Hey, Nothing Can Stop the Army Air Corps

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

Susan P. Brown

Dr. C. Warren Vander Hill

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

May 1982

(Spring 1982)
Special thanks to Vickie Shaw
Tammy Cummins
Julie Clampitt

and, of course, my Mother.
for Dabo, with love
FORT BENJAMIN HARRISON, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

"Off we go, into the wild, blue yonder . . . ."
One long, hot weekend last summer, my sister, Jo, my father, and I climbed into Dad's pickup and took off for Bakalar Airport in Columbus, Indiana to see an airshow of World War II planes. It is rare for my father to raise his voice about anything, but upon our arrival, he leaned out the window and cried: "Look, girls, by God, it's a P41!" The rest of the day was spent with admiring all of the planes there, and Dad touched each one like it was a long, lost friend. I don't think Jo and I had realized that inside the father we knew—quiet, deep-voiced, bear-hugging Daddy—was a young man who had been our age. At eighteen, when we had gone to college, he had joined the Army Air Corps. He had been tall (5'10") and skinny (135 pounds) and dark and shy and probably scared to death. It was like discovering a person you knew a lot about, but had never met.

Dad worked for a now defunct railroad after graduating from high school. It was his first own real money, and he was happy with his job and his car. He and his buddy, Calvin Cunningham, drove Dad's '41 Ford all around the more obscure back roads of Marion and Hancock county—chiefly because they didn't want to be recognized. Dad had
some privileges because he was a railroad worker; one of which was he had all the gasoline he needed in those days of ration books. He and Calvin would pool their resources and go bouncing through the Indiana countryside as eighteen year olds have been doing since the Model T.

Among the other privileges Dad enjoyed was what is known as a deferment. Two or three deferments had gone by, and finally, Dad's boss came and said he was very sorry, but that they had deferred him as long as they were able to, and that soon, his local draft board would be breathing down his neck. Good-bye Calvin, good-bye '41 Ford, good-bye gasoline.

Some of Dad's other friends were going to take a "test" and see if they could join the Army Air Corps. I think they all had dreams of being pilots and being heroes and getting kissed by Betty Grable. At any rate, Dad drove to downtown Indianápolis and took "one of those damned intelligence tests the Army is so fond of giving." Of all of his group of friends that took this "intelligence test" Dad was the only one that passed. Roy M. Brown, Jr., only son of Roy and Maude Brown was about to become a flyboy.
The first thing the Air Corps did was to give him a physical. They sent him to Stout Field where he was poked and prodded and told him he'd have to get his teeth fixed and the pollops in his nose removed. (On being asked what in God's name "pollops" were, I was informed that they are "little, pea-shaped things in your nose that have to be removed." These "little, pea-shaped things" were later to wash Dad out of pilot training.) At the same time, the local draft board surfaced and informed Dad that he was indeed drafted. After some small difficulties, Dad was in the Army Air Corps, officially, as an "aviation student."

So, on a summer day, Maude and Roy, Sr. drove their youngest out past Ft. Benjamin Harrison to downtown Indianapolis to send him off in the wild, blue yonder. He and 45 other "aviation students" were promptly driven back to Fort Harrison where they were given uniforms, lectures on sex and girls, shots (Dad still gets grim about stepping innocently through a door and getting a shot in both arms), and the beginning of a long series of lectures on Honor, the Behavior of an Officer and a Gentleman.
They were in training to be pilots in the Army Air Corps, a cut above your usual riff-raff, and they had better learn to behave like it.

They did a good job with their "honor brainwash." Dad was about ten minutes from home, and not once did it occur to him to sneak out from the base and go home to visit. He was happy to be in the Air Corps, and his parents were happy and relieved that he was "doing his part." It had never occurred to him that people might think less of him because of his deferment. All he knew was that, for the time being, it was exciting, he was young and healthy, and each day was new and different.

The things that bothered Dad the most were facts of life: (a) there were no doors on any of the stalls in the bathroom and (b) people that were next to illiterate and "meaner than Hell" had complete and total control over your life. One corporal, in particular was thoroughly hated, and although his name isn't remembered, the loathing Dad felt for him is.
There was some chafing after the novelty of the situation wore off. Most of the group Dad was with were as young as he was, and they felt that their wings had been clipped. There was not a lot to do at Ft. Ben, and no one seemed to know how long they'd be there or what they were going to do next. Dad drew a lot of guard duty, not the thrill of a lifetime especially when one is guarding parking lots and the VD wing of the post hospital. At any rate, he was very proud to be with the group—all of whom had passed a battery of tests to be there and were told repeatedly that they were the "cream of the crop." For the rest of his time as an "aviation student," he was constantly reminded that he was someone special and he was never to forget it.

At this point, Calvin Cunningham reappeared while my father was on guard duty one night. Calvin came driving by in his '41 Plymouth, free as a bird and sporting on the front of his car the fog light from Dad's Ford. This fog light was Dad's pride and joy, it had been an amber railroad lamp and when turned on at night looked red, while in the daytime it looked amber. Dad and Calvin had had lots of fun with it by scaring most of the
people they knew by pulling them over at night. Dad naturally demanded to know what Calvin was doing with his light, and Calvin (a fast-thinker) replied that Dad's parents had given it to him.

By the time Roy and Maude visited him the next day, he was (as Maude would have said) in a full-fledged swivet. Didn't they love him any more? Why had they given Calvin his fog light? By this time, Roy and Maude were in a swivet and roared off to Calvin's house. Calvin, it appears, had dropped by and left his sweetheart, Ginny, on the front porch talking to Maude and Roy, while he went and filched the light off the '41 Ford. His parents, more than a little dismayed by my Grandparent's arrival, denied that Calvin had stolen the light, and then finally, Mrs. Cunningham burst into tears and begged for forgiveness, sobbing: "He's not really ours, he's adopted." The light soon reappeared on the '41 Ford, and Calvin later became a loan collector for Household Finance--a job he reportedly enjoyed and excelled at--chiefly because he carried a gun. My father saw him again only once, after his marriage. My mother remembers the incident because she was doing laundry and had it
spread all over the house when Calvin (and Ginny) rolled into the driveway in a Cadillac convertible. Dad still says that Calvin was a good friend, but "he was a stupid kid, who did stupid things."

Calvin, Fort Ben, and life as he knew it was soon left behind; after 44 days at Fort Benjamin Harrison, the Army informed them that they weren't supposed to be there in the first place and they were being sent to Texas.
"It was the first time I'd ever run into any Mexicans, Chicanos, I guess you call 'em now . . . they all had this black hair all swept back in 'duckbutt' hairdos, spoke Spanish all the time which kind of bothered us, but they were nice people . . ."
Dad rode a troop train all the way to Wichita Falls, Texas. The trip was not a memorable one and he remembers Texas as a hot, dusty place where the wind was so bad that they had to wear gas masks while drilling.

It was at Shepard's Field that Dad received what little basic training he got. Day after day ran into each other with endless lectures, drilling, and inspections. One that Dad particularly hated was "short arm inspection." Apparently, you lined up wearing nothing but shoes, raincoat, and helmet. Your feet were checked and (as my father put it) your "plumbing" was checked for "disease." Dad still recalls with glee the time he saw a group of WACs lined up wearing their raincoats, shoes, and helmets for their own "short arm" inspection.

Dad thoroughly hated Texas. It was so hot, so dusty, and so boring. If things weren't bad enough, there was a polio scare and all the local swimming pools were closed.

The Army tried. Dad saw a lot of USO shows, one well-remembered featured a girl contortionist who was well-endowed above and below, and she was also a very bad contortionist. Nobody cared.
The only bright spot in Texas was mail call. Everybody got letters from home that made them homesick, but it was considered "unmanly" to make a big deal about it. A large group of Kentucky farm boys would stand around and as they would read their letters, they would begin to sob and then wail on each other's shoulders. My father described them as "tall, big guys with those bony Kentucky faces and all of them meaner than hell." They made no bones about what they were crying over either. They just wanted to go home. After a couple of months in Texas, Dad was ready to go too. They shipped him out on another troop train, this time to a small teachers college in Wisconsin.
WISCONSIN

"All they did was drink beer all the time, ..."
If Dad hated Texas with a passion, he loved Wisconsin. He woke up the next morning to green, green everywhere with a blue sky and no dust and no wind. The name of the town was Stephen's Point, a beautiful place, like something out of an Andy Hardy movie. They were quartered in Nelson Hall, a girls dormitory at the teacher's college there.

Stephen's Point took all these incoming "aviation students" into their homes and Dad had a great time. The people there all drank beer like it was water, consequently, Dad and his Army buddies would be (literally) lying under the table while the local females would be raring to go.

After one particular beer blast, Dad didn't quite make it through the double doors of Nelson Hall before curfew. They each were allowed seven demerits, and being late for curfew was six demerits. Beyond seven demerits, and you had to walk an hour on the adjoining tennis courts for each extra demerit. As Dad put it, "from then on, I was an extremely good young man."

They took classes at the college, and he did well. The classes were kept separate from the rest of the college and timed so that they literally had to run to every class.
After running everywhere all day, they ran out
to a field where they had to line up for inspection.
Their shoes had to be shined, as did their belt
buckles and buttons. There were to be no smudges
on the back of the trouser leg where you could
wipe off your shoes. You could get a demerit
for any of these things, as well as for having
hair too long. They could and would give
you demerits if your bunk wasn't made up tight
enough, if your foot locker wasn't "just so,"
and if they didn't like the state of your socks.
Dad must have been exceptionally good, because
he never did get his seventh demerit.

Stephen's Point's male population had been
severely depleted by the war, so one can imagine
what a swath all these men in uniform made.
There were semi-formal dances held at the town
hotel every Saturday night, so you got your
tailored uniform from the dry cleaners with
a crease in it that would have cut butter,
polished your belt buckle, and swept some
Stephen's Point cutie off her feet (at least
for the evening). The male shortage was
so bad that they were finally instructed
to please dress with the blinds down: girl
"peeping Toms" had been discovered.
Dad's education continued with ten hours of flying in Piper Cubs, and further lessons on how to continue to behave like an Officer and a Gentleman. They sirred everyone to death, and to each other and their instructors they were always, always "Mister."

By the beginning of October, the Army was ready to ship them out again. This time, replete in their winter wool uniform, they were shipped to California.
CALIFORNIA

"I don't know how much Kurt Vonnegut you know, but I do know that in one of those books of his, he writes about the same thing happening to him . . . . he writes it better than I can say it."
Dad was on another troop train, this time nearly suffocating in his uniform. They were so brainwashed by this time (his own term) that they didn't dare dream of not wearing wool pants and a wool shirt when they'd been told to. The first officer that saw them sweltering in California, ordered them out of the wool monstrosities back into their suntans.

They were put in barracks in Santa Anna, where they received another battery of tests. At this point, 65% of Dad's group washed out of pilot training--including Dad. Because of the 44 day delay at Fort Ben, they missed the period when the Air Corps was begging for pilots. Add a group of MIT graduates at Stephen's Point, and what you get is disappointment. By the time Dad got there he was no longer the "cream of the crop." They could afford to pick and choose, and they went with the college graduates, not one, by the way, washed out.

Dad was disappointed, and frustrated, and bitter. He had been drilled for so long on this dream of being an Officer that he was at a loss. Adding to his frustration
was the realization that if he had not felt so honor-bound, he might have made it. Along with the tests, they were given an intense physical exam and the question of the elusive "pollops" came up. The doctor asked, and Dad told him the truth: yes, they had been removed. The doctor said later that if Dad hadn't told him there was no way he could've told. Apparently, the Army Air Corps didn't want their men flying without all their "pollops." So, Dad was grounded, because he didn't have a degree and he had no "pollops."

The Army did try and soften the blow. They were offered entry into any of the Air Corps schools: gunnery, radio, mechanics, armament. Dad and a bunch of his buddies decided that they'd all stick together and go to the same school. When the time came, they each picked a different school. Dad chose mechanics school.

It had never occurred to him that he might conceivably wash out. What finally brought home the fact that he was not going to be a pilot? He (and the other 65%) were promptly jerked out of the barracks they had been in, and henceforth were never referred to as Mister anything. He and the rest bound for mechanics school were sent
back across the country in a single Pullman car. Their destination, of all places, was Lincoln, Nebraska.
NEBRASKA

"One day, some guy came running in and asked if we'd ever fired a rifle, when we said no, my God, you'd have thought the world was coming to an end . . . ."
In Nebraska, the wool uniform came in handy. It snowed and was "as cold as hell." During his stay at Lincoln, some clerk somewhere discovered that Dad and several other former "aviation students" had never fired a rifle while in the military. So, nothing would do but for them to tromp out to some field covered with snow, and fire a rifle for the first and last time in his military career.

Lincoln was a staging base for bombers going in and out of the country. There was always a bomber going in and out, and new crews being quarantined. These crews were not allowed off the base, since most of them knew where they would be going when they were sent overseas. It was considered risky to let them loose off the base.

The upshot of this policy was that clerks had a brisk black market business in selling passes off the base. My father's pass was "stolen" after a couple of months of school. The clerk who he had turned it into insisted that it had not been turned in, while Dad insisted (with witnesses) that he had. Finally, it being one of those situations "where you are continually being crapped on," Dad went to a chaplain for help. He couldn't get on or off the
base and he was going stir-crazy. The chaplain was a remarkable man, a Father Greisner. Why Dad chose to go to a Catholic chaplain, I do not know. God must have been on his side, for one of Father Greisner’s charges was the clerk in question. My father’s pass was restored at something short of light speed. Father Greisner had a lot of clout over the members of his flock, and he and Dad became good friends. Father Greisner was not above strolling over to the PX for a beer, and more importantly, he used the trunk of his LaSalle to haul crew members out of the base for one last night on the town. The trunk of the LaSalle was big enough to hold three or four soldiers, and of course, no guard would dare check Father Greisner’s car. The only problem was that the soldier had to find his own way back into the base.

Dad graduated from mechanics school, where he’d learned a lot about life and the Army, and the Army promptly sent him back to Long Beach, California.
Dad was in Long Beach for only a few weeks, for P51 specialist school. He got his first furlough and went home where I'm sure Maude fussed and cried over how thin he was and fed him till his tailored uniforms threatened to bulge. He had survived his first year in the Air Corps and he was to report to Fort Myers, Florida.
FORT MEYERS, FLORIDA

"I never did like Southern girls, they all seemed so conniving, and of course, they still had that burr under their ass about the Civil War . . . ."
Dad arrived at Fort Myers in a driving rain—"you know, like in all those old war movies." It was the middle of the night, and one of those omnipresent clerks was in an uproar with trying to find them bunks and a decent meal. Dad was now a mechanic and he was assigned to a certain squadron and certain flights. The next few months were among the happiest in Dad's life. They worked their tails off (night and day), and they were around their beloved airplanes. They were happy.

They did no KP, that bane of Army life. German prisoners of war (Luftwaffe types) wound up at Fort Myers and they did the KP. At first, there was some grumbling about poisoned food, until everyone realized the POWs were happier to be there than they were. The POWs used to stand at the end of the runways and watch the P40s take off and laugh. Everyday, when they were marched from their quarters to the mess hall they were stopped at this giant map tacked up on the front of the post theater. This map showed the advances being made in Europe, and the POWs refused to believe any of it. They couldn't believe that those planes that they laughed at had control of the air over Germany.
They flew day and night (on moonlit nights) at Fort Myers, and according to how much time they flew, they got a pass for the weekend or for a day. Their spare time was spent at the Royal Palm Hotel, where they went to a lot of parties. It was here that my father developed his own ideas about Southern Women. Fort Myers had its own "upper crust" who were rather a snooty bunch. In their own way, they were no better off than Dad and his friends, but they talked a good game.

The most memorable event of his happy Fort Myers days occurred when everyone chipped in and sent one C47 (a gigantic cargo plane) down to the British Honduras to pick up a load of Canadian VO and English chocolate. The main attraction was that they were duty-free, and the British didn't care how much they bought. They were so eager to load up and get back that they threw the plane off balance and almost crashed on take-off. By the time they got back to Fort Myers they were so drunk they almost crashed landing. What happened next was one big enormous drunk for the whole base. My father swears he
has never been so drunk in his life. The technique was something like this: you ate the chocolate first, then you took a giant swig of VO which was, in a word, SMOOTH. The entire base was drunk. The last thing Dad remembers is being carried into the barracks and being thrown on his bunk. He had no hangover, which, I suppose, is because of the chocolate.

It is important to remember that most of the people on this post, the pilots and the mechanics were only 18 or 19 years old. They worked "their tails off" for 18 hours a day. The mechanics were assigned certain planes to take care of, and they usually had the same pilots. If a pilot kept getting the same plane, he usually thought of it as his. Dad and his buddies knew better—the planes were theirs, because they took care of them. They named them, and painted those funny names on them: Leroy's Joy, Viking's Vicious Virgin, Phyllis.

Once the planes went out, all you could do was wait for it to come back. One morning was particularly bad. The planes were supposed to go out in the morning to check the weather. The pilots, hyped up as my father had been and ready to see action, would dogfight. Unfortunately, something
happened and the pilot of one plane was killed instantly when another pilot dove into his plane from the rear. The other pilot managed to bail out, but his parachute straps were too loose around his groin and they practically tore him in half. Meanwhile back at Fort Myers, the two runways were blocked by one plane that had managed to flip over on its back while a plane on the other runway had managed to slam on his brakes and come to a 90 degree stop on his prop. The air-sea rescue plane, at the same time, was frantically trying to take off and save the pilot with the parachute problems. After screaming at the tower, he took off from the grass in front of the hangar, and rescued the pilot.

This poor pilot never got over that dogfight. They tried to get him back in the air, but something always happened to keep him from taking off. Finally, they grounded him. The usual procedure when a pilot crashed was to take him out of the wreckage, and put in him in a new plane without giving him a chance to think. The important thing was to
keep him talking and get him in the plane before he knew what was happening.

I'm trying to keep the tone from getting too ghoulish here. Life was not all V0 and chocolate for all the people at Fort Myers. One pilot kept making remarks to his crew that his plane was going to kill him. One night in line outside the mess hall, they heard him come screaming in in his P40. He buzzed the air field twice, then flew (without missing a beat) straight into a grove of pine trees across from the runway. He cut a swath through the trees and was killed instantly when the fuselage finally got caught in a tree.

Dad says that it was always painful to see the plane itself after a wreck, because after working with aircraft for awhile, the planes almost become living things, like a crippled bird. The pilots themselves had gone through pilot training, but usually had only four or five hours worth of flying in fighter planes. Thus, when something went wrong with the planes they weren't experienced enough to handle it.
The worst part for Dad was standing there waiting, while everyone else's planes came in. You just stand there, waiting, thinking: "What did I do wrong?" The entire time (two years) that Dad was at Fort Myers no accident was pinned on a mechanic, but the responsibility and the fear was there.

Dad was sitting in a local movie theatre when word came that the War was over. What followed was a three day drunk, and then "what the hell are we going to do when we get out of here, and when are they going to let us go?" Overnight, they shifted from 18 hour days, 7 days a week to a 8 hour, 5 day week. The older, married men were discharged soon and sent home to start the baby boom and finish school on the GI Bill. Friends that Dad had made were being shipped out, and finally the word came: he was being shipped out overseas. He was to report to Fort Patrick Henry in New York.
FRANCE

"April in Paris, chestnuts in blossom, holiday tables under the trees . . ."
Dad and his outfit got on yet another troop train and rode it up to Fort Patrick Henry. They got all their records up to date, they endured endless lectures on conduct and how to board the ship, they got shots and more shots until they were in a frenzy of anticipation. At the last moment, when they were all standing on the dock, the trip was called off. They were sent to Greensboro, North Carolina for three weeks, sent back to New York, and finally shipped out on a converted luxury liner. The ship was so huge that they were ordered not to wander off by themselves because people kept getting lost. Dad's shins were bruised from banging into metal stairs and hatches.

They docked at Le Havre, France. It was the first time Dad had seen any kind of destruction from the war and he "just simply could not believe it." They were sent to a camp outside of Le Havre, where they could look down on the city, and see the damage that had been done. They were put on the first of many trains with an especially green lieutenant (there's nothing quite so green as a lieutenant) and were sent off on this train ride around
France.

At every town they stopped in, people came, trying to buy anything they had—soap, candy, cigarettes. Somehow, they wound up in a freight yard in Paris. They were there for two days in this railcar. The car itself was big with no seats, no bathroom, and what appeared to be a lot of animal dung on the floor. They could walk up into Paris from the yards, so they strolled in, bought some bread in long loaves, and strolled back for fear of being left behind. They were cold, and the rest of the train had been moved leaving them alone in this freight yard.

They had no idea why they were there until the word got around, and all these people kept coming down to the car to buy goodies of these nice American boys from the States. They sold them what they could—it wasn't a black market situation—because they were so sorry for them. The money didn't do them a lot of good, and they felt bad taking it.

Finally, they got so cold that they made a fire to keep warm and to heat up their K rations. Some fool put his can of rations in the fire, where it exploded and showered everybody with hot ham and eggs:
"an experience." They finally were pulled out of the freight yard and dumped at Fort Lucky Strike. (Most of the camps in Europe, or France anyway, were named after cigarettes. For example, the camp at Le Havre was named Fort Herbert Tarrington.)

At Lucky Strike, these green aircraft mechanics were thrown in a tent with a bunch of Kentucky boys turned anti-aircraft soldiers. They had been in action since Anzio Beach in Italy, and they were wild. Dad had been one of the lucky ones. These guys had been too young, seen too much, and they were crazy.

They kept a stash of weapons that they were supposed to have given up under the floor of the tent, and they sold it to the mechanics. Some of the stuff was beautiful: they had knives made of brass with handles carved out of plexiglas scavenged from bombers. Dad didn't buy any of it, and he felt sorry for these misplaced Kentucky farm boys. They talked about going home and all the awful things they were going to do to the members of their local draft board.

They walked around Lucky Strike some trying to see some of the French countryside, but they had to contend with French mud and mine fields. The Army came up with something for them to do finally. The local post office
was swamped with letters and packages from English girls to American soldiers. Dad and the rest of the mechanics were instructed not to open any of the letters, but to read the postcards and try and figure out if the guys were dead or alive so they could tell these poor girls. There were packages of cookies, and from the United States, box after box after box of Hershey bars.

It was very sad, because each of these American boys had picked up an English girl, loved them madly, promised to marry them, and then had been shipped out. Apparently, the Americans did something right, because the English girls were crazy about Americans.

They were put on yet another train and this time they rode through the French countryside day and night for no apparent reason. The trains would stop out in the middle of the country and they would just sit for hours. They were in the same type of car, and they had been told that these were 40 and 8 cars. They held 40 men or 8 horses. Too recently it had held 8 horses. At any rate, they were learning how to take care of themselves. Dad had scrounged up a tarpaulin and they spread it on the cleanest corner of the floor and slept on it.
They were in this car for days. Some of the guys played cards. Dad, somehow, always managed to have a book with him. They were living on K rations still, and someone had managed to pick up a little stove to heat them on. The countryside was beautiful, even if they had no idea where they were.

Dad's most vivid memory was that of crossing a stream and looking out over a valley covered with crosses and helmets and rifles—it was a graveyard from World War I. The graves still had flowers on them, and it felt good to know that someone there was still taking care of them.

Their rail tour of France ended shortly after this, and they were sent across the channel to Southampton.
ENGLAND

"I was uneasy all the way over on the ferry, but once we were in England things started perking up a whole bunch . . . for one thing we could read all the signs . . ."
They were stationed at an air base at Bovington. The base was huge, it was dispersed so that if it was bombed they'd have a hell of a lot of base to ruin. Dad was assigned to work on C47s, on a night shift. They lived in quonset huts and one Texan in Dad's hut spent his spare time throwing knives at the door. They lived in fear every time they walked in the door. This same jerk put a pistol cartridge in the stove, which naturally exploded and they were forced to "steal" another stove.

They became friendly with a family in the nearby village of Watford. This family had a pretty daughter, Grace ("a pretty, plump little thing with blonde hair"), who they took turns at squiring about. They frequented the local pubs, and were usually able to drink them dry of an evening. There were dances often, and Grace would bring her friends to the camp.

When one is going to a dance, one takes a shower. Bovington was so dispersed that Dad had to ride a bike to get to a shower. He and a friend, referred to only as Buckheister, rode to the shower and on the way home (in the dark) Buckheister missed a turn and managed to land in a giant puddle. Buckheister allowed himself one big "awwww SHIT" and climbed on the bike and rode back to the shower. Dad
followed him, and found Buckheister in the shower, fully dressed, washing himself and his best uniform at the same time.

Shortly afterward, Buckheister was flying as crew chief in and out of France. Dad was sent to Germany.
GERMANY

"Until you see it, you'd never believe that you could bomb something so much, and have anything left standing. . ."
Dad flew low over England and it was one of the most beautiful sights he'd ever seen: all that beautiful English green and the little villages with their chimney pots. He couldn't believe the desolation when they reached Germany. The farther they went into Germany the worse it got. They finally landed at Ansbach where they were quartered in huge barracks that had once been part of a Luftwaffe training school.

They overhauled C47 aircraft, and in spite of the less than pleasant surroundings they had a good time. For one thing, they were fed often and well. For another, two hundred yards away was a bar with naked ladies on the wall for the express use of American servicemen. They learned to play double-bid pinochle and after a while all they did was play pinochle.

They were sent back to Bovington when the C47s were back in shape. They were so eager to get back to England that they threw themselves and their bags into the plane. They were thrown in the plane any which way so that the plane was off balance and overweight. They barely made it off the ground, and Dad quietly leaned over, stuck his head in his barracks bag and
prayed until the wheels left the ground. They were glad to leave Germany. It was cold and disturbing. Besides, there were friends to see and Grace to dance with in Bovington.
BOVINGTON, ENGLAND

"I'll be seeing you, in all the old, familiar places ..."
The first thing Dad saw on his return to England was the sun shining on the White Cliffs of Dover. The second thing he saw was Buckheister running toward him across the runway. They were in England for 10 or 12 more days, and then they knew they'd be going home.

They were given a free run for that last week. They went to Watford (although Grace had a new group of admirers) and London and saw and did everything they could cram in. They shipped out from Southampton on the Norway Victory, ready to see home.
WELCOME HOME
Since the **Norway** was a victory ship, it had every good thing known to Americans to eat. They had steak, fried chicken, ice cream, and COLD milk. They stuffed themselves and slept on hammocks between decks. It was the **Norway**'s final run, and they made it back to New York in six days. They were welcomed home with an escort, and sent to a fort in New Jersey. They were warned that soldiers were being mugged and to be careful. Naturally, Dad and a bunch of his friends went out, got drunk, and two of the guys were mugged and stripped of what money they had.

They were shipped home on trains. Dad was shipped to Camp Attebury where he was discharged (honoringably, of course). He was picked up by Maude and Roy. Did he say, "Hi Mom, Hi Dad!" No. His first question was: "Where is my car?"

Welcome home Dad.