

Royal Canadian Air Force, 408 Goose Squadron



Dunwoodie Crew

Final Flight of Halifax Aircraft NP781 EQ-U

December 24, 1944

**Operation Lohausen Airfield
Dusseldorf, Germany**

May 19, 2013

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Acknowledgments

The information in this project was compiled by George R McKillop, Airframe Mechanic, 408 Squadron, November 1941– November 1944.

Photographs, stories and personal details of the crew were provided by Carolyn Kellar, daughter of David G Kellar, and Keri-Dawn Hill, granddaughter of William H Dunwoodie.

The *408 Squadron Book of Remembrance* was prepared for the Squadron and Association by Master Warrant Officer Del Badiuk, RCAF, 7CFSD, Edmonton. Although Del is no longer posted to the Squadron, he is the authorized curator of 408 Squadron Archives.

Additional research and document preparation by Carolyn McKillop Oliver, daughter of George McKillop.

**Operation Lohausen Airfield, Dusseldorf, Germany
from RCAF Linton-On-Ouse, Yorkshire, England
December 24, 1944**

408 Squadron Operational Record Book

Linton-on-Ouse, December 24, 1944. Sixteen Halifax aircraft of this Squadron were detailed to attack Dusseldorf/Lohausen airfield. All aircraft took off. Thirteen aircraft claimed to have attacked the target between 1450.5 and 1457.5 hours from between 15 to 18,500 feet. Two aircraft abandoned the mission due to engine trouble. One aircraft NP781 "U" failed to return from this operation and nothing has been heard of, or from this aircraft since take off time. Weather was reported as clear with some haze over the target. The target was identified by most crews by the TI's and runways. Bombing was carried out on Red TI markers and runways.



All crews were unanimous in the decision that this attack was successful and very concentrated. Ground defences consisted of heavy flak bursting between 16 to 18,500 feet. A number of our aircraft were damaged by flak. All aircraft were diverted to Earls Colne, Essex, England.

Crew of 408 Squadron Halifax Aircraft NP781 EQ-U

Pilot, Canadian J37475 Flying Officer Dunwoodie W H
Navigator, Canadian J13140 Flight Lieutenant Friker W L
Air Bomber, Canadian J38411 Flying Officer Kellar D G
Wireless Operator, Canadian R212809 Flight Sergeant Tonkin D C
Air Gunner, Canadian Service R88187 Flight Sergeant Chiasson J A
Air Gunner, Canadian R274509 Flight Sergeant D'Amour G R
Flight Engineer, Canadian R208171 Flight Sergeant Allan W B

**Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, W R Chorley
Loss of Aircraft and Crew**

Volume 5 1944, 408 Squadron Halifax VII. NP781 EQ-U failed to return from an Operation on Lohausen.

Bomber Command War Diaries 1939-1945, Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

24 December 1944, German Airfields

338 aircraft—248 Halifaxes, 79 Lancasters, 11 Mosquitos—of 4, 6, and 8 Groups attacked the airfields at Lohausen and Mulheim (now Dusseldorf and Essen civil airports). The purpose of the raids was not recorded; it is possible that they were to hinder the movement of supplies by transport aircraft from Ruhr to the Ardennes battle area. Both attacks took place in conditions of visibility and the bombing was accurate. Six aircraft lost, two Lancasters and one Halifax from the Lohausen raid and three Halifaxes from the Mulheim raid.

Crew Members: Commonwealth War Graves Commission Casualty Details and Additional Information

Flying Officer Pilot, William Henry Dunwoodie, POW



Bill & Cec Dunwoodie

Operational Points 20, Hours 37.15 Trips 6, Neuss, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationships

Son of Henry Charles and Blanche Cora Dunwoodie (née Smith) of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; husband of Cecilia (née Josland) of Clanwilliam, Manitoba.

Telegram to Mrs Blanche Dunwoodie dated December 27, 1944:

"M9017 regret to advise that your son Flying Officer William Henry Dunwoodie J37475 is reported missing after air operations overseas December 24th. Letter follows. RCAF Casualties Officer."



Telegram to Mrs Blanche Dunwoodie dated April 7, 1945:

"Ottawa Ontario 9:38 PM. M9086. Pleased to advise that your son Flying Officer William Henry Dunwoodie is reported safe in Brussels, Belgium en route to United Kingdom. Letter follows. RCAF Casualties Officer."

Telegrams dated April 9 and July 17, 1945 from W H Dunwoodie to Cec Dunwoodie:

"Darling am safe, free, well in England Writing. Love Bill."

"Cec Darling arriving Rivers 3:30 Thursday afternoon. Love Bill."

Flight Lieutenant Navigator, Walter Louis Friker



Wally & Diana Friker

Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationships

Son of Walter L Friker and Wilhelmina C Friker (née Hafer) of Victoria, British Columbia; husband of Diana Friker (née Dawes); father of daughter, Diana Linton Friker, of Montréal, Québec.



408 Squadron Book of Remembrance 24 December 1944 Venray War Cemetery, Reference Collective Grave VIII D. 9-10.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Commemorated on page 310 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.



Flying Officer Air Bomber, David Garfield Kellar



David & Mary Kellar
with daughter, Carolyn

Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen,
Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg



Family Relationships

Son of George Robinson Kellar and Ethel Blanche Kellar (née Dowrie) of Stoney Creek, Ontario; husband of Mary B Kellar (née Morris); father of daughter, Carolyn Jean Kellar, of Hamilton, Ontario.

408 Squadron Book of Remembrance 24 December 1944 Venray War Cemetery, Reference Collective Grave VIII D. 9-10.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Commemorated on page 350 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

Letter to Mary Kellar dated December 28, 1944 from Wing Commander F R Sharp, Commanding Officer 408 Squadron

"Dear Mrs Kellar,

Before you receive this letter you will have had a telegram informing you that your husband David Garfield Kellar (J38411) has been reported missing as a result of air operations. I do not wish to grieve you further in your deep anxiety, and trust that you will bear with us until such time as definite information is received one way or the other concerning the welfare of your husband."

Letter to Mrs Mary Kellar dated April 20, 1945
from Mrs Moses F Chiasson:

"Dear Mrs Kellar, It is with new hope that I write to inform you that on April 14th we received a telegram from the Casualty Office Ottawa informing us our son was a prisoner of war, although not stating where. Hoping you received same or better news and our dear boys and loved ones will soon be back with us."

PS. Also received word from Mrs Blanche Dunwoodie saying she received a telegram from her son who was safe in England."

Letter to Mrs Mary Kellar dated May 31, 1945 from Mrs Moses Chiasson, Margaree Forks, Inverness, Nova Scotia reporting receipt of a telegram advising that their son Joseph Alcide, previously a POW, was now back in England.

Letter to Mrs Mary Kellar dated July 14, 1945 from the RCAF Casualty Officer for Chief of the Air Staff:

"Dear Mrs Kellar, It is with deep regret that I must confirm our recent telegram informing you that your husband, Flying Officer David Garfield Kellar, previously reported missing on Active Service, is now reported 'missing believed killed' in accordance with established procedures Air Ministry, Overseas is now taking action to presume your husband's death for official purposes."



A voice from heaven said,
"Write blessed are the
dead which die
in the Lord."

Pilot Officer Wireless Operator, Donald Clifford Tonkin



He gave his duty
Who had but youth to give
and giving died
So we might live.

Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationship

Son of Harry P and Marjorie B Tonkin of Toronto, Ontario.

408 Squadron Book of Remembrance 24 December 1944 Venray War Cemetery, Reference Collective Grave VIII D. 9-10.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Commemorated on page 463 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

Flight Sergeant Air Gunner, Joseph Alcide Chiasson, POW

Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationship

Son of Moses F and Marie Anne Chiasson (née Doucet) of Margaree Forks, Inverness County, Nova Scotia.

April 14, 1945 Mrs M F Chiasson received a telegram from the RCAF Casualty Officer informing them that their son, Joseph Alcide, was a prisoner of war.

May 31, 1945 letter to Mrs Mary Kellar from Mrs M F Chiasson reporting receipt of a telegram advising that their son Alcide, previously a POW, was now back in England.

Pilot Officer Air Gunner, Gerald Roch D'Amour



Photo credit:
Frans van Cappellan
6 Dec 2006, www.flickr.com

Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationship

Son of Anthony and Luce D'Amour of Ottawa, Ontario.

408 Squadron Book of Remembrance 24 December 1944 Venray War Cemetery, Reference Collective Grave VIII D. 8.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Commemorated on page 286 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

Pilot Officer Flight Engineer, William Bruce Allan



Operational Points 16, Hours 29.55 Trips 4, Hagen, Soest, Osnabruck and Duisburg

Family Relationship

Son of William and Catherine Allan, of Welland, Ontario.

408 Squadron Book of Remembrance 24 December 1944 Venray War Cemetery, Reference Collective Grave VIII D. 9-10.

Canadian Virtual War Memorial, Commemorated on page 235 of the Second World War Book of Remembrance.

Flying Officer Pilot, W H Dunwoodie: Account of Final Flight, December 24, 1944

Crew:

Al Chiasson, Rear Gunner
Bruce Allan, Engineer
Rocky D'Amour, Mid-Upper Gunner
Don Tonkin Wireless Operator
Wally Friker, Navigator
Dave Kellar, Bomb Aimer

On the morning of Christmas Eve we were briefed for the fourth day running. The weather had been clamped¹ for the past week and we had not been able to take off. Heavy bomber support was vitally needed because the Ardennes offensive was getting out of hand. This morning we were to go out approximately four hundred and fifty strong and destroy the Lohausen airfield at Dusseldorf. We were to go out in gaggle formation, the Halies² being in the first wave and the Lancs³ in the second. Our height that day was to be nineteen thousand feet and we were to be on the target at "H+2"⁴ which put us in the middle of the first wave.

Briefing was finished and we went out to our aircraft at about ten o'clock to await orders to take off. The weather looked to be clearing off a little and visibility had increased to about a thousand yards. The rear gunner, Al Chiasson, the engineer, Bruce Allan, and myself were the first to arrive at the plane. We went about our usual jobs of checking the old girl thoroughly so that nothing could go wrong. I had finished my checks and was outside having a nervous smoke and chatting to our ground crew when the mid-upper gunner, Rocky D'Amour, and the wireless operator, Don Tonkin, arrived. Al was in his turret and Bruce was priming the engines. Rocky and Don stopped and talked for a bit and then went in to do their routine inspections. We had about three quarters of an hour yet before take-off and I was wishing that the navigator, Wally Friker, and the bomb aimer, Dave Kellar, would come out so we could get everything settled as far as our tactics were concerned. Just about then the panic wagon⁵ came on to the dispersal. I hoped Wally and Dave were there, but it was W/C⁶ Sharp with sandwiches. I took the two double ones for each member of the crew and put them in the door of the kite⁷ and watched Sharp drive off to the next plane. I wasn't very hungry so decided to wait to eat my sandwiches with the other boys when they had finished their "DI's".⁸

I had another smoke with the ground crew and gave them my chocolate ration cause I didn't feel like eating it. I kept thinking of Cec⁹ and home and once when I wasn't watching myself I thought, "What an awful day to be shot down. It would be a terrible Christmas present for those at home." I pulled myself together and thought of something else.

¹ Clamped, slang; weather was too bad to fly.

² Halifax aircraft

³ Lancaster aircraft

⁴ H+2; aircrew briefing terminology partially explained by "which put us in the middle of the first wave".

⁵ Panic wagon; van

⁶ W/C; Wing Commander, Fred Sharp, Commanding Office of 408 Squadron

⁷ Kite, slang; airplane

⁸ DI; Daily Inspections; done pre-flight

⁹ Cec; Cecilia Dunwoodie, his wife

Those thoughts kept coming back though and I wished I had eaten my sister's chocolates and tasted Cec's fruitcake and sent the rest of the stuff to Sheila Josland in London.

My daydreaming was disturbed by the arrival of Dave and Wally. They went straight to work, Dave checking the bombs and Wally setting up his charts and maps. The ground crew were now busy putting de-icing compound on the leading edge of the wings and props. To stop myself thinking any more I did another external check on the aircraft. We couldn't stop anyone thinking thoughts like I was but it was an unwritten law that no one was allowed to talk about such things.

We had fifteen minutes left when everything was in ship shape for the trip. The boys all got out and we all stood in front of the kite and laughed, joked and smoked. Everything was tense and whatever anyone said, it seemed funny. Wally gave me the last minute gen about heights and speeds etc., and then we didn't talk anymore about the trip. We teased Wally about the news that he was to be a pappy in June or July. He was sure proud and so were the rest of us I guess. We all knew each other so well and Wally's wife too, that we seemed to feel that we were all in the same family. Al then informed us that he was getting married. Suddenly, I felt an awful strong feeling of responsibility. I figured that I just had to get the plane back cause it would affect so many people's lives if we went down.

By now the subject had changed and the boys were arguing about a name for the plane. Someone had suggested "Galloping Dandruff". All of us agreed but Wally and Al. They had no alternate name but they didn't like the one chosen. The majority were for "Galloping Dandruff" so we unofficially adopted that name.

The W/C came up again in the panic wagon and said the trip was on and that he would have a shot of rum for us at interrogation when we got back. We all said so long to him and headed for the plane.

Dave, Wally and Don were the first in because their positions are in the nose. I was next. As I climbed in I noticed all the sandwiches still sitting there untouched. It gave me a strange feeling to think that none of us could eat and we had nothing since very early morning. Bruce followed me in and then came Rocky and Al. We all took up our positions and the ground crew waited outside. Bruce turned each engine over in turn.

I gave the order contact and turned all switches on. Bruce acknowledged the order and started all four engines. We tested our intercom and oxygen while the engines warmed up. Now that the engines were going and I was busy doing my pre-flight checks all that tight nervous feeling was gone and I was quite cool and collected. All was in order so I signed for the aircraft on the F700 held by the Rigger¹⁰ standing beside me. He wished us all a Merry Christmas and left the plane. I called the boys once more to see if everyone was ready and then waved the chocks away and taxied out to the take off point.

We got a green light so rolled out on the runway waved to the padre, who was always at the edge of the runway to see all the boys off, and took off.

The first few hundred feet was all fog and mist but very soon we climbed out of it into the beautiful bright sunshine. Everything was white below us and blue above. As we circled and climbed

¹⁰ Rigger, Airframe Maintenance Trade

for height, I could see the fog below breaking up. Soon we could see very nearly all the ground. More and more aircraft could be seen every minute, all climbing in the direction of our rendezvous. Nothing was heard over the intercom except Dave and Wally passing information back and forth.

We reached height just as we arrived at the rendezvous but due to the wind being stronger than anticipated we were a few seconds late, causing us to be a couple of miles behind our wave. I pushed the nose down to pick up more speed and catch up but in doing so, lost a thousand feet. We were flying right into the sun so I had to pull my shaded goggles down over my eyes. They were dirty so I took them off and Bruce cleaned them. After that everything was smooth and quiet. As we flew down England the airplanes began to get closer together so that the fighters who would pick us up over Holland would be able to give us effective cover. Once I tried to regain my height but in doing so I dropped behind again so had to give the idea up. There was hundreds of planes around us above and below and on all sides so we didn't worry.

As I saw the English coast slip away behind us I whispered a little prayer and got in closer to the rest of the aircraft. I wanted a smoke but my oxygen mask was in the way so I chewed on a piece of gum instead.

The wind was pretty strong and soon we were going flat out to keep on schedule. Still we lost time and by the time we reached the continent we were ten minutes late. We were all packed close together though in an organized shambles and that's what was the most important.

We all kept searching the sky for Spits which would be our fighter cover and it wasn't long before we could see Mustangs and Spits all around us.

It sure made us feel good cause we knew if we ran into any trouble all we had to do was fire a red cartridge¹¹ and a few fighters would come and guard us individually from any enemy fighters. I kept calling the boys up to make sure they were all OK, because now would be a bad time for someone to pass out from lack of oxygen.

We passed over the Port of Antwerp, now in the hands of the Canadian Army. Shortly after this Don started throwing chaff¹² out which screws up the Jerry predictors.

Soon we crossed the front lines and were over Germany. As we moved into the Rhine we could see bursts of flak¹³ up ahead. Al said what a hell of a place to spend Christmas. Wally said, "Never mind Al we'll all be home in a few months."

As we got nearer the target the barrage of flack got thicker till when we saw the TI's¹⁴ go down, it was so thick it looked like a big black box. This was directly over the target and we had to fly through it. In a few seconds flack shells started to burst near us. The engineer pointed and said, "Look." There was an aircraft right in front of us badly hit and on fire. It turned on its back and dove for the ground. I told the engineer, Bruce, to shut up because I didn't want him to tell the rest of the boys what we just saw.

¹¹ Red cartridge fired from a pistol by the Wireless Operator to alert their need for fighter protection.

¹² Chaff; Window, i.e. thin metallic strips of paper.

¹³ Bursts of flak; shells from Anti-Aircraft guns.

¹⁴ TI's; Target Indicators, markers dropped by Pathfinder Squadrons.

The radio was on and I could hear the Master of Ceremonies¹⁵ telling us which TI's to bomb. Rocky said that the flack was near the top of our kite. Dave reported it near the nose. I said it was below and behind and I could see it on both wing tips. It was no use taking evasive action because shells were all over. Dave gave me corrections for our run up. I could now hear the shells blowing all around, above the noise of the engines and radio. It was an awful sickening sound. There was no flack to speak of below and a lot at our height so I dropped down five hundred feet. That put us at seventeen thousand five hundred feet. There were still lots of aircraft around us so we weren't alone down there. Dave was having a hard job to get his corrections to me because of the noise on the radio but suddenly the plane gave a lurch upward and I heard Dave say, "Bombs gone". I held the course and Dave said he would have a photograph in just a second. As I reached for the trim tab¹⁶ with one hand, I brushed my goggles up with the other, so as to see the instruments more plainly.

Bruce was turning around to get more chaff for Don when suddenly everything went red. My head seemed to be banging up against the metal spar¹⁷ behind me. There was an awful roar in my head like a wind blowing through my ears. I had an instant when I could smell gun powder and burning flesh and I thought I was dead. Then all went black, but through the unconsciousness it seemed that my head was still being pounded against the spar, but I could feel no pain. I thought to myself, "Well I'm dead now."

I don't know how long I was this way but when I came fully conscious, I could feel a terrific wind blowing on me. I opened my eyes to look around and assess the damage. To my horror I found I was stone blind. I put my hand up to my face and the glove came away sticky. I knew I was hit in the face then. I next grabbed for my microphone and then discovered that my helmet, ear phones, mic and oxygen mask were all blown away. I reached around to find the engineer, Bruce, but he seemed to be gone. I figured I just had to find someone because I couldn't find my way out alone. I bent down as far as I could and felt for Don below me but he was gone too. Then I got pretty scared. I said a little prayer and said goodbye to Cec and Mom. Then I thought of the call light so I tapped out a "P" meaning parachute while I was doing that I felt above my head to see if the roof hatch was jammed. There was no roof there. I knew that there was about one chance in ten of getting out alive through the roof. I could hit the props, mid-upper turret, rear turret or the tail of the plane. I took a chance though 'cause I had no chances out of ten if I just sat there. I unhooked my safety belt and stood up. As soon as I did this the wind caught me and blew me away. I felt my arm brush something as I went out. There was nothing breathtaking about falling through space. It was like being suspended in mid-air on a bed so soft you could not feel it. I reached for the rip cord and couldn't find it. I tried the other side and it was there so I pulled. I waited for the jerk of the chute opening. None came. I waited and thought I felt the harness tighten a little once but wasn't sure, I wondered if I would feel it if I hit the ground without a chute. After a few minutes, still in the air I got nerve enough to feel up above me and sure enough the lines were there so I knew the canopy was open.

My head started hurting a lot and my legs pained too. I remembered my first aid kit. I took off my gloves and tucked them inside my jacket, pulled out my first aid kit. I found a vial of morphine. I threw the rest of the kit away and took the cap off the morphine, stuck the needle in my hip and squeezed all the contents of the tube into me. I tried to see again and couldn't. I kept praying all the time that my eyes would get better.

Pretty soon I heard light flack bursting near me so I pulled first on one side of the shroud lines and then on the other to make myself swing and be a moving target. After a while the firing

¹⁵ Master of Ceremonies; individual(s) in an aircraft providing directions on the specific TI to be bombed.

¹⁶ Trim tab; mechanical system on flight controls to assist pilot control the aircraft.

¹⁷ Metal spar; aircraft structure.

died away and I got violently sick. Soon I started to wonder if I would ever get to the ground. My hands got cold so I put my gloves back on. Found the rip cord ring was still stuck in the palm of the glove so I pulled it loose and threw it away. I noticed then that I was awful weak and tired so I just relaxed. Soon I could hear voices below so I hung just as limp as possible so as not to break my bones when I hit. Suddenly I got a bat on the back of the head and I knew I was lying on the ground. I reached for the release on my parachute harness but I was so weak, I couldn't unfasten it so I just lay there. I was thinking, "This is just like the movies only it happens to be real."

Just about then, the people got there. I could hear them all jabbering but they stayed about ten yards away by the sound of them. After a bit two guys came up to me. They said "he's dead". I guessed what they meant so I moved my arm to show them I wasn't. The women and children all started yelling "shoot him". One of the guys pulled my gloves off and felt my pulse and then they got busy and took my harness and Mae West off. One of them got under each arm and started walking me towards a farm house going by the smell of the barn and the noise of cows etc. I had a real difficulty bending my knees and couldn't stand on my own feet. They took me in the house and sat me down in a chair. Some woman could speak English and asked me questions. She asked my name, what I flew and if I was Canadian. I told her to leave me alone because I was in great pain. Actually, I wasn't because the morphine had taken affect. She told the rest of the people, who all this time wanted me shot, that I was in great pain so they all clapped their hands and were quite happy. I guess they figured if I was suffering it was much better than killing me. I asked if I could lay down and the woman who was asking the questions said something in German and they helped me out of the house down to the barn and laid me in the straw. The woman who could speak English gave me a big piece of silk to hold over my face to catch some of the blood. Every once in a while someone would talk about shooting me again, so I would groan a little. This always made them happy and they would all clap and cheer etc.

I asked for a doctor after a few minutes and the one who could speak English said she had phoned for one. I asked how long he would be and she told me half an hour. I was so awful tired that I tried to sleep. The girl that could speak English sat down by me and held my hand and kept talking to me. I can't even remember what she said because I was too tired to listen. After a while she shut up and just sat there. Whenever I moved she said, "You are going to the hospital soon". I guess she wanted me to talk to her and quite possibly spill some valuable information. However, I was too weak and sleepy to say anything so I just lay there.

I don't know how long I was there but the next thing I could remember was some guy examining me. They eventually stood me up and walked me out to a car. A guy helped me into the back seat and got in beside me. Then he rammed a big revolver in my side and said, "Do not try to escape because I don't want to kill you." I couldn't help grinning at that. I imagine they are taught that phrase in English and tell every prisoner, without knowing what it means. I figure that way because it was perfectly obvious that I couldn't have escaped without the help of half a dozen men. Then they started the car and we drove away. The next thing I remember was being jerked out of the car. I couldn't walk or even stand so I fell down in the snow and stayed there. After a bit they came out and put me on a stretcher and took me into what smelled like a hospital or dressing station. Here they opened my eyes, felt my pulse, etc., and then stripped all my clothes off. They put a blanket around me and carried me into a damp cold room. It must have been some kind of a kitchen or bath room because I could hear water dripping. Every once in a while they would open the door and somebody would come and look at me. Soon they dragged me out of there and bandaged both my legs up and gave me back my piece of silk to hold on my face. I guess the silk was a piece of my parachute. Then they dressed me in all but my shoes, carried me over to a truck and shoved me in the back. I think it was a truck because it sounded like one and jolted around like one.

It was open on top because snow was falling on my face. It felt good because by this time my face was burning like the dickens and the snow was cool.

After a while the truck stopped and a couple of guys pulled me out and said I was at the hospital. They laid me down in the hall and people seemed to be going by in the dozens. One guy explained in German that the air raid was over and the people were coming out of the shelter. I could pick up enough of what he said to gather that that was what was going on. A lot of German sounds like English. After everyone had gone by they packed me down to a ward where I got a big bawling out from what I found out later was an SS nurse. She called me a swine and a murderer and everything under the sun. I had to laugh at her because she bellowed like the typical Jerries seen on shows.

One of the German patients asked if I wanted a smoke. I said sure, and they gave me one and lit it for me. I took a few puffs of it and then smelt a terrible stench which made me sick. I thought it was my burnt face that I was smelling but found out a few days later that it was the German cigarettes.

The fellow who could speak English said I was going to sleep in the bed next to a Russian.

Three or four people got their hands on me and led and dragged me along. I shook their hands and said show me the way and I'll walk myself. They laughed at me, but when I did start walking a little, they shut up and one guy took my arm and led me to the bed.

A nurse said, "I will give you a clean shirt." The boy who could speak English told her how to say it. I undressed and they took my clothes away and gave me a long night shirt. Then they parked me in bed and left me alone. The Russian started yammering at me then, I told him "nice forstay"¹⁸ in the hope he would understand that I didn't know what he was talking about. He did alright and nearly had a fit he was so glad I could say something he could understand. He called me comrade and shook my hand. I told him my name was Bill and pointed at myself. He told me his name was something that sounded like "Toe Itch" so that's what I called him. I thought that cabbage in Russian was "capoosta"¹⁹ so I said that and he jumped out of his bed and shook hands and called me Comrade Bill several times.

Dunwoodie wrote his account after returning to the United Kingdom in April 1945.

¹⁸ "Nice forestry"; likely "nicht versteh", German for "do not understand".

¹⁹ "Capoosta", "kapusta", Slovak for cabbage.

Mrs. Blanche Dunwoodie (mother of Bill Dunwoodie) wrote the following, along with other stories from her past, sometime after World War II when she still lived at 12720 -117 Street in Edmonton, Alberta. Typeset by her grandson, Allan Shute.

I Am Alive!

A true story by Blanche Dunwoodie

Did you ever have a premonition that something had happened? Something revealed to you in a dream which was happening far away? This vision came to me on Christmas Eve of 1944.

Just before I went to sleep I could see my young son Bill's face above me. It was red like it was burned and his eyelashes looked white like they were burned too. But what seemed so real, he was trying to grin. Then the scene changed and I seemed to be looking down from a great height, and I could see a parachute on a snowbank. There was someone still attached to the parachute, but whoever it was, was very still.

The next day or two I tried to laugh at myself for seeing this so plainly, and I had about decided not to tell my other children about it. Then I thought I would say something casually and laugh about it. "If there is anything to this," I said, "I know that he is alive because his face moved like he was trying to grin."

A short time after this, I received a telegram that my son was shot down over Germany and was now missing in action.

Time went on and we did not hear from him, and I would think that perhaps when he tried to grin, it was just before he landed on the snowbank and he might be dead after all. Then I would see a telegraph blank which seemed to look gray instead of yellow, and it would say this message over and over to me: "I am alive."

About four months after he crashed, he was liberated from a German prison camp on Easter Eve, and I got a telegram from the war department and one from him, but neither of them said those words I had so firmly in my mind. But then he sent me a letter from England. With trembling fingers, I opened it up, and the first words I saw were "I am alive."

The letter went on. Bill told me that his face and eyes were burned, and that he landed in a snowbank in his parachute. He was blind for some time when he first landed, and he would lie in his bunk and concentrate on those three words, "I am alive," and hope that there was something in mental telepathy so we would know he was not dead.

The End

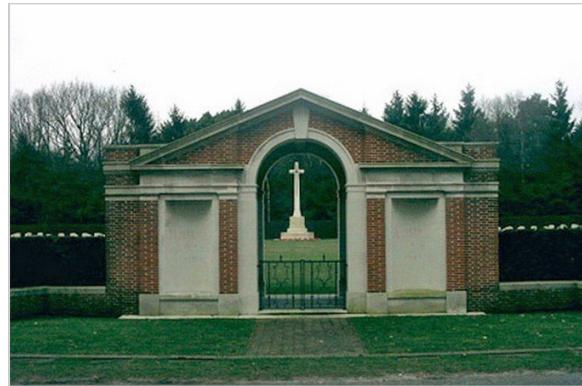
Other Photographs



Flying Officer David G Kellar
on Right
Unidentified Airman on Left



David & Mary Kellar
30 August 1940



Venray War Cemetery
Venray, Limberg, The Netherlands
Photo credit: Commonwealth War Graves Commission
www.cwgc.org



W.B. Allan, W.L. Friker, D.G. Kellar, D.C. Tonkin
Grave/Memorial Reference: VIII. D. 9-10.
Venray War Cemetery



G.R. D'Amour
Grave/Memorial Reference: VIII. D. 8.
Venray War Cemetery
Photo credit: Frans van Cappellan
6 December 2006, www.flickr.com

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