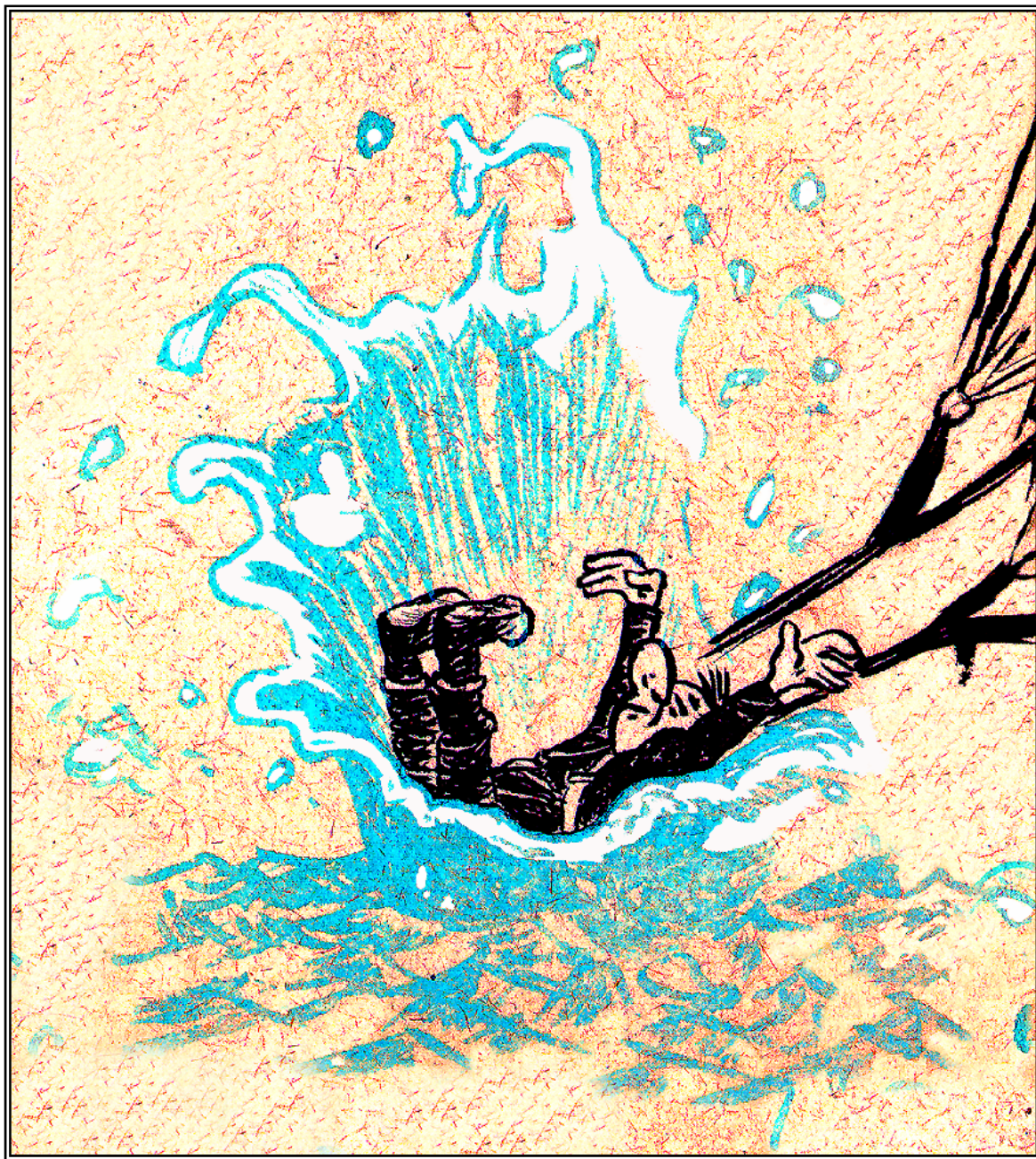


RAMROD TO MUNSTER



By Stephen C. Ananian

My Special Thanks: -

To Alister Raby, Air Historian and John Harris, Aviation Archeologist, for their invaluable assistance in helping me research this story.

I met Mr. Raby several years ago in Cambridge and explained to him my desire to locate my rescuers. A few weeks later I received a photocopy of the "Detailed Work Schedule" of 'A' Flight 278 Squadron for the 5 Oct '44, the day of my rescue (page 28). This information started my search and thus the documents that follow.

John Harris a 'Friend of the 339th Fighter Group' searched directories via the computer for the aircrew of the Air Sea Rescue seaplane (Walrus). On the Fiftieth Anniversary, almost to the day, he located the pilot Warrant Officer F. J. Bedford.

My gratitude also goes to 'aviation writer' Ian M^cLaclan. Ian wrote of my escape in his book, "USAAF Fighter Stories". The responses he received led to information about the Air Sea Rescue crews that participated in my rescue. My gratitude goes also to Peter Randall and Jim Sterling who's Websites has this story for all to read.

I am grateful to them all!

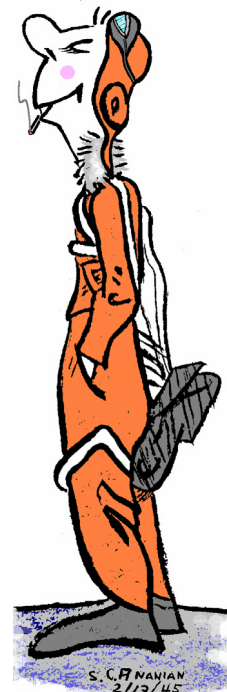
S.C.A.

RAMROD TO MUNSTER



*To Anna, my guardian angel,
Who watches over me in death as she did in life.....*

By Stephen C. Ananian



THE SAD SACK cartoon drawings are a creation of Sgt. George Baker and were redrawn by the author during the war in his scrapbook. They are used here to illustrate the story.

About the Author

Stephen Carnig Ananian was born on December 25th 1922 in New York City. As a youth he loved aviation. His heroes in those days were Charles Lindbergh, and the Air Racing Pilots, Roscoe Turner and Jimmy Doolittle.

Little did he know that he would some day be assigned to the Eighth Air Force, commanded by General Jimmy Doolittle and solo at the same field as did Charles Lindbergh.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December seventh 1941. Stephen was a student at New York University College of Engineering. The very next day he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet Program.

Called to active duty on February 3rd 1943 he went to Atlantic City for Boot Camp and then to the Army Air Force Academy at **Maxwell Field** in Montgomery, Alabama for classification. Two months of physicals and academic testing he was classified as an 'Aviation Cadet' and a student pilot!

'Primary School' training was at **Souther Field** in Americus, Georgia where he flew the Stearman PT-17. This is the Field where **Charles Lindbergh** first soloed many years before. Steve was in good company!

Two months and sixty hours of flying time later, he graduated 'Primary' and went on to 'Basic' training at **Greenwood, Mississippi**, then to **Jackson, Mississippi** and 'Advanced Flying' school. There he flew the North American AT-6 and his first fighter plane, the P-40 'War hawk'. On March 12th 1944, he graduated as a Fighter Pilot, from Jackson, Mississippi Class of '44C'. He received his wings and was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the 'Army of the United States'.

Ananian went overseas to England on the Blue Ribbon Cruise Ship 'Isle de France'. He was assigned to the Eighth Air Force, Sixth Fighter Command, 339th Fighter Group, 505th Fighter Squadron, based at Station F378 Fowlmere, just south of Cambridge. The following account is the story of his first 'combat' mission.



Introduction

To my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, two out of three of my fellow airmen were lost in battle. These men never had the opportunity to marry, have children and grandchildren. They never experienced the joys and pleasures of life as I did.

The account that follows is a story of some of those men that risked their lives so that I and therefore, you could live in freedom and peace. I have spent my remaining days asking, "Why me?" and trying to earn that privilege.

I beg of you, do not take their gift to you lightly.

Earn it!

The Mission

Mission No. 146, Field Order #598, (0952-1345)
(0952-1345) means takeoff at 09:52 and return at 13:45.

5 October '44

This was a P.T.W.S.* mission to Munster. Bombers were picked up at IJmuiden and escorted back to the Zuider Zee. The Group then went back to pick up stragglers. One aircraft was lost to AA fire.

Losses/ damaged:

- Lt. Stephen Ananian (505), aircraft damaged by a single burst of AA fire; parachuted into the Channel about 40 miles from Alderburgh; survived.

Comment: When Lt. Ananian landed in the water, he could not get out of his harness, and the wind began to pull him through the sea. Lt. George T. Rich (505) flew low over Ananian and collapsed the chute with his prop wash. After an hour and a half in rough water, a R.A.F. Walrus (amphibian aircraft) landed and picked him up. The Walrus could not take off and waited for and transferred Ananian to a British minesweeper. The Walrus had to be sunk and its crew taken back also. Lt. Ananian was back flying within a few days.

* P.T.W.S. - **P**atrol to the **T**arget – and on **W**ithdrawal **S**weep the area

"Ramrod"

***Ramrod** was the code word used to describe a combat mission in which fighter planes escorted the bombers. I guess the word comes from the days of the old west. Cowboys that herded the cattle were called 'ramrods'. These cowboys rounded up the strays and brought the cattle home.*

Ramrod, a perfect description! I often felt like I was riding herd on the bombers, protecting them from enemy fighters and bringing them home to safety!

RAMROD TO MUNSTER*



The author flying in this P51-B fighter flew his first mission. What transpired that day is the true account that follows.



Every fighter pilot remembers his first combat mission, but mine is one they will be talking about for quite some time!

October 5, 1944. We were awakened early. It was a cold and windy morning. Briefing was the usual quick and efficient session. Mission for the day, Ramrod, escorting two boxes of B-17's . . . A short hop, four hours . . . Target, Munster, in the Ruhr Valley . . . Lot's of Flak¹ expected . . . Probably no fighter opposition . . . Perhaps a few ME - 262s² . . . Altitude, twenty seven thousand feet . . . Freezing level at two thousand . . . Violent up-drafts . . . Gale warnings over the English Channel and North Sea . . . That means Air Sea Rescue won't be patrolling the flight path . . . "If you see any barracks in this area don't strafe them. It might be a 'Prisoner Of War' camp, and we would not want to risk shooting our own men."

I was flying Chet Malarz' aircraft. It was a sleek P-51B. His crew chief told me it was a good airplane, the engine was practically new, only ten hours of flying time since it was installed. I was in White Flight. Tom Rich was 'Flight Leader' and I was flying his wing. Take off was at nine fifty-two. . .

¹ **Flak** – Antiaircraft fire, short for **FL**ieger**A**bwehr**K**anone or antiaircraft canon. Can't pronounce it? Neither could we, so it's FLAK for short.

² **ME-262's** - German jet propelled fighters. Very fast and very dangerous!

We circled the field in formation while the Group formed up. Land-fall-out³, was at ten twenty-six and the group headed out over the North Sea. I could see white caps on the water below us. It looked cold and inhospitable. Just before we hit the Dutch coast the fighters spread out in battle formation. Our group rendezvoused with the bombers, as we made land-fall-in⁴.

The course was almost straight in across the Zuider Zee toward Hamburg, then a 90⁰ turn toward the Rhur valley. We had nearly crossed the Zuider Zee, flying over some small islands. Denmark and Sweden were to the North and The Third Reich was straight ahead. All was serene . . .



It was difficult to believe that we were at war, and that the enemy was far below.

Suddenly **BAM!** One puff of black smoke, with an angry looking orange center, **FLAK!** My engine quit cold and lost power. I called, "Upper White Leader this is upper White Two here, my engine just cut out! I've been hit!"

Tom's calm voice replied, "Upper White Two this is Upper White Leader I'll go back with you. Do you know what's wrong?"

I knew I must have been hit but it didn't make sense. One burst of 'Flak' at this altitude could never hit anyone . . . No smoke . . . No holes that I could see. I realized that the engine was running but it just didn't have any power. I checked all the instruments . . . Oil temperature O.K. Coolant temperature O.K. . . . Fuel pressure normal . . . Oil pressure seemed a little low . . . Had plenty of gas in my wing tanks but switched to fuselage tank just in case . . . No help there . . . Supercharger high blower is engaged . . . Or is it?

That's it! Oil pressure is falling off and the supercharger has disengaged. Since the supercharger is engaged with engine oil pressure I must have been hit in an oil line or in the supercharger itself . . .

That was bad news. I can't go far without oil . . . Five minutes if I'm lucky . .

I was now at twenty thousand feet over the Zuider Zee, and descending. "Bail out here Steve, and you're a dead duck!" If I'm really lucky I'll be a prisoner of war . . .

Then again, there was 'Neutral' Sweden nearby, but I didn't come all this way to become a prisoner of war in Sweden!

Of course, I might be able to make it to the North Sea and bail out over the water!

³ **Land-fall-out** - Point at which one crosses coast going from land to water.

⁴ **Land-fall-in** - Point at which one crosses coast going from water to land.

Then I remembered briefing! **"Storm warnings over the North Sea. No Air Sea Rescue boats patrolling today!"** No sense in worrying about that now. First things first.

I called Tom Rich over the Radio, **"Let's go home!"** Tom's reassuring voice came back, **"Good luck Steve, I'm staying right with you!"**

That was the way it started . . . Two silver mustangs, like knights of old, returning from the Crusades wounded, exhausted and heading back to England. We slowly descended. I, in a flat glide with no power, and Tom, flaps down, 'S-ing' back and forth to keep from over-shooting me. Protecting my rear from enemy aircraft.

Tom was on the radio alerting Air Sea Rescue about our predicament. My hands were full trying to get my plane back home to Fowlmere. I could not help thinking, **"and this is Chet's aircraft that I was supposed to take care of . . ."**

My manifold pressure gauge was reading ten inches of mercury, the lowest reading on the dial. I had the trim tabs rolled back and the stick in my stomach in an effort to stretch my glide to the sea. I kept looking at my air speed and rate of descent. We hit the coast of Holland and I was over the North Sea! Altitude seven thousand feet. At this altitude, atmospheric pressure was enough to give the engine power to keep me aloft! I had hoped this would happen! As we hit the coast we were met by two P-47's from Air Sea Rescue (see Appendix E, page 20). They were escorting me back. My rate of descent was now reading zero. Things were looking better!

Of course I had a few problems too. Oil pressure was now zero and oil temperature was 40°C. It was now obvious that my problem was in the lubrication system.

I looked back and saw Tom. What a comfort! Still with me. Down below the water was churning! I had to cool that engine some how! If I could only get the oil in the bottom of the crankcase up on those cylinder walls!

That's it! I started to rock the plane violently in uncoordinated movements.

It worked! The oil temperature started to go down!

Tom asked what I was doing. **"Lubricating the engine!"** I said. I kept looking ahead for the English coastline.

Then Tom called **"White Two, I see the coast. Were going to make it!"** Great news!

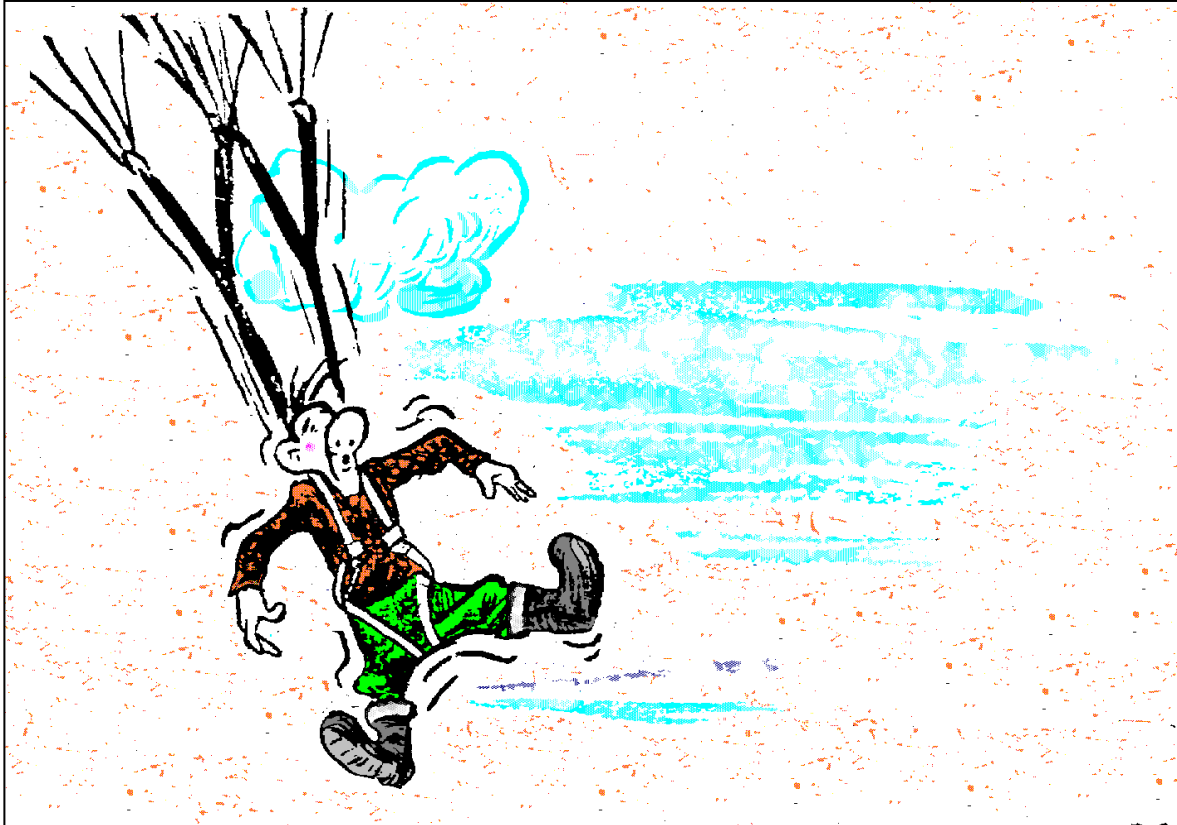
Then it happened! A run-away-prop! While I tried to keep it from changing pitch, all hell broke loose! The coolant boiled out and smoke and oil filled the cockpit. The engine sounded like some one was pounding on it with a sledgehammer. The heat in the cockpit was becoming unbearable!

I looked at the altimeter, it read 3,000 feet! Minimum altitude for bailing out was 250 feet. As much as I disliked it, the time had come for this aircraft and me to part company!

I radioed, "This is it Tom, I'm bailing out!"

Then I lowered my seat, pulled my goggles over my eyes, lowered my head and released the canopy. I tore off my oxygen mask and detached everything that fastened me to the plane.

Just before I disconnected my earphones, I heard Archie Tower's⁵ voice on the radio. He must have been monitoring the whole thing back at Gas pump⁶.



"Say again Upper Five Four! I didn't understand!"

Then Tom answered him, "He said he's bailing out! " For the first time there was a note of concern in his voice.

Archie didn't answer. Then complete silence.

Raised myself to jump and the slipstream knocked me back into the cockpit. I then rolled the plane over and started to drop out.

Just as I left my seat, looked back and saw the radio antenna and stabilizer just behind me. Was afraid of hitting the tail section so I eased back on the stick a little just as I fell and cleared the stabilizer.

I pulled the ripcord. My oxygen mask went floating past my face . . . Falling . . . Falling head first spinning toward the water . . . Pop! The chute opened . . .Whitey (he was our parachute man) once told me every chute packed at Fowlmere, had opened . . . I was happy the record was still in tact!

⁵ **Archie Tower** - 505th Squadron Operations Officer.

⁶ **Gas pump** - Radio call sign for our airfield's control tower.

Then a strange thing happened. My dinghy floated in the air in front of me. This dinghy, if you remember, is stowed in a canvas pack that you sit on. It was secured to your Mae West⁷ by a line aptly called an 'umbilical cord'.

The procedure for a water landing is to loosen your chute harness, and drop out of your chute ten feet above the water. The canvas bag is carried away by the chute. The dinghy is pulled out of the pack by the 'umbilical cord'. You hit the water. Splash . . . Inflate your Mae West . . . Inflate your dinghy . . . Climb in, sit back and wait for rescue. Simple! Right?

Not exactly! I hit the water almost as soon as the chute opened. No time to loosen it. Once the harness was wet it was impossible to unfasten all those buckles.

Fortunately for me, when the dinghy floated past my nose in mid air I reached over and pulled the CO₂ inflation cartridges and inflated the dinghy. This whole thing took place in a matter of seconds.

I hit the water and skipped from the top of one wave to the next. I was skimming off the top of the waves like a flat rock bounces off the surface of a lake. My chute, aided by the heavy winds, was pulling me for a roller coaster ride!

I was flat on my back, struggling to dump the chute, and swallowing the North Sea like a pint of 'Half and Half' at the 'Checquers' (the local Pub back at Fowlmere)!

I was in **real** trouble and I was on the verge of drowning.

Then this P-51 starts to buzz me. It was Tom! What was he doing? He made another pass and then I understood! Having seen my predicament he was trying to spill the chute with his prop wash! On his second or third pass he succeeded. I think he hit the chute, at any rate it worked.

I don't remember too much after that. I could not climb into the dinghy because the chute went down and started to pull me under. I just hung on to the raft for my life.

According to Tom, they lost me initially in all those whitecaps. It took twenty minutes till they finally found me again. Then the P-47's from Air Sea Rescue marked my spot with smoke bombs and dye. Tom said when they finally located me. I looked like a drowning rat hanging onto a doughnut. I tried to wave once and let him know I was alive, but in the attempt, I nearly drowned.

Things were getting worse! The water was cold. I prayed, and I spoke to God. **"It's up to you God. I can't think of anything else I can do."** God didn't answer. He probably agreed with me.

I knew Tom would be running out of fuel soon. Besides what more could he do? He must have been reading my mind. His plane passed overhead and

⁷ **Mae West** - Endearing term for pilot's orange colored life preserver. When inflated it made you look like you had a bust, Mae West's figure! Thus it was called a 'Mae West'.

wagged its' wings. He was wishing me well and headed for home. The P-47's having more fuel were still there . . . But for how long?

I looked up at the circling Thunderbolts (P-47's). They could not have had too much fuel left, and would have to go home too. Then I would be alone. What could they do anyway? What were they waiting for?

I became aware of a change. It was a sound, an airplane engine. Different! Then there it was! A Walrus! It was an Air Sea Rescue flying boat. A twin wing, 'Flying Bathtub'! Now he started to circle about. There was one thing I knew. He could never land. With this wind or on this water with ten-foot waves landing was out of the question! If this was Air Sea Rescues' answer to my problems, I was in deep trouble!

God it's up to you!

I think I passed out then. I became aware of the sound of a plane taxiing on the water toward me and I came to. As I rose and fell on the wave crests I caught sight of the Walrus (page 14). God had answered my prayers. It had landed and was heading right at me! Standing up in the hatch was an R.A.F. airman (L/A B. Westbrook) with a big smile on his face. He yelled, "**Here Yank catch this.**" He threw me a line. Don't know how I managed to grab the line, but I did! He hauled me toward the plane and grabbed me with a boat hook.

A waterlogged pilot is heavy under normal conditions, with a parachute attached and the heavy seas I was an impossible load. "**Don't worry,**" he said. "**There are two ships on their way.**"

A few minutes later, I saw the trawler (*HMS George Adgell*) with the 'Union Jack' flying. Then I was being pulled into a lifeboat. Someone gave me rum to drink. It warmed my insides. I realized then how cold I had been. A seaman put a blanket around me and held me in his arms, just as my father would have.

I felt warm. How was that Walrus going to manage to get off? I passed out. Later I learned that the Walrus cracked a pontoon trying to lift off. They were picked up by the other boat that had come to my rescue (*RML 547*). The Rescue Launch unsuccessfully attempted to tow the Walrus. It sank in the rough seas.

That night I stayed at an R.A.F. hospital on the Thames Estuary. The next day I was back at Fowlmere. The day after, Oct. 7, I flew my second mission.... Ramrod to Bremen....

I had it made! I knew that I was going to live through the war. I knew also that we were going to win! How could we lose with a team like this?

I don't think I ever thanked Tom for all he did. He had called Air Sea Rescue and vectored two P-47's, the Walrus and the two ships (the trawler *George Adgell* and Rescue Motor Launch 547), that finally rescued me.

When the Walrus arrived at the scene, I had been in the water over an hour. The pilot (W/O F. J. Bedford, FAA) must have realized I could not survive much longer and probably asked permission to land. He knew he would be

lucky to make the landing, let alone the impossibility of a take off! I had been in the cold water too long, and he must have felt he had to risk it.

Of course Tom's quick thinking, and expert flying, kept me from drowning on splashdown. All those people working to keep me alive! How could we have ever lost the war? I am very grateful!

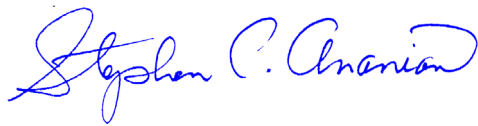
All in all I was in the 'drink' for about an hour and twenty minutes. That mustang flew, losing oil, for over forty-five minutes. I still can't believe I was hit by one shot from an antiaircraft gun. I'll always be indebted to Tom Rich for his great flying and quick thinking! Flying low over the water and deflating a parachute is some sort of stunt! Why I was able to survive in that cold water, with high winds, and force four seas, I'll never know.

To top it all, those naval airmen, from Air Sea Rescue, attempting a landing under those conditions, **and making it!** The crew of the trawler 'HMS George Adgell', Rescue Motor Launch 547, and those P-47 pilots. Yes, someone up there loves me!

Come to think of it, I don't think I ever paid back Chet for the loss of his plane. Chet, I owe you a beer. Tom, and the men of Air Sea Rescue, **I owe you my life**, and my undying gratitude! Thanks! Thank you all!

Upper Five Four Out!

1/LT. STEPHEN C. ANANIAN



Tom's Story....

RECOLLECTIONS OF STEVE ANANIAN'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL ON 5 Oct. '44

PREAMBLE: -

Steve joined the 339th Fighter Group in late September 1944. He was assigned to "D" Flight, 505th Squadron, and the same flight to which I was assigned. It did not take long for me to develop a strong affection for him.

Steve was "blessed" with an aptitude for letting his opinion be known, if someone asked for it. I could relate to this, since it is also one of my "blessings". Ananian is more extroverted than I am, but I'm not shy.

There are many things a newly assigned pilot, in a combat environment, must be checked out on. The type of formation we would fly when in enemy territory was one. We did not fly the close formation depicted in movies. This would deprive the flight of three sets of eyes, since you must glue your eyes on the flight leader's aircraft to fly close formation. We flew a "spread" formation (Battle). This pushes each member of the flight out about 100 feet and brings them up almost line abreast. Thus they can, and are, constantly scanning the entire sky.

To compensate for the increased; or decreased distance, (depending upon position), which must be flown, the number 2, 3, and 4 men change sides once each 90 degrees of turn. The aircraft being "turned into" slides under the flight leader, and the ones being turned "away from" ride high, and cross over. If a 180° turn is made this is done twice, and so forth.

It is also necessary to understand the "color codes". Red leader leads the squadron (16 planes). Blue leader leads the second section, which consists of all aircraft after the lead eight, and is second in command. While each pilot has his own squadron call sign, "Upper 79" was mine; "Upper 54" was Steve's. Your Color Code call sign changed daily, depending on the position you were flying on each mission. This was most important. I know of at least one pilot who was lost because a member of his flight saw a jet coming in, but used the wrong flight color in calling the enemy aircraft. As a result the flight leader did not take evasive action until it was too late.

Among the many other items new pilots needed to absorb was "escape and evasion", in the event you went down over enemy territory. An item covered in this area was the explanation that the Germans kept close watch along the coastline they controlled. It was known they had high-speed boats and would attempt to reach airmen who bailed out close to the coast before our Air Sea Rescue could reach them. This was not for humanitarian reasons; they wanted the prisoners, for possible information, and one less pilot to fight. Steve was thoroughly briefed on this subject. He used this knowledge on his first mission....



**Capt. George Thomas
Rich**

RAMROD TO MUNSTER . . .

MY RECOLLECTIONS

George T. Rich (505th Fighter Squadron)

The briefing for this mission was more or less routine. From a fighter pilot's standpoint the most significant item of the briefing was the gale warnings for the North Sea. Most single engine fighter pilots did not like to fly over water. The often-repeated phrase was that the engine went into "automatic rough" at this time. The condition of the sea did not help. Also, the flight to Holland meant crossing the North Sea's widest point, for us.

Munster was not a tough target for fighters; we did not have to fly into the cloud of flak as the bombers did, but it was Hell for the bombers. The Ruhr Valley was Germany's industrial heart. It was the most heavily defended area in Germany, with the possible exception of Berlin.

If fighters were not hit by the first burst of heavy flak they were normally not going to be hit. We immediately went into a diving turn upon getting heavy flak. This changed our altitude, course and speed. The gunners couldn't catch up to us. On the other hand, the bombers could not change anything. The anti-aircraft gunners had from IP (Initial Point) to target, to zero in on them. This was normally about twenty miles, or so. On this portion of the run the bombardier was in control of the aircraft.

We went into "battle" formation before making "land-fall-in" on the southwestern edge of the Zuider Zee. As usual I looked down at that long causeway running south to north across the Zuider Zee. I suppose every fighter pilot felt like me, and wanted to bring a couple of 500 pound bombs over and bust that sucker. We had been told, though, that it had no military value, and would be a great inconvenience to the Dutch people if we destroyed it.

Everything was proceeding smoothly, we had just crossed the Zuider Zee, and my head now began to swivel. It would continue to do so for the duration of the escort phase of our mission. The movies depict the white scarf that fighter pilots wore as cosmetic 'show'. NOT SO! Our necks were constantly moving. The wool collars on the duty shirts we wore would rub your neck raw. Scarves were a necessity, not for the sake of appearance.

The relative calm was suddenly shattered when I heard "This is Upper White Two, I've been hit". I looked over at Steve and saw he was dropping out of formation and making a one eighty. His aircraft was already beginning to leave a trail of black smoke. I didn't even ask Upper Leader for permission to escort him home. This was a "given". I gave Steve a heading to fly and took a position slightly above him and off to one side. As we came up on the coast (out-bound) I advised Steve we had two choices. We could fly South, down the coast, just off shore, but it would be a little over one hundred miles to friendly territory. Or, we could try to make it across the North Sea, which would be the same distance. He said, "I'll take the water". Obviously he remembered the

briefings about the Germans and their high speed races to pick up aviators in the water.

The Allied Air Forces maintained two emergency landing strips, five hundred feet wide and ten thousand feet long. One was in the south, in the vicinity of Dover. The other was in the north close to Scotland. I believe they were named Woodbridge and Manston. These strips were for returning aircraft, which could not, for whatever reason, make their home fields. Any time a mission was in progress Air Sea Rescue kept two P-47s sitting on the runway at each field. These aircraft used their bomb mounts to hold life rafts and other survival/rescue equipment.

I had Steve switch to emergency frequency, which Air Sea Rescue used and I switched also. I called ASR (Air Sea Rescue), they had a call sign but I don't remember it, gave them our position, altitude and heading. They advised me they were launching two "Jugs" (P-47s) and they should intercept us in about ten minutes.

Our initial heading was intended to get us over land in the shortest distance. The heading was working out OK, but Steve's aircraft was not. He was very slow, and kept losing altitude. At one point he started rocking his plane back and forth like crazy. I asked him what he was doing and he calmly said, "Lubricating my engine".

Of course we were in continuous radio contact with Air Sea Rescue, and I kept them advised as to our current altitude. It developed Archie Tower, our Operations Officer, was monitoring the emergency frequency back at Fowlmere. But, he lost contact with us, as we got lower, so he didn't hear the final phase.

Obviously radar was far more advanced than I realized. Just about as predicted I picked up two "Jugs" (Thunderbirds) ⁸ at twelve o'clock level, and closing. They made a 'one-eighty' and took up a position at six o'clock, a little high, and continued with Steve and me.

Steve kept getting lower and lower. The "Jugs" and I maintained our position relative to him. I sneaked a look ahead and could see land. We would reach land in the approximate vicinity of the northern-most emergency strip. I was elated, and told Steve we were going to make it. I made plans in my mind to ask the P-47s to lead us to the field, since they were familiar with the area.

Unhappily, Steve burst my bubble very quickly. He said "I've got to leave it, it's too hot in here". The two "Jugs" and I backed off a bit to give him the room he needed.

I felt he made an excellent exit of the aircraft. Some pilots had trouble getting clear of the aircraft when bailing out. Others experienced the plane continuing to fly and threatening them. Steve's just quit flying and dived right into the water, so it was no longer in the picture.

On this day the North Sea was just a mass of whitecaps. When Steve hit the water he just started hydroplaning across the water, on his back. As he did every time I needed help, God immediately put a thought in my mind. "You could probably collapse that chute with your prop wash".

⁸ See page 24 Appendix E on Air Sea Rescue P-47s.

I told the Air Sea Rescue men, "I'm going down to see if I can't help that boy". I pushed my prop pitch full forward to High RPM for maximum thrust, and made a down-wind pass, getting as low as I could. When I got right over Steve I pulled straight up. It took two or three passes, but on one pass I looked back and there was no chute. Thank God, at least he is not going to be drowned by his chute pulling him under.

After the chute was collapsed I climbed back to the altitude of the P-47s and said, "Put some smoke, or dye on him". One of them came back, "We lost him". I really felt frustration at this, but I could understand it. The sea was completely covered with whitecaps, but I knew we couldn't give up. I said, "Then put some smoke where you last saw him, so we'll have a reference point, because we're going to find him". They did this.

Before I forget it, I want to say; those "Jug" pilots did a terrific job. The Air Sea Rescue pilots said, "We're going to begin a square search". I said, "Great, I'm going to bore holes right here. One of us will spot him".

Naturally it seems much longer, but we must have searched for twenty minutes, or more. I was really beginning to feel let down when, thank God, I saw him. I called the "Jugs" and told them, "I'm putting my left wing tip on him and making circles, let me know when you see him". They quickly came back, "We have him in sight". God, I was **so thankful**.

I told the Search and Rescue guys, "I'm getting out of your way. Do your work". They must have been feeling the same relief I felt, I think they jettisoned their entire payloads right on Steve. There were dinghies, smoke and dye every place. No one would have trouble finding him now.

As we learned later, Steve could not get out of his parachute harness. His dinghy was inflated and he had his elbows hooked over the side but he couldn't get in it. I told him when he got back to Fowlmere that he looked like a little rat, hanging onto a doughnut. "SOMEBODY UP THERE LIKES HIM". At that time of year a man was supposed to die of hypothermia if he could not get in his dinghy within eight minutes.

The Air Sea Rescue boys told me a Walrus and a boat was on the way. I was running low on fuel. There was nothing else I could contribute, so I thanked them profusely and headed home. On the way back I dodged around the end of a large convoy of ships hugging the English coast. I wasn't about to fly over that convoy. They shoot real bullets.

The Minesweeper that later picked Steve up. Obviously came from this convoy. How did they get the word? Someone had communication channels we did not know of. We will never know all who contributed to this saga. Too many were involved, and too much time has passed.

When I returned to Fowlmere Archie Tower greeted me and said, "You did a good job with Ananian". I should have treasured these words of approval. They were the only ones I ever received from him.

After Steve returned to Fowlmere "Doc" Scroggin (505th Flight Surgeon) told me that he had arranged for us to take a couple of days off. He said I should take Steve to London and get him good and relaxed and laid back (that meant get him DRUNK). I thought this sounded like a great idea, but Steve said, "No, I want to go on the next mission flown. I don't want to get gun-shy".

As the war progressed our friendship grew. It became more or less routine to be assigned as a pair. This was fine with me. Steve was an exceptionally good pilot. I lost my element leader, and his wingman, once during some particularly violent maneuvering, but not Steve. He over-stressed⁹ the aircraft, but he stayed with me. We had complete confidence in each other, and flew as a team. In retrospect I can remember one time I took him into a snowstorm, attempting a ground controlled radar approach on the continent. We were on instruments for forty-five minutes, which meant Steve was flying very close formation, and probably fighting vertigo all this time. We never saw the ground, and eventually had to return to home base. I didn't have to do this. I could have gotten Steve killed. I would not do it again.

We both returned to the States on the first ship to leave England after V.E. Day. The ship was the "Isle de France". The largest ship in the world at the time. We were separated from service at Greensboro North Carolina in June 1945. I next saw Steve in Orlando Florida at our 1980 Reunion. The warmth was still there. He will always be my best friend, and I love him.

Upper Seven Nine Out! *Capt. George Thomas Rich*

Many years of investigation on my part has revealed the following information. The Sea Rescue was conducted by the 69th Rescue Motor Launch Flotilla (RML547) out of Felixstowe and "A" Flight No. 278 Squadron (Walrus and Spitfires) conducted the Air portion of the rescue. See Appendix C & D.

The Air-Sea-Rescue P-47s from Boxted Detachment B 65th Fighter Wing. See Appendix E.

Position of crash site was 128° (T) Oxfordness 11 miles.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve". The signature is stylized with a large, looping 'S' and a horizontal line extending from the end.

⁹In a "Dog Fight" with a ME-109, Steve hit "compressibility", keeping up with Tom, The rivet holes on the aluminum skin were stretched and the paint was burnt off the Mustang. The P-51 was 'scrapped'.

RESCUING THE RESCUERS !



Rescue Motor Launch 547

The following is an excerpt from an Air-Sea-Rescue account by Sub Lieutenant Allan Rowe of the Rescue Motor Launch 547 from his book

"Air-Sea-Rescue in World War Two". *These are the fellows that came to rescue me, the Mustang pilot! SCA*

"We were on our way out to our patrol position when we were vectored to a ditching. We had been having engine trouble, but our motor mechanic, P.O. Mason, quickly got us going again, and we were soon heading at full revs along the bearing we had been given.

"Have you heard the buzz?" said Boswell to his assistant gunner, Evans, a pale and rather undernourished cockney, who came in for a bit of mickey taking from his mates.

"Naow, what?" was the anxious reply.

"There's a Walrus ahead!"

"Garn," growled Evans, "'What you on about?" Jimmy just told us. "There's been three of them fighters already all saying the same thing. In fact, we now seemed to be over-supplied with support aircraft.

"We had had three separate message that just ahead of us a Walrus was going down to pick up a fighter pilot from a one-man dinghy. A naval trawler was said to be standing by, but obviously experience had shown that there could be problems, which only we would be able to deal with. So we carried on, very soon spotting the trawler - the George Adgell - with the Walrus close by.

"Walrus reports the airman is now in the trawler," called Clem Woodhead, on VHF watch in the wheelhouse. "Stand clear, about to take off."

"You hope," murmured someone behind me, as the little plane taxied into the wind and began its run. We remained at a distance, watching anxiously.

An easterly wind had gradually increased in strength since the rescue had taken place and it was blowing the spray off the white horses which fringed the short, choppy waves into which the Walrus had to fly, working up to maximum speed in order to take off. As it scudded across the wave-crests, it started to bounce more and more heavily, sending up sheets of spray around its wings, as it dug ever deeper into the surface at every bounce. The buffeting was more than its frame could endure. Suddenly one wing dipped the other rose in the air and it keeled over and slewed round to port.

"It dipped its port wing" I exclaimed, "It looks as if the float's ripped off."

This was indeed what had happened. Fortunately, however, before the plane could capsize, the pilot had throttled back his engine and brought it to a stop, listing badly, with its lower port wing under the water looking like a wounded bird.

"Full ahead," said Andy. "We'll close her. They'll not be able to take off now."

"Wilson! Ainsworth! Stand by with heaving lines. Boswell! Evans! Get Fenders." I ordered. "Goodwin, bring a dinghy up to the bow."

"We'll come alongside her bow," said Andy, seeing the pilot climb out of the for'ard cockpit as we approached from the port side of the aircraft. "Slow ahead, starboard ten... midships... steady as she goes. Stop both. Slow astern port. Stop engines."

Carefully, he placed our bow just ahead of the plane's bow and brought it under our lee. There was no need of heaving lines or even fenders. The pilot, taking advantage of a rising wave, was able to grab the guardrail and get a foot on to the ship's sidetrake, amidships. We were then able to help him over the rail without too much difficulty.

The Walrus was floundering badly, however, and taking on a steeper list, which threatened the life of the observer, who had clambered out on to the starboard wing as the fuselage filled with seawater and started to sink by the stern. His situation looked extremely precarious. He was half-kneeling on the upper wing, clinging to the edge to avoid slipping down the increasing incline.

Using the engines to swing the stern clear and then come swiftly around to starboard. Andy thrust the bow of '547' neatly up against the wing tip, which was just high enough to form a kind of gangplank on to the point of our bow.

It was so impressive that I can still picture the airman rising to his feet and simply stepping aboard: there was only a very low rail on the fo'c'stle so as not to obstruct the field of fire from the pom-pom. It was only just in time, however, for as we pulled astern to clear the wreck, the wing rose high in the air and the aircraft gave a sudden lurch and began to sink. Within a few minutes it had disappeared beneath the waves." *ALAN ROWE*



At left, Lt. T. D. "Andy" Andrews 'Skipper' of RML 547. Lieut. Andrews was featured on the cover of Time Magazine as the epitome of the old English 'sea dog'.

The search continues . . .



**1/Lt. Harry Douthwaite
of the HMS George Adgell**

Heading home that day, sailing up the 'Thames Estuary' on board the trawler HMS George Adgell I rested from my ordeal and had the opportunity to thank the Captain and crew for having rescued me. The crewmember that had pulled me into the boat, asked if they might keep the Nylon parachute to give to their lady friends. (Parachute Nylon made great undergarments in war torn England). Of course I said yes, since it was no longer usable.

As I departed down the 'gangplank' the whole crew came to Attention, saluted and presented me with one of the panels of my parachute. They asked that I wear it as a scarf for them when flying.

Needless to say I was honored and deeply moved by this gesture of my rescuers!

After that day, I flew sixty-one combat missions and one diplomatic mission to Sweden – I always wore that nylon scarf made from my parachute!

Years later, on June 4, 2005 I heard from Harry Warren, son of Harry Douthwaite, 1st Lieutenant of the Trawler/Minesweeper HMS George Adgell.

He informed me his dad is no longer with us but recalls, "Yes, my Dad certainly got a piece of your parachute and I believe my mum made one or more blouses out of it. I wish my memories of what he told me were sharper, but it was so long ago and I wasn't as interested as I am now. I do remember him saying that your rescue was a real high spot for the crew - it sounded as if they were nearly as pleased about it as yourself!"

Outside of Tom Rich, I never had the opportunity to thank my rescuers properly. I tried locating them but the war always seemed to interfere. I looked forward to personally thanking them - - 'Downing a few pints' and getting to know them. I am still looking and hoping that someday I will be able to thank them all!

Steve



Left one of three Spitfire pilots, F/S Murland who came to my aid. His son Jerry writes, "Dad was, Howard Ferguson Murland, called "Hugh" in the RAF as they shortened everything!"

AFTER 55 YEARS - - - - I LOCATE ONE OF MY RESCUERS!

On October 3rd 1999 I received an E-mail from John Harris (Aircraft Archeologist). With the aid of his computer he had located the Pilot of the Walrus, John Bedford. After 55 years of searching I had finally located him. Leading Airman Westbrook's whereabouts is still not known. On October 5th 1999 (55 years to the date) I wrote John and thanked him. I also sent him a copy of this story. The following is his reply.

Nov. 17th 1999

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your letter. I have been moving around a bit lately and thought it best to leave the letter safely in England rather than risk having it mislaid somewhere in France; hence the delay in answering.

You write a good story! I don't think I can add much to what you have written; it was all a long time ago, and if in my mind small details differ from the written account it could be my memory that is at fault – in any case it isn't important.

I suspect that the remark by Ross Mc Neil that "Bedford Seems to have made a habit of trading dented Shagbats for downed airmen" was not meant to be taken seriously; to me trying to rescue them really mattered. I remember how I felt a couple months earlier (Aug. 3rd): I had gone to search for a baled out pilot, visibility was very poor – cloud right down on the deck; by chance I found him still attached to his parachute and not in a dinghy... I made a steep turn to come around and drop a smoke canister but couldn't find him the second time; I searched and searched without success. I gave my position to a H.S.L., which eventually found him, but by then he was dead. I was really vexed that I had not been able to save him – I would gladly have traded a "Dented Shagboat" for a living survivor that day.

I don't think there were any Spitfires involved in your rescue, but according to "detail of work" on page 19, two spitfires were scrambled to search for a baled out Mustang pilot and returned with "nothing to report". We old hands had a low opinion of Spitfires as search aircraft, downward visibility was minimal unless you stood them on a wing; on that day in particular, with all those whitecaps, it would be almost impossible to spot a body in the water unless he was in a dinghy. Without looking at a chart I wouldn't know how near their search area was from mine but I would say it was a separate incident.

Unfortunately I cannot tell you anything about L/A Westbrook except that he was seconded from the Navy. I was posted overseas shortly after your incident and lost touch with the squadron. We often flew together but we did not have regular crews on the squadron. I could look up all the telephone directories I can get hold of and see if I can find anything there, but I expect that has already been done.

How did you know his initials were R. H. and did you have any other information about him such as an old address?

Yours sincerely,

John Bedford

"Baby Mine" don't you cry...

"IT JUST WAS NOT MY DAY TO GO"

By Bill Guyton, *Pilot 505th*

On 28 March 1945 the Target City for the Eighth Air Force bombers was Hanover, Germany. The mission of the 339th Fighter Group was to escort the bombers. I was flying Steve Ananian's P-51 6N K "Baby Mine", and my mission ended up in a farmer's field near Colchester, England, about 70 minutes after takeoff.

Our group took off in pairs and climbed up through a low overcast to form up above the cloud deck before proceeding on course across the North Sea for a rendezvous with the bombers over the continent. I was having trouble with the throttle trying to close. Keeping it open required much more pressure on the friction lock than usual.

As we climbed over the North Sea I switched as usual from the fuselage tank to external tanks. Now I developed a new problem. The engine was cutting on and off as I tried to use the external tanks. Without the external fuel I would be unable to complete the mission. In addition the throttle friction problem persisted. There was nothing I could do to correct the situation. When I informed the squadron leader of the problems, he advised that I return to base at Fowlmere.

I reversed course and let down over the North Sea, dropping my external tanks. I did not want to attempt a landing with full external tanks. I crossed the English coast under 300-foot overcast. My left hand was sore from trying to keep enough pressure on the throttle friction knob to maintain suitable power. I kept looking for a familiar landmark in order to pick up a suitable heading for Fowlmere, which I assumed to be about 50 miles away.

Suddenly the engine quit completely. I switched tanks to no avail. Bail out was my next thought, but looking down I realized I was too low for the chute to open. Next thought, - climb, then bail out. The highest I could get was 600 feet, at which time I had to lower the nose to avoid stalling out. I made a swipe with my hand at the seat belt and missed it. Baby Mine was sinking swiftly down through the cloud deck, and I knew I would have no time to unhook seat belt, shoulder harness, G-suit and Oxygen mask. I was out of options. The silent, rapid descent through the clouds into the unknown was filled with prayer and terror. Without power I hoped to have enough altitude to make one turn toward a suitable emergency field.

As I broke through the overcast, it was raining. And I saw an open field off to the right. The opening to the field was guarded by a row of large trees to the left and larger ones to the right. There was a ridge of dirt about four feet high



1/Lt William R. Guyton

separating the two fields. As I started my turn I cut the switches and released the canopy. The P-51 was sinking fast, and I was approaching a power line. I leveled my wings to clear the power lines, but it took me out of my turn. My left wing headed directly at the end tree on my left. As I lifted the left wing to avoid that tree, my right wing ripped through the ridge of dirt and was torn from the aircraft. At that point I was knocked unconscious.

When I regained consciousness, the scene was a muddy mess. I recall seeing belts of .50 caliber ammunition strewn in front of the windshield. There was a lot of gasoline in the area but fortunately no fire. I checked my body parts and found that I was O.K. except for a couple of head wounds, which had knocked me out. Looking around the plane, I saw three or four farmers gawking at the plane from a safe distance. Perhaps they thought I was dead, or possibly they feared fire or explosion. I then hurriedly exited the plane in case it did catch fire. I must have been unconscious for some time, as they had to trudge through some large muddy fields to get to the wreck scene. One farmer remarked "Rough landing, mate"! Another asked who was going to pay for damage to his field. A "Bobby" appeared, and I asked him to guard the plane and keep people away. I was taken to a phone where I could call the base to get picked up.

The impact caused the P-51 to semi-cart-wheel as the wing came off and it came to rest facing 90 degrees to the right of the intended direction of the crash landing. I think I was hurled about 100 feet from point of impact. There were no skid marks, just a few propeller marks as it ticked the ground.

A post crash inspection revealed that the engine failed because of a breakage in the throttle linkage. I assume that was what was causing my throttle to creep. In discussing the crash with an aeronautical engineer friend and other



"Baby Mine" – Safe on the ground with her radiator standing in the lower right corner.

pilots, they said having an engine failure at such a low altitude meant the plane would be on the ground with or without me in about 20 – 25 seconds. I was fortunate to make a successful crash landing under such difficult weather conditions.

I guess it just wasn't my day to go to Hanover. *WILLIAM R. GUYTON*

This account by Bill Guyton of the last flight of my airplane is a perfect example of the superior skills of our pilots. To come out of a layer of clouds so close to the ground and be able to find a 'Forced Landing' site and to "crash land" a P-51 took great flying ability. Bill Guyton was one of the best. A few days later he was back flying combat. He flew my wing on my last mission April 5th, in his own new P-51 D, 'Eileen', 6N-I Bar.

He completed his tour, and is credited with having destroyed five enemy aircraft. **STEVE**

Friends . . .

10/16/01

I correspond with Tom Rich and John Bedford regularly and we are still attempting to locate Leading Airman Westbrook.

John Harris, a friend of the 339th in England, an Aviation Archeologist and now a personal friend, has been a great assistance in helping me locate information. John is the one who found W/O F. John Bedford, the pilot of the Walrus that rescued me. He is now helping in the search for Leading Airman R. H. (or B.) Westbrook.

There is a discrepancy in his Initials. On page 21 author Norman Franks in his book 'Another kind of Courage' says he was L/A **R. H.** Westbrook. On page 23 the 'Dunkers Club' of RML 547 has his name as L/A **B.** Westbrook.

Alan Rowe in his book 'Air-Sea Rescue in World War Two' describes the origin of the 'Dunkers Club' on RML547. The Name came from the American practice of 'Dunking Doughnuts' in their coffee. Those that the crew of RML 547 rescued from the sea became members. Perhaps the '**R**' stands for 'Robert' and '**B**' for 'Bob' would be a common shortening of the name.

I am inclined to believe the accuracy of Norman Franks since his information probably comes from 'official records'.

Still looking!



Appendix A



Capt. George Thomas Rich's aircraft, with squadron markings 6N-H - *Chute!* **YOU'RE FADED**, shown here, flying formation with Steve, (in "*Baby Mine*") over Fowlmere.

Tom completed his combat tour of 63 missions and is credited with having destroyed six and a half enemy aircraft.

A little secret. Tom named his aircraft after Steve's rescue from the North Sea. In gambler's parlance, "Shoot you're faded." Means, "Roll the dice I have your bet covered", but to an airman "Chute" is slang for parachute. So "Chute you're faded" means, "Bail out, I'll watch over you". Tom always did.

Appendix B



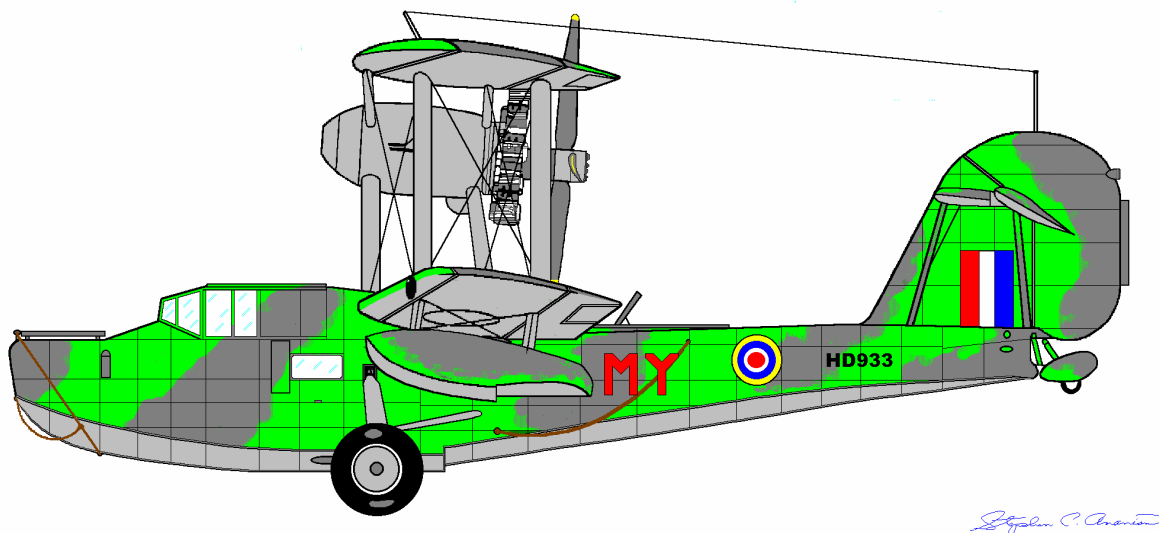
6N-K "*Baby Mine*" Aircraft of 1st Lt. Stephen C. Ananian.

On February 9, 1945, Steve flying in 6N-K successfully engaged three of ten ME. 262 jet fighters in a "dog fight" at high altitude. He shot down 1 Me. 262, thus becoming the first member of the 339th to destroy a jet-propelled fighter in aerial combat (and the only pilot to have shot one down in a 'dog fight').

The author flew 63 combat missions, 302.5 combat hours, and is officially credited with destroying 4 enemy aircraft (one jet fighter) and damaging 2 jets.

On 13 April '45 he flew on a diplomatic mission to Sweden. For which he was awarded Sweden's 'Gold Medal of Vassa.'

Appendix C



Walrus: - HD 933 "Shagbat"

10/12/43. Collected by ferry pilot
01/44 Transferred to 15 MU
05/44 Transferred 278 Sqn at Harrowbeer
11/07/44 Damaged after landing in rough sea to rescue American, 55 miles SE of Martlesham, Cat A. (Pilot W/O RC Whitaker OK)
05/10/44 Port float broke up on attempted take off in rough sea with survivors, capsized under tow by trawler, sank 28 miles off Essex coast, Cat E (W/O F J Bedford and crew OK)
(Source: AM78 aircraft movement cards).

Author Norman Franks writes in his book, 'Another Kind of Courage' (Page 98)

Warrant Officer F. John Bedford and Leading Airman R. H. Westbrook¹⁰ took off in a Walrus at 12:15 p.m. on 5 October, to search for a missing Mustang pilot from the 339th Fighter Group. They found the survivor (Ananian) clinging to a dinghy, but the sea was far too rough for the man to pull himself in. Bedford landed and tried to rescue the pilot, but due to severe buffeting they were not having much success. Westbrook managed to retain a line hold on him until the trawler HMS George Adgell arrived, which lowered a boat and got the pilot out of the water.

With the man safe, Bedford went to take off but lost his port float, so the Walrus (HD 933) was taken in tow by RML 547, which had also arrived. Westbrook was out on the starboard wing, and RML 547 came alongside and took him off, then got Bedford off. Soon after the tow was taken up, the Walrus turned turtle and sank. Nevertheless, it had been a good rescue in a Force 4 sea and the Walrus crew, by getting a line to the exhausted pilot in such difficult circumstances, certainly saved his life.

¹⁰ Author Norman Franks uses the initials R. H. for Westbrook

Appendix D

Ross McNeil, Air Sea Rescue historian, wrote me the following information.

"Bedford seems to have survived the war but made a habit of trading dented 'Shagbats' for downed airmen, note the following: -"

HD918 (750hp Pegasus VI engine)

While transferring survivors 30 miles E.S.E. of Felixstowe, collided with a naval launch, hit buoy in tow by RAF launch. 31st July 44.

W3076

Damaged on take off in rough sea after picking up survivor 100 miles east of Martlesham. 25th Aug 44.

W2715

Rescued crew of ditched glider taxied to beach but u/c collapsed taxiing ashore, Aldeburgh, 18th Sept 44.

HD933

Your rescue 5th Oct 44. Where he lost a Walrus.

"If a pilot in your squadron bent an aircraft a month what would your C.O.'s reaction have been? No. 278 Squadron just gave them a 'pained look' and another Walrus!"

My reply to Ross was, "We thank God for men like Bedford and Westbrook, and his C.O. It was their guts and talents that won the war."

Ross adds the following; -

Steve,

RML (in RML-547), stands for 'Rescue Motor Launch', this was a new class of long distance, all weather, vessel designed for the Royal Navy Coastal Forces. The original design was adapted from the Fairmile 'B' type motor launch used in large numbers for convoy protection and also to provide support for raids such as the one on St. Nazaire.

The Royal Navy RMLs were based in units of four boats, in harbours all around the coast of the British Isles. Bases were Appledore (Devon), Falmouth, Newhaven, Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Immingham and Stornaway. RML-547 was based at Immingham on the River Humber.

The name 'Shagbat' was the nickname given to the Walrus by its initial operator, the Royal Navy. It stuck and stayed with the aircraft whilst in Fleet Air Arm and Royal Air Force service.

The results of the Air Sea Rescue service from 1941 - 45 are impressive. You were one of 10,663 persons rescued of which 5,721 were Allied aircrew, 277 enemy aircrew and 4,665 non-aircrew (eg ships crews, troops from transport aircraft etc.). Of the aircrew total almost 1,600 were rescued by the Walrus.

On two days, 25th and 26th July 1943, the Air Sea Rescue organization recovered 78 crewmembers of VIII Bomber Command, USAAF.

Rescue of USAAF personnel by 69th RML Flotilla (HMS Beehive, Felixstowe) included yours on 5th Oct 1944. It lists: -

Mustang 505 Squadron, Position 128 degrees (T) Orfordness 11 miles. Pilot (Ananian) picked up by trawler, Walrus crew by RML 547

Ramrod to Munster Page 23
'The Dunkers' Club' of RML 547

When RML 547 made a rescue those rescued became members of the 'Dunkers Club'. Their list shows the following two new members on 5th Oct 1944, Walrus 278 Sqdn. FAA (Fleet Air Arm) Pilot W/O F J Bedford FAA, Observer L/A B Westbrook¹¹

RMLs were 110 feet in length compared to the RAF High Speed Launches, which were only 69 feet long. The RMLs were also designed with sleeping accommodation and long-range tanks to enable them to stay on patrol for several days.

As to crew it varied. Normally twelve were on board but it was usual to 'Press Gang' any stray servicemen into being extra lookouts if it was known that something big was happening. The most I've seen in the reports was 15.

The ASR boys say that the most attentive audience to ditching briefings at airfields were the Poles followed by the American fighter crews. Least attentive were the B24 crews.

Additional trivia -

The Danish fishing vessel **Erika** picked up an 8th AF crew 35 miles to the North-West of Heligoland. Despite the protests of the rescued airmen, the boat drifted for a day and a half. The fishing vessel had no radio. Then over the horizon a RML appeared and was signaled by the Danes. The explanation given to the Americans was, "We wait, they always come!"

One of the RAF high speed launches was taken to within three miles of the Dutch coast, in broad daylight, to rescue the crew of a ditched B-17 of the 390th BG. The coastal defenses of **Ijmuiden** were clearly visible as they went in, found the dinghy, made the pick-up and headed for home. They had been running west, flat out, when enemy JU-88's appeared and set the ship on fire from stern to stern. They abandoned ship and were rescued an hour and a half later. Unfortunately the RAF skipper was among the dead.

The motto on the crest of the Air Sea Rescue crews was, -

"The Sea Shall Not Have Them!"

¹¹ This account uses Leading Airman B. Westbrook, in "Another Kind of Courage" author Norman Franks shows his name as R. H. Westbrook. Do not know which is correct to date 2/24/01.

Appendix E

AIR Sea Rescue Squadron Det. B, 65th Fighter Wing C.O. Capt. R. Gerhart from 56th Fighter Group, Station: - Boxted



Shown above, the Air Sea Rescue Squadron CO's aircraft on a loop dispersal at the back of Park Farm, Langham Moor. The house served as accommodation and offices for the unit. Formed in May 1944, the Squadron used War Weary P-47Ds to carry dinghy packs and sea-marker equipment for use in search and rescue work. The unit was distinguished by red white and blue nosebands and a single yellow stripe over each wing surface. Although this photograph was taken in early September 1944, the Squadron's aircraft retain the temporary black and white 'D-Day stripes' on their upper surfaces.

Formed to supplement RAF services. Originally in a spotter role and equipped with 25 War Weary P-47Ds. First Air Sea Rescue configuration comprised two 108 gal. Wing tanks, container for two British 'M' type dinghies under belly of P-47, and four smoke marker bombs under each wing, aft u/c stowage. Latter caused drag that affected control of P-47. Revised configuration provided for 150 gal. Belly tank, an 'M' type dinghy pack on each wing rack, and four smoke markers on small rack aft of belly tank. Original 90 personnel on detached service from Eighth Fighter Combat stations.

Appendix F



2/Lt Cecil Byrd

6 June 1995

Dear Steve,

I have read RAMROD TO MUNSTER several times and am impressed with the courage, physical strength and a strong desire to live...demonstrated by a young fighter pilot who knew that his survival chances were almost nil...yet never gave up.

Within two days of his spectacular rescue he was back in the air over Germany on his second combat mission...RAMROD TO BREMEN...refusing a few days rest and recreation recommended by the flight surgeon.

His skill and prowess in the air was not diminished by the very frightening first mission experience. He went on to complete a full, successful and outstanding tour of duty and was known as one of the best fighter pilots of the 505th Fighter Squadron.

I was equally impressed with the courage, determination and devotion to duty of all those directly involved in the rescue. It's a great story. Everyone at the scene was a hero.

I am proud to say I flew in combat with you, my friend.

*May your skies always be blue - - **

*Best wishes always,
Cecil Byrd*

- Cecil is the originator of the greeting - "Blue Skies"

During the "Battle of the Bulge" Cecil was called on to fly Weather Reconnaissance under unbelievable instrument flight conditions. In fact, this resulted in a crash landing on his part once but that didn't stop him. Operations Officer, Archie Tower said to him, "Any landing you walk away from is a 'Good Landing'".

I flew one of those weather flights once and the greeting between Cec and I after that became 'Blue Skies' - -

Only a fighter pilot who flew combat during WW II can appreciate this situation. S.C.A.

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USAAF <http://www.tiac.net/users/srose/urg/aces.html>

Video Tapes, DVD - 'Flash Back TV' – The Imperial War Museum

The History Channel, Battle Stations, Episode 5, 'The P-51, Mustang'
The 339th FG In Combat – "My War In Pictures" A DVD By Stephen C. Ananian
Restored by "Rare Aviation Films"

Appendix H

YEAR		AIRCRAFT *		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				
1944		Type	No.				DAY		NIGHT		
MONTH	DATE						Dual	Pilot	Dual	Pilot	Dual
							(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD							42.40	42.40	1.34	3.10	30.10
SUMMARY FOR SEPTEMBER 1944						1	WALRUS	6.00			
DATE 1-10-44						2	SPITFIRE IV	10.15		30	
UNIT 278 SQUADRON											
SIGNATURE F. J. Bedford											
OCT	3	WALRUS	W3096	SELF	L/A WESTBROOK	PATROL (DNC. R/T FAILURE)		1.00			
OCT	3	WALRUS	HD918	SELF	L/A WESTBROOK	SEARCH M. 6122.		2.00			
OCT	5	WALRUS	W3076	SELF	L/A WESTBROOK	SEARCH N. 4335 - RECALLED.		1.20			
OCT	5	WALRUS	HD933	SELF	L/A WESTBROOK	SCRAMBLE - PICKED UP		40			
1 SURVIVOR (LT ANANIAN, 339 GROUP) AND TRANSFERRED HIM TO TRAWLER 'GEORGE ADGEL'. PRANGED WALRUS IN ATTEMPTING TAKE-OFF & TRANSFERRED TO RML 547. WALRUS SANK.											
OCT	24	WALRUS	L2284	SELF	FLT GREEN	SEARCH M. 8646		2.25			
OCT	27	SPITFIRE IV	DM532	SELF	---	SEARCH. WEATHER DUFF DNC.		25			
SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER 1944						1	WALRUS	7.25			
DATE 1-11-44						2	SPITFIRE	25			
UNIT 278 SQUADRON						3	SPITFIRE				
SIGNATURE F. J. Bedford						4					
COMMANING No. 278 SQUADRON											
ROYAL AIR FORCE.											
GRAND TOTAL (Cols. (1) to (10))							42.40	43.74	1.34	3.10	30.10
6.51 Hrs. 3.5 Mins						TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD					

Above, photo copy of Walrus pilot W/O F. J. Bedford's "Flight Log" for the month of October '44. Note entry for Oct. 5th "Scramble - Picked up 1 survivor (Lt. Ananian 505 Squadron 339 Group) and transferred him to Trawler 'George Adgell'. 'Pranged' Walrus in attempt to take-off & transferred to RML 547. Walrus sank".

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT									
By "A" Flight No. 278 Squadron For the Month of October 1944									
SECRET									
Page No. 008									
Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time		Details of Service or Flight	References		
				UP	Down				
1st Oct.						No operational flying - only ferrying trips to Bradwell Bay			
2nd Oct.						No operational flying - night flying by one section of Spitfires.			
3rd Oct.	Walrus	S/Lt. Carr - Gregg	Attempt rescue	13.00		was sent to Coltishall to re-fuel and collect an escort of Mustangs to attempt to rescue of a dinghy(s) just off TERSCHELLING (HOLLAND). This was abandoned, as no escort available and dinghy(s) reported to have drifted inshore.			
	Walrus	W/O. Bedford	Patrol			Aircraft carried out patrols during return of friendly bombers - nothing to report A section of Spitfires.			
	Spitfires	F/O. Skinner and F/O. Hyde				Carried out night flying practice.			
4th Oct.	Spitfires					No operational flying - one Air test of Spitfire. Also section of Spitfires on night flying.			
5th Oct.	Spitfires	F/S. Marland, Vickery	Search			Searched N.4555 for reported baled out Mustang pilot - N.T.R.			
	Walrus	W/O. Bedford	Search	12.15		Scrambled to pick up baled out fighter pilot at N.1560.			
		L/A. Westbrook				Found survivor clinging to dinghy but sea state too rough to effect boarding. The Walrus landed and taxied to him but they were unable to pick him up due to severe buffeting and lack of control. Crew retained hold of survivor until trawler lowered a boat and pick up. On attempting take-off after transfer - Walrus lost port float - an attempt was made to take Walrus N.D.933 in tow, but she was sinking fast and was cast off - just another 'right off'			
6th Oct.	Spitfires	F/L. McLeod	Search	06:40A		1 section of Spitfires airborne at 06:40 and assisted Warwick aircraft in search - finding one dinghy with 3 bodies at N.7147 and later a dinghy with one man at N.7156. They			
		F/L. Fawcett							
	Spitfires	F/Sgt. Vickery				were relieved over area for orbiting watch by further 2 sections of Spits, who maintained watch while the/			
		W/O. Whitaker, J.							
		W/O. Whitaker, R.							

Above is an excerpt from the log of "A" flight of 278th Squadron Air-Sea-Rescue for October of 1944. Thanks to Alister Raby, Air Historian.

Appendix I



Grandson Brock on right with his friend Conner pose in front of "Flying Fortress", B-17 G, "Sentimental Journey" at the Greenville Downtown Airport.



Granddaughter Megan is shown here in Waist Gunner's position of the same "flying Fortress", that flew in the Pacific theater during WW II