

John Cadden

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Avalon, N.J.

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John Cadden was a radio operator on Stanley Krivik's crew in the 445th Bomb Group. Krivik's plane crash-landed in England after the Kassel mission of Sept. 27, 1944.

John Cadden: You know, so much time has gone by. But some things stick out in my mind. Especially on that mission, one thing that I remember - from all I've read about it so far, nobody has pointed out the fact that at our briefing that morning, they announced that they had captured Brussels, and they had captured it with the runways intact, so if anybody had mechanical problems or battle damage, instead of heading for Switzerland or Sweden, which was the practice up until then, we should try to make it to Brussels. It's never been brought out but it's influential in the story of our crew because after the battle damage we were all set to bail out. We didn't think we could get back to England, so we headed for Brussels.

My first indication of the battle - as a radio operator I was not in the top turret at that time; over the target and for a while afterwards the engineer took over the top turret and the radio operator operated the bomb bay doors. After the all-clear we would close the bomb bay doors and come back and monitor the radio for any messages that might come in. I had done all that after we dropped our bombs, and the first indication that we were being hit by fighters was from the waist gunners on the intercom, and you could feel the bullets whizzing through the fuselage. They both reported the Focke-Wulf 190s as I recall attacking, and our tail gunner, Henry Puto, was hit. Apparently he was hit right from the very start and knocked out of his turret.

He's only one of the two other members of our crew that's alive to my knowledge. He had wounds to his face and to his legs. We didn't know where, we just knew he was wounded at that time.

We had lost one engine, and Stanley Krivik, the pilot, managed to get it feathered, but we had no oil pressure in another engine. I think it was the outboard engine on our right. It could have been the inboard, I forget which, one on the right, and the other on the left hand side of the plane had low oil pressure and we couldn't get

enough power. So he alerted me to go down and open the bomb bay doors. He didn't say we're going to bail out but I knew that's the reason he wanted to open the bomb bay doors. I went down, and I was about halfway through opening the bomb bay doors when bullets started to whiz around the bomb bay. And that's the last I remember. I got knocked out. I don't know how long I was out, because I woke up by the nose wheel, which is further away from where I should have been.

When I woke up, I was off my oxygen tank. I had the portable oxygen tank with me. I was off that, and I'd lost my helmet and my head was buzzing; I didn't know what was going on. I gathered my senses. The first thing I went for was the bottle of oxygen, and I got back on the oxygen. Then I started to look around for my helmet. I picked up my helmet, and it had been hit. It's a steel helmet with the hinges on either side for the earflaps because of the earphones we wore, and it apparently hit just about where the hinge was and took the hinge off and made a big crease right through the helmet, by my right ear. That explained why my head was buzzing. But I wasn't bleeding.

The bomb bay doors were half-open at that point so I went back to them. The firing had ended by that time. I went back to open them up again, and they're halfway open but there was no power. We'd lost all of our hydraulic fluid. So I cranked them open manually, which takes a little bit longer. But I got them open. I went back up to the pilot and told him I had the bomb bay doors open. He was in conference with the navigator at that time, his name was Dale. And they were deciding where to go and what to do. They thought they couldn't maintain altitude but at the rate we were losing altitude we thought we could make Brussels, so he told me to go back down and close the bomb bay doors, we were going to head for Brussels, and get the wounded up on the flight deck where they'd be warm. By that time the tail gunner and both waist gunners were wounded.

John Cadden: When I first came up on the flight deck to report to Krivik that I had the bomb bay doors open, he looked like he saw a ghost. His eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped. I don't remember much about the reaction from Dale. About a week later in the hospital Krivik came over to see me; he was in the same hospital. I said, "You had the funniest look on your face."

He said, "You were covered with hydraulic fluid, and I thought it was blood. I couldn't imagine somebody losing that much blood."

After I closed the bomb bay doors again, I'd say maybe we flew almost an hour, but gradually losing altitude. We were still heading towards Brussels. And when we thought we were close enough, we thought we'd drop down below the ceiling and look on the ground, you could pick up rivers or something like that. And when we came through the overcast, there was nothing below us but water. We were about, oh, I'd say 2,000 feet, no higher, and nothing below us but water. Everybody was surprised at that point.

In the meantime, as the radio operator I was the medical fellow on board. I had the first aid kit and I was supposed to administer whatever first aid I could.

All the time we were flying towards Brussels we had the wounded up on the flight deck and I had broken out the first aid kit. Bob Paul, one waist gunner, was wounded, but he was able to treat himself. He helped himself to the sulfa drugs and bandaged himself up, and the same thing with Bill Rand, the other waist gunner, he was able to take care of himself. Henry Puto was hit a little more seriously. He was in a lot more pain. I tended to his wounds as best I could. I gave him a shot of morphine. I remember giving him the shot because at those high altitudes you couldn't pull his pants down and give it to him in the leg, you had to go right through his flying suit. Heated suit and all. I gave him a shot of morphine, and it quieted him down.

And then, really, I had nothing to do until we discovered we were over the water, and of course Dale and Krivik, the pilot, had a hasty conference. They assumed that we were over the North Sea, which was a correct assumption, and if we just keep heading west we'd hit England. Which we did. But in the meantime, we stripped the plane of anything that could be stripped out of it. The guns. Ammo. Anything we had was stripped and dumped in the ocean.

I was in constant touch with air-sea rescue. I'd give them an SOS and a signal and they'd plot our course in case we did go down, they'd come out and get us. And I remember it so clearly because while I was in touch with air-sea rescue, the rest of the crew was trying to throw the radio out and I had to fight them off. I'd rather, if you're going to go down in the water I'd like to have somebody coming after me so I thought it was important, anyway.

When we got down around 1,200 or 1,000 feet, not much higher, we came over England. And immediately Krivik noted where we were. It wasn't far from where we'd normally come in.

He then headed for the air base, with his course set on the runway. Of course, at the sight of land everybody cheered. And I guess Krivik thought he could get it down on the runway. We didn't have any hydraulic fluid or brakes so we'd probably run off the end of the runway but that was better than bailing out. We didn't have much altitude left, 800 or 1,000 feet or so.

The big thing then was to get the wheels cranked down, and we had no problem with the main landing gear. It came down and locked in place. But we couldn't get the nose wheel locked in place.

At that time, everybody who didn't belong on the flight deck went back to the waist to get ready for a crash landing, including the navigator.

The radio operator and the engineer stayed up with the pilot and co-pilot. We all had positions we'd take to brace ourselves for the crash. Mine was behind the co-pilot.

I don't think we were much more than 500 off the runway when Bugalecki finally got the nose wheel locked and he came up, and I thought - everybody thought, I guess - I thought he was liable to be down there when we landed and he'd get crushed.

Aaron Elson: Bugalecki was the engineer?

John Cadden: Yes. I would say we didn't have much more than 500 feet when he finally got up out of there and let the pilot know that they were locked in place.

So we felt pretty good. Braced for the crash. We knew it would crash. And, next - there's a little window by the radio set, when you're back behind the co-pilot on the left hand side of the fuselage there's a window down by your knee and I was looking at whatever scenery you could see going by, and all I could see were trees. I had never noticed trees on our approaches before to the runway. All I could see was trees, and the next thing I knew, Krivik was pulling me out of the wreckage. And that's about all there is to my tale of the Kassel mission.

Aaron Elson: So you didn't see what it was on the runway that made him divert?

John Cadden: No, I didn't.

Aaron Elson: But he talked about it?

John Cadden: In the hospital, he came over to see how I was doing. Probably the same day that he told me that when he saw me covered with the hydraulic fluid he thought was blood. He said when he got down to the runway, he could see it was covered with lorries and British wreckers. He didn't say how many. He said "lorries," though, not just one, it was several. And he said he didn't want to kill everybody on the runway so he had to overshoot it. He couldn't get back up and go around. He had to keep going, and he overshot the runway and crashed. He crashed in a farm. And when I was in the hospital, when Krivik came over and we were talking about everything, I asked him, "Gee, I thought we were gonna at least hit the runway before anything happened."

He said, "I couldn't put it down on the runway because it was shut down for maintenance."

Aaron Elson: When you crashed, you passed out?

John Cadden: Yeah, I remember seeing the trees, but I don't remember anything beyond that. And the next thing I knew I was in the wreckage. I could see the sky, but there was stuff all on top of me, on my legs. Everything was on fire. I don't think we had much gas but there had to be some gas, and there's still .50-caliber bullets, I'd thought we threw them all out but they were going off all over the place from the heat. Plus I was in one of these fur-lined suits, I think I would have had a lot of severe burns if I wasn't. I was hot, but it protected me from being burned. I didn't inhale any fumes because it was wide open; I was looking at the sky.

Aaron Elson: How did Krivik get everybody out of the plane?

John Cadden: I was conscious at that time, and I heard him pulling Trotta out. I think he took him out seat and all. Krivik was probably the strongest person I ever saw. He was a bull. Matter of fact, I don't think many pilots could have kept that plane in the air, because he had no hydraulic fluid, and you had to be pretty strong to handle that thing without hydraulic fluid, and he flew it all the way back that way.

He pulled out Trotta, and then I heard somebody yelling that "Cadden and Bugalecki are still in there!" So he came back in and grabbed me and yanked me out and got me away from the plane. And I took about two steps and fell. Then he went back for Bugalecki, I think at this time that Bugalecki was half out but he wasn't out yet, and he pulled Bugalecki out. So I was very happy I was flying with Krivik that day.

Aaron Elson: And who pulled the gunners out?

John Cadden: They just landed up all over the field. I guess what happened is, the waist gunners and the tail gunner and the navigator and the nose turret gunner, they set up a net in back of the fuselage, across the fuselage, and they lean into that so when the crash comes they're braced by the net, they won't go flying up into the wreckage. And I guess everybody but Dale took advantage of that during the crash. He just acted as though it was going to be a normal landing, and he just sat down on the floor of the plane, and I guess when the plane crashed it broke in the middle and they all flew clear of the plane. Ended up scattered on the field with no injuries, really. But he ended up going into the bomb bay, I guess, and he got killed.

Aaron Elson: What was his position?

John Cadden: He was a navigator. He was new too, he had only flown around two or three missions with us. We trained with a fellow by the name of Jackson. He had gone to Re Miner's crew. He never hit it off well with Krivik. As enlisted men we were not aware of the friction between the officers. I knew there was some friction, but most of the enlisted men loved Krivik, because he took care of us and looked after us. So I guess Jackson managed to get off the crew, and we got Dale as his replacement.

Aaron Elson: Explain again about the net.

John Cadden: There was a net they rig up across the back of the fuselage; the plane is like a big tube. I was always up in the front, I wasn't back there, but this net gets rigged up before a crash landing, and they all lean into the net so when the initial jar comes, instead of being thrown forward into the bomb bays, you get caught by the net.

Of course I was never back there, I was always up in the front. But that was our second experience with a crash.

Aaron Elson: It was?

John Cadden: Yes. The first plane - I flew 19 missions and I'd say the first 11 or 12 were on a plane called Fearless Fosdick. And we used to have all kinds of trouble with the gasoline tank readings on that plane. We thought we were running out of gasoline over the Channel on one of our missions. So as soon as we hit the English coast there was an air base [at Manston] that had extra long runways, and we put into that. And it turned out, we thought we were just about out of gas, it was reading empty, and we had 200 gallons left. I think Krivik got in hot water for that. So he recalibrated the gasoline gauge, and it was shortly after that, maybe the next mission, that we thought we had a lot of gas and we ran out. We were over England at the time, and we're flying about 1,500 feet, and all the engines conked out. Fortunately we were in a farming area and we crashed into a cornfield. They call them cornfields, it was like a wheat field. Nobody got hurt, but the plane was totaled. After that mission, that's when we started flying Percy. That was the name of the plane we were on on the Kassel mission.

That had been one of the original planes, I understand, that came over from where the 445th started out. That's the one we were on the day of the Kassel raid because after the crash of the Fearless Fosdick, that's the plane that was assigned to us.

I got in hot water because of the crash of the Fearless Fosdick, because up until then intelligence gave me this camera and I was supposed to take pictures of the bomb hits out the bomb bay doors; it's a great big thing that you hang out the bomb bay doors. And I did a good job of it so they kept letting me take pictures, but after that crash I took that aerial camera and I took pictures of ourselves all over the plane, waving, and when I got back, it never dawned on me, I forgot that this thing would be developed, and they got mad. They didn't say anything to me, but they raised the devil with Krivik over it. And after that they never assigned me the camera again. I didn't enjoy hanging out the bomb bay anyway.

Aaron Elson: After that first crash-landing, were you antsy? Did that make people extra nervous?

John Cadden: I think it gave us confidence, that we could crash without the thing blowing up because I always thought if a B-24 crashed you'd get a ball of flame and that would be about it.

Aaron Elson: Had you seen any like that?

John Cadden: No. I've seen them from a distance. As I remember two planes collided, but it was maybe five miles away from the base and all I could see was the smoke coming up. Some of the people had seen it, I didn't see the accident but I did see the smoke coming up from one of the wreckages. But I hadn't witnessed any crashes on the air base at all, because if we weren't flying I wasn't even paying much attention to what else was going on.

Aaron Elson: Where was your crew formed?

John Cadden: We were formed up in Westover Field, Massachusetts. I went through gunnery school in Laredo, Texas, and we graduated from gunnery school. It was after Christmas, between Christmas and early January.

Aaron Elson: Had you enlisted or were you drafted?

John Cadden: I enlisted in 1942. In December. I was in Morris Junior College, and I knew my number would be coming up soon, so I figured I didn't want to end up in the infantry, for obvious reasons, sleeping in trenches; my idea of the infantry was World War I.

I said, "I'll probably be going in," so I initially tried to get in the Air Corps, their pilot program. I was trying to get a college education in those days; my family couldn't afford to send me to college so if I got in a program like that I'd get some college in. But I was colorblind. I couldn't even get into the Marines or the Navy. But I could join the enlisted reserve. I joined in December and I got called up on April Fool's Day, April 1st of '43.

When I joined the enlisted reserve, I joined the artillery. I figured, that's far enough away from the front lines, the living conditions are better anyway. But they put me on a train to Fort Dix. I got down in Fort Dix - there was a whole group of about 25 of us from Morris Junior College and there were about 30 from Seton Hall, or Seton Hall Prep.

Aaron Elson: Where was Morris Junior College?

John Cadden: In Morristown. That's where I was born and raised. When I got off the train in Fort Dix, we went through the usual procedures of getting transferred from being civilians into the Army and being measured and getting clothing issues that didn't fit and all that. I don't think we took any tests, I don't know what we did down there except get lectures and get clothing, get shots and that sort of thing. And the next thing I knew we were shipped off; I think they shipped us off a little prematurely because somebody in our barracks came down with meningitis or one of those very contagious diseases and died, so I guess they didn't want us on the base. All of a sudden we got shipped out and I ended up on a train that was going south to the Air Corps. We were going down to basic training in Miami Beach. The train was full of GIs; I don't think we had much of a kitchen because all we had for three days, I guess we had corn flakes in the morning and the other two meals were boiled hot dogs, and that's it. It took us about six days to get from Fort Dix down to Miami, because they'd sidetrack us for more important things. I guess we weren't that essential to the war effort at that point. So we'd get sidetracked and spend the night on the railroad. The next morning you start up again, go forward, get sidetracked again, so it took a long time to get down there. I'd never been as far south as Philadelphia. I guess Fort Dix as the farthest south I'd ever been to that point.

We got assigned to a hotel in Miami Beach, and they gave us all kinds of IQ tests and decided what we'd be best at. They rated me as a radio operator. And I guess at that time they needed gunners, because being colorblind didn't seem to make much of a difference. They had some balls of yarn and they asked you to pick out the red ball, and if you picked out the wrong one they'd say, "You know it's not that."

I went to Scott Field for radio school. I did well in Scott Field. I enjoyed that. Then gunnery school, which I enjoyed. I couldn't shoot worth a darn with the Thompson or a rifle or a pistol, but with the aerial gunnery I was good. I was told down there I was No. 2 out of 500 in aerial gunnery. And I was pretty good with the clay pigeons, too; we had to shoot those. But I couldn't shoot anything that was standing still. So I guess from my shooting ability I was better off where I was than anyplace else. But after we got to combat, the radio operators didn't spend that much time in the turret. Before we got to the target I'd spend some time. Then over the target the

engineer would take over, and when we got off the target again then I would go and spell him until we got out of enemy territory.

Aaron Elson: Now, we were getting to where the crew was formed.

John Cadden: Oh, the crew was formed up in Westover. I left around New Year's and took a train - they gave us a week to get there so we could take the train up and have a few days at home and then take the train up to Westover. And out of a class of 500 there were only two of us who were assigned to Westover. We were both from that neck of the woods. The other fellow was named Bobby Beckwith. We rode up together on the train. The train wrecked on the way up - it got sideswiped just before we got to Buffalo, in a town called Ashtabula, and it went off the tracks. Maybe some people got hurt, but we didn't get hurt. We were sound asleep when it happened, it was around 2 in the morning. After a while they took us off the train and bused us into a hotel in Ashtabula and we spent the night in the hotel, and the next morning they put us on another train, we got off in Grand Central Station, he went his way and I went mine.

Aaron Elson: Did you ever find out what happened to him?

John Cadden: Never did. His family were in the jewelry business in Beacon, New York, and were the nicest people I knew. I remember he had a little beat up little radio, he used to have it in the barracks, and he loaned it to me when I was going to my home and I had that there, I could listen to the radio in my room. That was a big deal then, I didn't have to go down and listen with the rest of the family if I didn't want to.

We were together there in Westover, but I fractured my ankle chasing a bus up there, and it laid me up for a month in the hospital. In the meantime, he went on with the crew so I ended up four weeks behind him in training and naturally he was gone four weeks before I was finished, so I have no idea where he ever ended up.

I don't know when I found out I was going to the European Theater. I know that when we finished our training we were given a leave of about five or six days.

John Cadden: On the crew I trained with, we had a waist gunner and I forget his name now, but he never showed up when we were supposed to leave from Mitchel Field on Long Island. He had been an instructor up at Westover Field and I don't think he had any ambitions to be in combat, but they assigned him to our crew as

a waist gunner, and I don't think he was too happy about it. But on that leave we had before we picked up our plane at Mitchel Field, he never showed up. And the last I heard of him, he ended up in Leavenworth because once you get your orders, it's desertion. But he was older than we were, married, with a newly born child, so I guess he figured it wasn't for him. The last I heard he was in Leavenworth, but somebody told me he got released.

We flew over without him, and we flew up to Gander. Initially we landed in Maine and refueled, and there they issued the watch. I'd never had a wristwatch before but they gave me an Elgin watch because the radio operator had to keep track of the time messages came in and so forth. I still have the watch, by the way.

From there we flew up to Newfoundland. We spent the night there. This was in June; it was after D-Day, the last day of my leave was D-Day. The next day I went over to Mitchel Field.

An interesting thing about Mitchel Field is, a fireman in Hempstead, New York, threw a beer party for us. I don't know how many crews, there were about 30 or 40 of us, and they had us all over, you know, young guys, happy, drinking beer, all this free beer at the firehouse, and oh, about 1:30 in the morning they packed us all in the fire engine and drove us back to Mitchel Field with the lights flashing, the siren going. It was great stuff. I don't know if they did that for everybody or what.

From Newfoundland we flew over to Ireland, it may have been a 10- or 11-hour flight. After about five hours, all we could do was look for land. We weren't even near land yet.

Aaron Elson: That must have been spooky, flying over the ocean for the first time.

John Cadden: Yeah, you're all by yourself, and all new, green, even the navigator, and we were depending on him. But sure enough, after about ten hours we sighted land in Ireland, and then we landed and left the plane. They spent two weeks in Ireland indoctrinating us. Telling us what to do if we're captured, and issuing us all fake identifications and things like that. Shaving our heads. The whole idea I guess was so we wouldn't look like aviators but more like civilians if we got shot down.

After about two weeks in Ireland, they didn't fly us so we took a train to England.

Aaron Elson: As an enlisted man, did you have any contact socially with Krivik?

John Cadden: Yes. He encouraged doing things together as a crew. We used to go horseback riding together, the whole crew. And he was sort of a nut. He played football. Anything physical was right up his alley. He played for Fordham before World War II. And before that he played for Bloomfield High. He probably was All-State. He was one of the strongest men I ever saw, not tall, but was he strong! We'd go horseback riding together as a crew, we'd go from the base, and a farmer would rent us the horses. We'd get ten horses and go riding. It was like playing cowboys and Indians. He'd lead the charge, charging into the woods. With the low branches you'd get knocked off a horse pretty quick. It was crazy.

Aaron Elson: Did anybody get any knocked off?

John Cadden: Yeah. I forget who. I don't think I did because as a child I rode horses a little bit, but some of them, you'd have a hard time staying on. I used to ride horses bareback as a child, not horses, ponies. But I grew up in the country, so horseback riding was nothing new to me. But to a lot of them it was.

And I don't think Krivik had been on a horse much either. He'd always want the wildest horse, and he was gonna show us how fast this horse would go, and he opened it up, we were all watching, and he ended up under the horse, with his arms and his legs around the horse, the horse couldn't get rid of him. Finally the horse gave up and just stopped, and he climbed back up. He was something else.

Of course as an enlisted man I wasn't privy to what went on with the officers. But I think probably a guy like Krivik rubbed a lot of them the wrong way. I had that suspicion. I always thought the planes we got to fly in were probably the oldest planes that were on the base, that sort of thing. But he was a good friend with Miner. And there was another fellow he was close to, who had been a pilot before the war, but he got shot down on the third or fourth mission. All I know is his radio operator - usually you got close to the fellows on the plane who did the same job you do and I was close to this fellow Beggs, and he was on this crew. His pilot was probably the best pilot in our whole group, and he got shot down over one of the north Germany targets and he just went up in a ball of flames. Nobody ever got out of it.

Aaron Elson: On your first mission, you flew to Gotha?

John Cadden: Yes.

Aaron Elson: When you did that, had anybody talked about that disastrous Gotha mission?

John Cadden: I think we heard about it, yeah, because that was still being talked about when we got there. There was a lot of flak but I expected a lot of flak. We were pretty well prepared on what to expect, so even though you're green, nothing came as too big a surprise.

Aaron Elson: Does anything stand out? Usually the first mission is something that's just engraved in people's minds.

John Cadden: No, the flak, you can hear it, the spent flak you can hear hitting, the flak that's going to do damage you don't hear.

Aaron Elson: You went to Gotha on July 20, 1944, that was your first mission. You also flew on July 23, 24 and 25?

John Cadden: Some of those were milk runs. Tactical. Probably one of those was with the breakout of St. Lo, that would be one of those tactical missions. We bombed on one mission I remember, it was probably this one on August 1st, the biggest bombs I'd ever seen. I don't think the B-17 could carry them. We could only carry one or two. They were big things. We were dropping them on St. Malo, that island that's off the coast of France, it's like a shrine there or something. The Germans had a lot of guns on there.

Aaron Elson: What was the St. Lo raid like?

John Cadden: It was like flying at night when we got to the target. We went in at 5,000 feet, which is low for us. And I don't know where we stood in the parade of planes that went over that day, but it was like flying into midnight. Approaching it would be like broad daylight. And all of a sudden it'd darker and darker and darker. These are from the bombs and the smoke. And then over the target it you could see the flashes on the ground, you couldn't see a lot of movement because everybody was hunkered down. But you could see the flashes and the gunfire. We just dropped our bombs, and as we pulled out of there, it was back into daylight again. An interesting thing about that: On that raid a B-24 tried to get in formation with us, it wasn't from the 445th, he had different tail markings; he tried to get in formation with us and our tail gunner opened up on him. It had a different tail marker and he shot at it. And they had to just about pull him out of the turret. And

he got reprimanded, they told him he shouldn't have shot at a B-24. About two weeks later, intelligence came back and said that was Germans in a B-24 trying to get in your formation.

Aaron Elson: Did you fly again after the Kassel mission?

John Cadden: No. I had a bunch of injuries, including a fractured back. When the ambulances got there and carted us off I was just about out of it. They brought us into the hospital - that was the 65th General Hospital in Diss - and they cut off our clothes. They didn't undress you, they just cut you right out of your clothes. And they knew we hadn't been to the bathroom in a long time, so they gave me a catheter, I guess I couldn't use a bedpan. And everything that came out was bright red. So I guess I got pretty well jarred up.

It cleared up in about two days. And then it was just a matter of recuperation. In the middle of getting better I got pneumonia. They had put me in a body cast and I got pneumonia in the body cast, so they cut me out of that. But I got through the pneumonia; that was the most dangerous part of it.

Aaron Elson: Did they have penicillin then?

John Cadden: Yes. I had never heard of penicillin before, and it looked like something you'd give a horse. The needle was about an inch around, and about ten inches long. And to preserve it they used to keep it refrigerated so it was ice cold. And they gave you that in the rump. That hurt. But it did the trick.

Aaron Elson: Did Krivik fly again?

John Cadden: I don't know if he flew. He was in the psychiatric section of the hospital, but I guess all his concern about his crew and all that got to him. But the psychiatrist got him. And Puto. But Krivik used to come over and visit me in the hospital, that's where I found out why we crashed. I couldn't figure out, you know, everything had gone according to the textbook up to that point. That's when I found out why we crashed. And in all the books I've read, the official reports say "other aircraft on the runway." But that's not the case. Jones I just read in the latest newsletter, he died recently, I blame Jones, but maybe he reported what really happened and they changed it up at headquarters, so you never know. But there must have been a lot of people watching, especially when so few of us got back, watching that landing and who know exactly what happened.

They shouldn't have tied up the runway with the planes out on the mission. As far as I'm concerned if it was Jones' fault he should have peeled potatoes for the rest of the war. I've always said, if it was Jones' fault, he has to take responsibility. He should have gotten the German Iron Cross. He took care of us for the rest of the war. Otherwise we'd have been flying more missions.

But maybe as I say, he reported it but everybody there in the tower, if you watch the famous movie, 12 O'Clock High, I wouldn't say they're that concerned, but a lot of people are very concerned. A lot of the ground crews should have been concerned watching for the planes to get back.

Aaron Elson: Was Krivik married at the time?

John Cadden: Yes. I don't know what shape his marriage was in, we really didn't talk about that.

Aaron Elson: From what I understand, his marriage broke up after the war.

John Cadden: It did. I met him several times after the war. Morristown and Bloomfield aren't that far apart.

Aaron Elson: Did he have any children?

John Cadden: I don't know whether he had a child or not. I didn't pay much attention. I knew he was married, and he was 22 I guess. I figured he was an old man. I wouldn't be surprised if there was something about him having a baby or something. I forget now. I saw him, as I said, several times after the war. I was working in New York.

Aaron Elson: What kind of work did you do?

John Cadden: I was an electrical engineer and I was in sales. And I was working down on what's the World Trade Center now but it used to be 30 Broad Street. I started working there in 1949, when I got out of college.

Aaron Elson: That's when I was born.

John Cadden: That's when I got out of college.

Aaron Elson: Where did you go to college?

John Cadden: Villanova.

Aaron Elson: Where would you meet Krivik?

John Cadden: He stopped by at 4 o'clock in the afternoon one day and offered me a ride home. And we had a chat. My boss was happy to meet him. And he had a woman who he introduced as his fiancée. The last I knew Krivik was married, so I didn't say anything. He drove me home, and then he was playing semi-pro ball in North Jersey, and he used to play a lot down in Madison, New Jersey, and I'd go down and watch him play and we'd go out and have a few beers after the game and chat about old times. But I never got into his personal life because I knew he probably wouldn't want to talk about it.

Aaron Elson: Had he recovered mentally from the strain?

John Cadden: Oh, I think so because we'd be talking about it, there was no apparent strain on him, and he reenlisted. He was doing roofing work at one time, and the next thing I know he had reenlisted in the Army and was flying, made it his career, stayed in as a pilot.

Aaron Elson: Did he go to Korea?

John Cadden: Yes. That's when he reenlisted, during the Korean War. And he retired from the military around 1970, because it was around 1975 I called the VA trying to track him down, because I hadn't heard boo. I stayed in touch with a few of the crew members but nobody had heard anything. I called the VA and they were reluctant to give any information out about him, and I told them why I was calling. I said, "He saved my life in World War II, I'd just like to get ahold of him." The woman I was talking to was very sympathetic, so she said, "I'll tell you this much." She apparently had pulled his records or something like that on the computer. She said, "He retired from the military in San Diego or Seattle or Los Angeles," and that was about 1970, "and he was admitted to a hospital a few days later and died within 24 hours." What it was all about her records didn't show, but he was admitted to a hospital and he died within 24 hours. So she said it must have been some sort of an accident that he had. I guess he went to the VA hospital. And that's the last I heard.