

ONE MAN'S WAR

FOUR HUNDRED FIRST BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H), AAF
Office of the Squadron Commander
APO 557

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In accordance with Army Regulations, this private diary belonging to Sgt Roy E. Loyless, 38545285 is held apart from other personal effects, and after cessation of censorship it is to be sent to Mrs. Mary Loyless, Houston, Texas

C E R T I F I C A T E

I certify that I have read and fully understand all the provisions of the Directive of the Secretary of War (AG 383.6 (24 Mar 45) subj : Publicity in connection with escaped, liberated or repatriated prisoners of war ****), and will AT ALL TIMES hereafter comply fully therewith.

I understand that disclosure to unauthorized persons will make me liable to disciplinary action for failure to safeguard MILITARY INFORMATION.

I realize that it is my duty during my military service, and later as a civilian, to take all possible precautions to prevent disclosure, by word of mouth or otherwise, of military information of this nature.

NAME (Print) Roy E. Loyless

Signed _____

Betrayed By Ford

Growing up I was always a Ford admirer and only drove and owned Ford cars as my pictures of them (enclosed) confirm. My first was a 1930 Model A. Roadster which I don't have a picture of. I survived a major accident in my 1936 Tudor (2-door); turning it over 3 times and sustaining only a fractured hip. A girl riding with me only had a broken arm, although as you can see by the picture, the car was totaled. The 1937 coupe I bought later and the 1940 convertible I owned before joining the Army Air Corp in 1943 was my favorite! I dreaded parting from it more so than leaving home for a war.

I've never written anything about my war experience and hardly talked about it except to close family members. I only recently received my medals after my grandson wanted them to show for a project on a Memorial Day display at his school! Although I have been asked by different organizations to write my biography, it still bothers me to think about it, much less put it on paper.

I was a tail gunner on a B-17-G attached to the 91st Bomb Group, 401st Bomb sqd., 8th Air Force flying from the air base Bassingbourn, England. On my 15th mission to Merseburg, Germany before reaching target we were hit by 88 mm shell which struck the aircraft behind the co-pilot and caught the oxygen and electrical systems on fire. My pilot, John Askins, could not warn us because the electric system was destroyed. Although the plane was on fire, he remained and set the plane on auto-pilot which saved our lives. He received the Silver Star for this 48 years later! I evidently was the last to leave the aircraft, as I was isolated in the tail from the rest of the crew. I landed about ½ mile from the aircraft and was the only one who saw it after it hit the ground. I was taken to it by German officers and Home Guard in a **1941 new Ford truck**. I will explain below. This Ford truck made by Ford in Germany, denied me any chance of escape, therefore causing my capture and imprisonment in German concentration camp for the remaining part of the war and severe health problems for the rest of my life.

After hearing a loud explosion, I bailed out the aircraft. My parachute opened and I was soon spotted by four P-51 Fighter planes who circled me until I hit the ground or tree as I will explain! There was a large recently plowed piece of land forest at the rear; I landed in a tree on the edge of the forest and hung in it about 15 feet from the ground. Before I could unhook myself and fall to the ground, a blue 1941 one and a half Ton Ford truck with a flatbed on the rear arrived. There were 10 older men and 2 ten to twelve year old boys on the bed. The men in the cab, which I was later told were Home Guard, all had shot guns. A Home Guard was driving and two German Army Officers were in the cab with him. I was told later they were on leave from front lines of the War. They started shouting at me and asking about a pistol. I released myself from the parachute which was caught in the tree and fell to the ground. I was surrounded by the Home Guard and one of the young boys, talking in perfect English, asked me if I was hurt.

They searched me and removed my escape kit (which we all carried). Initially, it was the only thing they were interested in. We remained at the sight while they climbed the tree to get the parachute out. I was appalled (?astonished ?) to see this new Ford truck! I asked the boys where they got this truck! I was told it came from Ford Motor Co. and was built by Germans at the factory in Cologne, Germany! I was wondering to myself how they could run a Ford factory in Cologne as my 6th mission, Sept. 30, 1944 was Cologne. Also my 10th, 11th and 12th missions were Cologne on October 14th, 15th and 17th. These were three missions in a row, as per my diary, which I am enclosing copies from. How could Ford operate a truck factory and not get bombed, I still wonder today. With the woods and forest behind me, I still think if it had not been for this Ford truck (furnished to the Home Guard) who got there before I could get out of the tree, I may have had a

chance to escape into the forest. I was always a fast runner in school and was always being asked by my coach at my Jr. High School to be on his track team. I never did because of my newspaper route and another job at a service station. After all, kids worked back in those days.

After they retrieved the parachute from the tree, we all got on the truck and drove about a mile to a large house on the road. The downstairs was a pub; I presumed that the upstairs was sleeping quarters. Two German ladies in their late 20's or early 30's (ran it) were in charge (?). I was seated in a chair by myself and I had my parachute as they had returned it to me after retrieving it from the tree. The German officers were seated at another table near me and Home Guards were on stools at the bar. The 2 boys were also in the pub by the door next to me. They were all talking in German, drinking beer and laughing. I was curious what they were laughing about, and I asked one of the boys what was so funny. He said the German officers were telling them that the war would soon be over, as I was only about 14 years old, thus the Americans must be running out of men to fight the war! I guess I looked younger than 19, which I had just become on 9-23-44. I didn't shave until I was 25 and I had a crew cut hair cut.

The 2 German ladies became interested in my parachute which was a large white silk one made by Irving Parachute Co., in England. Finally, the boys told me the German officers wanted to give it to them to make clothes from and asked me to give it to them. I was however, told not to mention anything about this to anyone after I was transferred to German Gestapo. I informed the boys it was OK by me; I would not say anything about it to anyone. If they asked, I would say it was in the tree the last time I saw it. It was of no use to me anyway and they had treated me well. The ladies took it upstairs and that was the last I saw of it. They gave me some apples to eat.

Finally, after a while, another vehicle arrived. I didn't see it, but I heard 4 girls come in. They were dressed in army clothes and I was pointed out to them. The boys told me they were the ones operating the guns that shot my plane down and they were curious to see me. After a while, the two officers and the Home Guard and I left to go see the plane which was about a mile from the pub. It was on the edge of the forest and it was evidently flying level when it hit the forest as it knocked down tree tops before exploding. It left a path about the length of a football field before blowing up. The tail section and the nose were still intact. The life rafts were hanging in trees and the bombs, which were still on the plane, were scattered on the ground as we were 30 minutes from the target when hit. We walked around looking at it and I found my shoe strings which were still in the tail. I had them tied together with the shoe strings; I was glad to get them as I only had one flying boot. I was told by the boys that the officers said I could keep them and they reminded me again not to say anything about the parachute! I informed them again that I would not under any circumstance! Not to worry, they had my word on this! We finally proceeded to the nose of the plane and I noticed the name for the first time, as it was dark when we boarded that morning. Our plane which had been damaged on the mission to Cologne, Germany on the 14th of October, 1944 was being repaired. We flew this plane, which had just been painted the day before and named USA Hard Way. It had a picture on the nose of a girl hitch hiking.

I was later taken back to the pub in the truck, and just before dark picked up by someone else who took me to town where I first saw my other crew members except the co-pilot. It was later confirmed that he had been killed by Germans when he landed on the ground. We were taken by train to the Frankfurt, Germany Interrogation Center and held until I was sent to Gross Tychow Poland, Stalag Luft IV Prison Camp. I remained there until the Russian Army was advancing and I was sent by box car to Barth, Germany, Stalag, Luft I.

Finally, in May 1945, I was liberated by the Russian Army, although they kept us as their prisoners for 3 weeks before the First Air Division of the 8th Air Force (including my Bomb

Group) flew in and picked us up. They took us 30 at a time in B-17s and returned us to La Havre, France, and back to US command! I weighed 157 pounds when I was shot down and 120 lbs. when I was liberated. I was returned home and finally put in a hospital in San Antonio, TX. Afterward, I was sent to Camp Mysitic in Kerrville, TX. This was a Girls Camp in peace times, that was serving as army convalescent camp for soldiers who had been in heavy combat. I was sent there to recuperate, as per the article I'm enclosing.

I still suffer from my War experience, and it is hard for me to write this as it brings back bad (horrible/terrible) memories! Although, I guess you can say I was lucky to return, the bombing raid I was shot down on that was later called the Massacre at Merseburg as it was the largest loss for my bomb group, the 91st, during the War. We lost 13 planes that day over Germany and 117 men; 49 killed, 68 prisoners of war and 2 planes landed in France. Forty B-17 Bombers were lost over Germany, fifteen P-51 Mustangs were lost on this raid although 98 German fighters were lost and 71 German pilots were killed. This was a major air raid of WWII as it was a synthetic oil refinery. I still wonder why we don't (didn't) have synthetic oil as the Germans ran their whole war effort on synthetic oil and we supposedly have (had) the knowledge and resources to make it. I guess that is another story of politics and greed that evidently exist today.

After being returned to La Harve, France, we were interrogated about our experience and I told the interrogation officer about the new Ford truck. He acted like Ford didn't have a factory in Germany operating, and said the truck was probably taken from our army and repainted by the Germans. However, being from a family very knowledgeable of US autos, (my father was a Dodge dealer in Pecos, TX until the depression in the 30's, and I had worked for an Oldsmobile dealer before joining the service); I knew this truck was a new Ford original, not re-painted. I left things as they were, but I knew he didn't know what he was talking about. I later read in a magazine about Ford operating this truck plant in Germany during the War! Again, I never discussed this with anyone and never thought much about it since after returning I got married and had two beautiful daughters. I was only concerned with making a living and giving them the things I never had growing up.

As per the records from the United States Air Force Historical Research Center which are enclosed, A/C 093, the plane we were flying, was last seen on fire at 1155. A/C 208 was last seen at 1300 hours, 5 minutes after the target which puts our aircraft one (1) hour from target. I was close enough from the border of the Netherlands and with the forest behind me, this Ford truck was the reason for my capture! The rest of my crew bailed out before me, landed in a town, and had no chance of escape.

I still wonder to this day why this Ford factory was not destroyed as Cologne, Germany was bombed frequently and a major target of our bombers, this couldn't be just luck! Also, the Ford truck design in the US was changed in 1941, and also changed in Germany, which proves my point. Ford Motor Company, USA and Ford Motor Company, Germany were still communicating during this time! Maybe you can explain this to me! ??