go in the same day as my best friend, George Herschele. We called him "Dutch." I was best man in his wedding, and he was best man in mine. Their family owned a bakery. They had the contract for the Seals baseball stadium. Whenever I wanted to go see a game, all I had to do was hitch a ride on the truck for Seals stadium. The driver would ask me, "You want to go see a game, Frank?" and I'd say, "Yeah I want to go see a game," and we'd hitch a ride on the truck. [Other times,] I would go to Seals stadium by myself and walk all the way up and look through a knothole in a gate and someone would tap me on the back and would say, "Hey kid, you want to see the game?" They had a gambler who would take all the kids to see them play. I would see DiMaggio every day. That stadium was probably one of the best stadiums for viewing – seats with arms on both sides, and very good viewing.

We both ended up Lawry Field, CO: he got assigned to White Cloud, Minnesota, and I went to Southwest Missouri State in Springfield, MO.

Second interview: September 8, 2011 3 pm

Tell me what your experience was like at Springfield.

“CTP” - College Training Detachment – They gave you tests and segregated you into five categories. There were so many kids trying to get in that they had no place to put them. The smartest ones went first. That was group #1. I was in group 3. We went to San Antonio, TX for classification tests—(that’s when you took all the tests)—and I [came] out on navigation. Thought about being a pilot and thought, ‘Geez, il screw up and take 10 guys I’ll feel guilty; and if I’m a navigator, I’ll kill 200.’ I thought, ‘I’ll get training for the future [as a navigator].’

It took 12-13 weeks—dirty work, KP, delivering food to mess tables. While other groups came in to take the tests, we had to take care of them. And then they assigned us. I went to Ellington Field.

We got there 3 days after the planes were hit by the hurricane. Upside-down airplanes all over the place. They had no water, no lights. They had great big tents put up as mess halls – the best food I had in any form of the service was right there at Ellington Field. The guy running the food was a major that had three restaurants in Houston, and he had a lot of his crew. He got them enlisted [with] a guarantee that they would never leave Houston, called them the “Houston Volunteers.” So the food, when you went in there, it was “What do you want for breakfast? Bacon and eggs? Ham? And waffles? Pancakes? You knew you were in heaven. When we went to Hondo, Texas we got the garbage.

Were you scared about flying and the war?

After the first mission. I had the hell scared out of me. I wondered what I was doing up there. I felt that way on all missions. On take off and landing I was scared to death. And then in flak –it was like someone came around the corner and scared the hell out of you.

Did you think about dying?

I put thinking about dying out of my mind. “They can’t get me.” That’s the way we all thought.

It was sheer terror. You’re in close formation: an accident could happen [at any moment]. You always had the prospect of flak coming up. Intelligence was pretty good at locating flak. Unfortunately, we didn’t avoid enough of it.

For the first 13 missions, I was up in the nose, and you could see everything. That’s when you knew you took an extra pair of shorts with you.

Really?

Not really. Wouldn’t do any good.

Was Hondo basic? Any problems there?

Hondo was good. They had sharp cookies instructing us there—all combat veterans—learning navigation. We went in the air, too, three navigator cadets to a ship. We even went on night flights to learn celestial navigation. It was very tough to keep the sextant bubble in the middle. We learned about an astral compass: if the sun was shining—[you] could hang it up there, shaped like an S—and if the sun was shining, it hit a certain

place; and you looked up the almanac for that date, and it told you where you were. I used this on our 13th mission until we crashed.

What was the target that day?

Saarbrücken. We couldn't get high enough through the clouds, so we had to turn back and took Saarbrücken, the secondary target. We ended up bombing east to west, just the opposite of what we were supposed to do. We came in between two layers of clouds, 16-17000 feet, and they peppered us.

Do you remember the date?

August. Around the 20th of August or so.

What was that crash like for you?

I suffered. I still suffer from that crash. I had no idea what happened. I got everybody out of the nose, then I got out. I opened the waist,

What does that mean?

There's a doorway between the bomb bay and the waist. I had my hand on the handle. I saw[that] the crew were [sic] all strapped in. Against each side of the ship they had a big belt in there and they were strapped in; and that's the last I remember. When I came to, I was inside the plane, and nobody else was there. The plane was split in half and tilted; they were all outside by a haystack.

Guys were running. They didn't come [back]for me. I looked out the window, and Omick yelled at me to get out. I remained dizzy for I don't know how long. They got taken to an airfield, and I stayed with the Norden bombsight. By the time I got to the air base, half the guys were drunk. They got two shots of whiskey.

I was up in the nose.

Where did you sit for takeoffs and landings?

I was in the nose for takeoffs and landings.

I thought that was dangerous, that you had to be someplace else.

I was afraid, but I liked the [view].

So you were in the nose for that Saarbrücken raid?

I went up to get the navigator out of the nose turret. The pilot called me up and said, "Where's the nearest airfield?"

We had packed everything up, so I looked out a Plexiglass window and said, "There's one straight ahead."

[The next minute, the pilot said,] *"Clear the nose, we're gonna crash."*

This is too nervewracking.

[A crew member named Weddle lost a piece of his foot in the crash.] *The boy that took his [Weddle's] place got killed. As far as I know he's [Weddle is] still alive. His foot lost a lot of blood.*

We only got to visit Weddle once in the hospital because we were flying—practicing. He met me at the boat when I got back [after the war]. We came into Newport News right out of Norfolk, and here came Ed Weddle just limping away. What a surprise, because he was told he wouldn't walk again on that foot. He became a good contractor down in Norfolk. He hobbled along there, not very fast, but he could run. Not very fast, but he came running [down to the boat].

Did you like being a navigator?

It was a good education. I could tell the pilots where to go, but they wouldn't always do it. We had a good record. The logs were good. Miner could fly close formation like nobody else. He'd stick that wing right in the lead plane's face. Scared the heck right out of the whole crew.

How was it different once you became a lead crew?

I wasn't in the nose any more, could hardly see anything. As a matter of fact, on that day we got shot up, all I saw was four planes, FWs, which when I first saw them, I thought they were P-47s escorting us.

Did you change at all during training? Did it change your view of yourself or of the world?

No.

You bunked at Tibenham with the Schaen crew, didn't you? Tell me about Jim Schaen.

Jim Schaen. Nice guy. What a shame that was. Easy guy. Happy go lucky fellow. Liked to laugh a lot, smoked a cigar once in a while, always joking.

And George Collar. You know how he loved your crew.

We loved George. He was just a great person. He says he screwed up on the test.] He wasn't in our hut all the time. He left after awhile. He flew 10 more missions than we did. He was an eager beaver boy. He loved his work.*

What was it like when he got dropped from the crew but was still in the hut? Was it awkward?

It was awkward. We missed George, but we got a guy named Omick. We don't know where he came from—special training, an ace bombardier. I don't think he was with another crew. Where did he come from? He was a good bombardier, he was just like George, eager beaver always on top of it. It was amazing about George, because he was always such a hard worker. You didn't mess with George Collar.

What was it like when they first teamed you up with Miner [in training]?

I was scared of him. He was such a rugged looking person—a football player from Albert University in New York state—and didn't stand for any nonsense. I got to him after awhile. I joked with him and said, "You're playing with my brain." It took two or three missions. The first mission, you didn't fly with your crew... We all cohabited together. We got along as a whole group.

What happened that he finally warmed up to you?

We came off a rathernightmare [mission].. and we went to Madame Troussard's museum. Miner started to talk to this guy who turned out to be a wax dummy. He says, "Jesus Christ." Then we went up to talk to a dummy, and it turned out to be a real guy. [←possible joke.] It was after our fifth or sixth mission.

The pilot would have his own friends – other pilots he went through [training with or he met in briefings]. He stayed with them mostly when he went out – Zimmerman and [?]-and the same thing with George Collar.

I went out with Virgil Chima[Miner's copilot, pronounced "Keema"]. He was a sweet little guy, he was short, could hardly reach the pedals. I didn't realize it till 40 years after this happened that they didn't find his body till the end of November [by] some women in the village looking for beechnuts. But his brother said he was beaten to death. His chute was gone. Anything could have happened.

When he was found, he was in the fetal position, so he must have survived the fall.

He came through the trees like I did. He could have. He was a bashful guy. He did go out; at Caspar, Wyoming, he met a young lady. Somewhere in our [KMHS archives crew] folder there's a picture of him. He was no womanizer. Drank Guinness.

How were you like or different from the other guys?

I fit in well. They were a great bunch. We all got along real good. We went out a couple of times with Reg [Miner].

How did you change once you began flying missions?

I started carrying rosary beads.

Really?

No. I don't think I changed at all

What did you think about when you were in the air?

Making calculations kept me busy. You're very busy. I used to put the O2 on at 3,000 feet and kept it on while I was working because it would be too busy later[†]. I was busy the whole time.

Tell us more about your time at Tibenham.

I remember a couple of the group's parties--sat around with Jimmy Stewart. Drank, he sang "Ragtime Cowboy Joe." Don't remember what we said.

Did you go to the Glenn Miller concert [on base in August, 1944]?

I lost my wallet there. It slipped out of my pocket. Sitting in those director's chairs they had, my wallet fell out of my pocket. I went back, and it was still there, but half the money was gone. The concert was great. That was a great orchestra. Better than in the States. I probably went with Chima.

Tell us about the other guys on the crew.

Some were wild when they'd get loose. Al Thornton and Powers got wild. Liked to live it up. They were a riot. You could always tell who was in the pub by the noise from the outside.

At Tibenham?

In London! They were the loudest.

I knew Corman Bean very well... When I was taken to the first place they took me [after being shot down] or the 2nd place, I'm walking down the hall and who comes marching the other way with a guard, was Corman Bean. Never said a word.

Third Interview: September 27, 2011

Who was in your hut before Jim Schaen's crew?

I think Steinbacher.

I remember Captain Steinbacher from Collar's writing. Remember the story about his boots? ["Captain Steinbacher" by George Collar in the "Kassel Mission Chronicles."]

He was a man's man, that guy. I think he flew two tours.

He became a fighter pilot after he finished his tour with the 445th.

After he retired from the last tour, [on his final mission] he was a fighter pilot, that's when he was killed buzzing our field.

Was the Gee System used once you were in Germany?

No. You could barely use it over France. The Germans would screw it all up.

You mean, they jammed it?

Yes. But I'll tell you, coming back from missions, that Gee box really worked. You could set the coordinates on your base on the thing, and look down, and there was the runway.

[Technical Q & A's cut here]

What were your responsibilities as DR Navigator when there were clouds?

Just writing in the log. Keeping track of where we go, our positions and everything.

Now. About September 27...[a few cuts] The briefing:

They gave us good intelligence on areas to avoid, where they expected a lot of flak, and they were always very accurate. And then the weather man would come on, and everyone would yell, "Liar Liar." [laughs]

After the bad turn, the call to bomb as a group, why did you close up your Mickey?

I didn't. Uebelhoer's ship said he turned off the radar. Normally speaking, when we go on a bomb run, the bombardier has control of the ship and he adjusts the bombsight to drop the bombs. If you're bombing through overcast, he doesn't do that. He turns it over to the mickey operator, and the mickey operator drops the bombs.

We kept our radar on. Our mickey operator was the first guy to come up and say we're not turning when we're supposed to. I heard what he said, and I got up and [looked at the radar screen and] could see we were going in the wrong way.

We were supposed to turn but we kept on straight. We were supposed to turn right at the IP.

We don't know much about what POW camp was like for you. What can you tell us about it?

I was in Block 3, South Compound, Room 11, and there was, I think, 240 guys in the barracks, 30 or 40 in our room.

How high were the bunks stacked?

Just two high. We slept on straw or excelsior or whatever you call it.

What was it like when you arrived on the first day?

It was in the evening when we got off the train, and we were marched three miles up to the camp, and it hurt every inch of the way.

You were badly injured, weren't you?

Two bad ankles and two bad knees and we had these big pincers and German shepherds all around us.

Did the guards yell at you?

[Doesn't recall yelling.]

How many of you were in the group?

I think a couple hundred of us.

Did you have friends in the group?

Reg [Miner] was in the group; but he was in a different barracks at first, but for some reason after 30 days, we were all in the same room: Miner, myself, Jackson and Branch Henard. And it was a smelly place. [Laughs.]

You mean body odor?

[That's exactly what he means.]

How did you manage to get through it (what coping skills did you use)?

All I could do was shuffle around. It took three to four months before I could move a little faster. The swelling on the ankles looked like two basketballs.

Didn't you receive medical attention?

No medical attention at all. There was only one doctor in the camp for, like, 2,000 guys.

Was he a prisoner, too?

I think he was British. I never saw him. I saw a South African guy, a doctor's aide if you will. He wrapped my feet is about all he did.

How did you pass the time?

We had some books there from a library that the YMCA furnished. We walked around the compound best we could. Some of the guys organized a baseball team and basketball and played. They had some pretty good athletes there, except we were all starving.

Made a lot of nice friends there—Bill Picarsky—“Whispering Willie,” they used to call him. All he could do was whistle. (He had, flak stuck in his throat somewhere.) Made a lot of nice friends.

We'd shoot the breeze. Played cards—passed a lot of time playing cards. That's where I learned to play bridge. They had some sharpies there that really knew how to play cards. That's all some of the guys did.

Interesting that it's bridge and not poker.

They probably had poker in some of the rooms, not in our room. Everything was bridge. It was more a mental game than poker, really.

What about trading? Did you do any trading?

Some guys did that—Norman Dale Stuckey in our room. He stayed in the Army, retired a colonel. He was a trader man. He came back with watches, cameras, all kinds of things. You couldn't take any pictures. They wouldn't let you: no way to get film. They let you trade for things. We had a lot of cigarettes that we used to trade.

Where did you eat?

We ate in our room. When I first went there in the North Compound, they had a mess hall there. They had a stage where they put plays on, but that was the North Compound. But we ate in our room. A guy named Shannon did our cooking—red-headed guy from Philadelphia.

Always the same guy did your cooking?

[Yes.]

What were the guards like?

They never bothered us at all. We had one guard who was a real nice guy, very quiet, very morose, very friendly.

There was one guard, the “Butcher Boy,” that nobody seemed to like. He went back to [Germany from [Long Island]]. I think they took care of him after the war. He caused all

kinds of trouble mentally. Making you get out of bed while they turned your bed upside down and check for secret messages. Stuff like that.

And they called everybody out in the middle of the night for roll call. Short, fat, blond guy.

Matter of fact, if you see some of this POW collection [photos], one German guard, named Tesch, nice guy, was just like Schultz in "Hogan's Heroes." [In mock German accent:] "I know nothing!" His wife used to come every week to collect his money. She was twice as big as he was. They let her in, so he stayed with our barracks. [He was in charge of their barracks.]

So you had one guy in charge of ...how many?

We had 12 rooms in ours...Not every room was the same size. We had a big room. It was about 240 guys for our barracks.

And they let his wife in?

A lot of the guards, their wives came to collect their money.

You saw them?

They never mixed up with us or anything. They just met with the respective husbands. The one guy was in charge of the other guards.

Were there dogs around all the time?

There were special ones that patrolled in the evening. The men were out in the day walking during the day, annoying the German guards, sticking their tongues out at the guards in the towers. One day a whole bunch of them got along by the fence posts and when they moved they pulled the whole fence out of the ground; they all got out. I saw them do it. They just let go of it--ten different poles.

Some things happened before I was there. I understand one day, they came running out of the barracks and said the war was over and got the Germans all excited, and one guard ran away. [laughs]

They came in the middle of the night to search you?

They figured guys were writing nasty things about them (which they were). Just enough to disturb you, you know. Shake everybody up.

Did it shake you up?

[Oh yeah.] You had to clean up a mess when they got through. They were like the police coming in [now]. You could see the resentment of some of the guards.

Toward the one guy?

[Yes.] Toward their authority. They didn't like to do it.

Right across the street from our barracks was a radar school. They'd fly this monoplane over, and the guys started throwing rocks at it and hit it one day, and they got put in quarters for a few days.

They blew all that stuff [the radar school] up over there a few days before the end of the war. A bunch of the stuff came up in the air and hit the roof and the side of the building and just scared us to death. [We didn't know what was happening.] We didn't realize the Russians were that close.

You could hear them shooting in the distance as they approached, didn't you?

You could hear the tanks and artillery. All of a sudden, a Russian soldier comes in on horseback.

Did you see him? Because there are conflicting stories. Somebody else said the first guy came in on a jeep with his girlfriend.

I saw one of them. I saw one guy and then a girl on horseback. She had a gun and everything else. She was dressed in an army uniform.

Was she blonde?

I couldn't tell. They were the first ones there, and then a whole bunch followed through.

Where were you?

I was sitting there looking out the window at them.

You were in the barracks?

We were told by Col Zemke to stay inside, and nobody leave camp at all even though the Russians were going to [be coming in.]

I heard the Russians brought in a lot of liquor and wanted you guys to celebrate.

I wasn't drinking any of their vodka.

What did you do during the first few days of Liberation?

Stayed in the room playing cards or reading.

Didn't the Russians bring in a lot of beef for you?

They drove in beef, pork, geese, chickens. They even brought in movies. They set up a screen, and they showed us "Sun Valley Serenade" with Glenn Miller's orchestra, and John Payne and [names the starlet]. And then they brought in a movie on the Russian battle of Stalingrad, their official movie. It was very cruel.

What do you mean?

Showing all the guys getting massacred, prisoners being shot and everything. We understand [now] that they were trying to hold us as some kind of hostage or something. They threatened to take us back to Russia. Zemke said no. He was [strong]. But we stayed there. I think we were the last camp out of Germany. Some guys got out...

What about the B-17s [that took them to Camp Lucky Strike]... Where did you sit when you got into the plane?

I sat in the bomb bay. They put 30 guys in every B-17, 30 prisoners, 300 flights, 9000 guys that they flew out. No casualties. Amazing, huh? [They flew] low level over the German cities so we could see all the ruins. You had no idea the damage that the Air Force had done. My God. All the towns looked deserted. Everything. Just ruins. Stupid damned Germans. Some beautiful cities were just torn to pieces.

[Tells a story about the guys in prison building a plane or painting a plane on the wall...] *They called the plane "Fearless Fosdick." laughs]*

That was a 445th plane.

Really?

Yep. One of the Kassel Mission pilots flew it on its last mission... It crashed in England. So it must have been a 445th guy who named it.

How did life change after Christmas at the POW camp and into spring, aside from less food?

The guys weren't walking around or playing baseball that much. They were conserving their energy.

... What was it like on the day you were liberated, when you guys woke up and saw that the guards weren't in the towers?

I was in our room. We looked out the window and saw the American flag up and American guys in the towers. Some of them [guards] stayed. They lived to regret that.

What happened when you saw the guards were gone?

Everybody went crazy. That's when the Russian came in on horseback. The Germans had shut off all our water supply and electricity and the boys [had] dug out latrines in the back of the barracks because there was [none in the] barracks and one of the guys ran out so fast he fell right in the latrine. And it was half full too. You heard a splash and "God damn it."

Who interviewed you at Camp Lucky Strike? Was it Col. Jones?

Jones was there, Terrill was there, Stewart was there. There were three of them there. They sort of ignored us, really. They didn't really want to hear about it really. Somebody [would say something derogatory, and] they said, don't ever say anything like that again.

What do you mean?

They didn't want to hear anything that wasn't their satisfaction. I said, "I think the lead crew screwed up and deliberately avoided the flak and took the whole bunch with them." [They didn't want to hear it.]

Everybody knew we were off-course. You could see the target by all the flak. And you could see those planes going in, and we were heading away from them. And don't let anybody kid you that they didn't see any flak. It was so thick that you could walk on it.

[And was it you that said something about] a directive?

Well, we're trying to corroborate that. I was told that was so.

That's a lot of crap. [Still thinks it was to avoid flak.]

It [the mission] just doesn't make any sense.

[This next may be another mission:] They went over Frisian Islands. They had told us not to go over it and they had it circled in red and said "Don't go over this island" and the lead and deputy lead went right over it and bang! We got hit.

We flew the day before.

Yes. To Hamm. Wasn't there something strange about being called in to be a lead crew two days in a row?

Well, each squadron had two planes with radar, and I forget the pilot [name] but the navigator was Brown—nice guy—and their plane had some malfunction. They let us know very nicely, and we were all set to go on a nice three-day pass to London. They wanted us to hit that target, locomotive target.

The Henschel engine works.

Yes.

What did you do immediately after getting home?

You want to know why I gained 50 pounds? I went up to 208 pounds, I ran into a friend of mine, he said "Hey Frank! You look like you've been sucking on an air hose." And I knew I had to go on a diet.

But you had lost so much weight [in the camp]. You can understand why your body would put it on quickly.

We really suffered from malnutrition there you know, and we didn't get proper medicine, no vitamins. They sent us to Santa Monica for rest camp—hamburgers as big as dinner plates. And beer. But 208 pounds! I got some pictures and I really [put it on].

* George Collar went to Tibenham originally with the Miner crew as their bombardier. When Miner and his crew switched to being a lead crew, Collar 'messed up' on the test and was forced to leave the crew. On the Kassel Mission, Collar flew with Jim Schaen's crew. Several of that crew, including Schaen, were killed that day.

† Normally, oxygen masks went on at 10-11,000 feet. Because they were uncomfortable to wear, most guys waited until the last minute to put them on.