

Our C.O. said something like, "I know what will happen to us. We have been designated to be an occupation bomb group and will remain here in the E.T.O. and more specifically, in Germany. It is estimated that we shall be here for a period of five to ten years. There shall be no furloughs back to the states".

He then advised us that we could then go to what served as a P.X. and we could purchase our ration of liquor. And we did. That was not the news that we wished to hear. Bill said if we were going to be here that long, then he was going to try to find a Belgian or French woman and get married.

A new friend, we called "Easy" as his last name was Ezzale. We bought our ration and tried to get drunk but we weren't successful. I suppose the news that we had received was anti-drunk-stuff.



The photo above is as close to a group photo of us enlisted men as I have taken at the base at Florennes Belgium. I did not record their first names thinking that I would remember them forever, but I was wrong again. Standing from left to right: Harris; Petrio, James Taylor, Henderson, Willis, Teeter, Bill Taylor, Funk, Fisher, Haigh. Bottom row left to right: Davis, Rosenbaum, Siebert, Ermiler, LeBlock and Barlow. Only Bill Taylor and Barlow were in my tent.

Not long after that, I saw a notice on the bulletin board that it was possible to attend a European University if you had certain credentials. I saw that a course in architecture was being offered. That sounded good as it appeared that I would be in Europe for 5 to 10 years. I could think of no better place to study art and architecture. I went over to the group education office and filled out an application. In the mean time there was little for us to do except go on a pass to Charleroi, Dinant, Namur, Brussels or other towns. Bill and I went to visit the Waterloo Battlefield.

106,000 Yanks Earmarked for Occupation AF

By James Strebig

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An air force of 1,500 planes and 106,000 officers and men will police the skies over the American occupation zone in Germany and Austria.

Fighter, medium and heavy bomber units will compose the occupational Air Force (OAF), with the Ninth AF as the basic organization, to which will be added units of the Eighth, 12th and 15th AFs. The present personnel of the Ninth exceeds 200,000 men, but more than half of these will be sent home or redeployed to the Pacific.

The biggest current problem is the construction of airfields. Since the Germans built their better bases in western Europe to be nearer Britain, the American occupation area lacks airdromes from which heavy American-type planes can best operate.

Heavy Bombers Added

Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Weyland, commanding general of the Ninth, has headquarters at Bad Kissingen, and they will be OAF headquarters.

OAF will comprise ten fighter and fighter-bomber groups of three squadrons each, three medium and 10 heavy bomber groups of four squadrons each, one reconnaissance group, three night fighter squadrons, five liaison squadrons, two transport groups, and two troop-carrier groups. There will be about 50 different supporting and auxiliary units, including four bands and 15 military police companies.

The airfields will be so located that no point in the American occupation zone will be more than 30 minutes' flight-time away.

Fortresses Included

A list of the tactical units already assigned to the OAF includes: the 79th Thunderbolt Group of the 12th AF; the 35th, 354th, 355th and 357th Mustang Groups; the 92nd, 94th, 96th, 100th, 205th, 306th and 384th Flying Fortress Groups of the Eighth AF; the 36th, 86th, 366th, 368th and 406th Thunderbolt Groups; the 344th, 394th and 397th Marauder Group from the Ninth AF; and the 97th and 99th Fortress Groups of the 15th AF.

Other units listed include two photo squadrons and two tactics squadrons from the 10th Reconnaissance Group of the Ninth AF and two target-towing and two ferrying squadrons.



James Taylor at a sidewalk cafe and Bill Taylor about half way up the steps of the Waterloo battlefield memorial.



This is now a farm house in Waterloo that once served as the hospital for Napoleon's troops. I believe the tower was inside the court yard. Bill and I enjoyed seeing this historic site, the place of another major European war.

I had recognized the building that had been the hospital for Napoleon's troops from an etching that I had bought in town. Bill and I went over, knocked on the gate, was greeted by the owner and invited to come in and look around.

Bill and I continued to visit regularly with the Cavillot family. One day they asked us if we liked waffles. We said yes, so they invited us in for waffles the next day. We arrived, they were cooking the waffles, then when there was a nice stack, Yvette took off some place with them. We were ready for butter and syrup. When she returned the waffle looked like a checker board---alternate squares were filled with fresh strawberries and the others with whipped cream. My introduction to Belgian Waffles.

I truly enjoyed my visits to Brussels. It was a big town full of all sorts of interesting things. The botanical garden, the old guild houses at the central market, the lace makers, the museums with the old masters and the Flemish artists. I became acquainted with Peter Bruegel the elder and his strange pictures as well as his paintings of the village life at the time.

One of the things that was almost a national icon was a small bronze sculpture, sort of tucked away, back in a corner off of a busy street. The story goes that the son of one of the influential families in the town had wandered off and was lost. The distraught father swore that when his son was found, he would commission a piece of sculpture to be placed at the spot where and what the boy was doing at that time. The boy was found unharmed. Thus we have the small sculpture "Manneken Pis". I had expected the sculpture to be closer to the life size of a 2-3 year old. I would believe that every G.I. that passed through Belgium would have bought a small brass replica of that piece be it in the form of a letter opener or an ash tray.



Food was good and plentiful at the cafes and hotel dining rooms. It was strawberry season and we had lots of them. The locals would come out to the base selling them by the basket. I had never seen such big strawberries.

The top photo is Barney, Gil and me (James Taylor) coming back from Liege, Belgium. We had stopped in the Ardennes Forest for a picture. A fellow (Bob) was with us and took the photo while Barney was setting his camera. The center photo is Zorn looking out the upper hatch in the radio operators / navigators room just behind the pilot and Co-Pilot. The bottom photo is Gil topside looking out the same thing. (was that called the astrodome?). I know that it was to be used for celestial navigation.

Look closely and you can almost see me behind the 50 caliber machine guns as if firing out the right waist window. I have lots of ammo. Look even closer and you can see me at the left waist window of "good ole K-9X" the Mary Ann.

The war continued in the South Pacific. We in the E.T.O. had few duties, we were waiting to see where we would go as part of the "Occupation Bomb Group". The news reports coming from the Pacific was encouraging" The allies were getting closer and closer to a possible invasion of the Japanese Islands. We believed that the incessant bombing would break the Japanese spirit. We woke one morning to hear the radio report that the Air Corps had dropped an atomic bomb on Japan. We didn't know what an atomic bomb was but from the description of the explosion, it sounded great-to our ears. Some three days later, on August 9, 1945 a second bomb was dropped on another Japanese city. The first bomb had not convinced them that they should surrender. Again we rejoiced.

Sometime around August 7, the First Sgt. came to my tent and told me to pack up my gear and take it to the supply room for storage as I was to leave for school the next day. I was to take with me a Class-A uniform, some fatigues and essential personal things. I was to go see the education officer for additional details. He told me I would go to the University of Besancon, France. He had no further information. The short notice gave me little time to say good-bye to the crew, the tent mates, the Cavillot family and the rest of the 494th Bomb Squadron. The only thing that I knew was that Besancon was southeast of Paris in the area of Nancy and Dijon and north of the Swiss border. I would need to change trains in Paris. I got to Paris in the late afternoon and was unable to get across Paris to the other station in time to make my connection to continue my journey. I would need to spend the night in Paris.