



My first knowledge of this fatal mission came at twelve noon on 4 July 1944, when our squadron commander delivered the pin point coordinates of the target to my tent and I was told to round up the men and get busy on the maps. The crew was gathered, after some difficulty, and informed of the target. Jim L., Gerry M, John B. and myself went to eat. After eating we went to the map room and outlined the route to the target and return and pinpointed the flak as reported by intelligence. Once we were agreed on a course Gerry M. the navigator and John B., the bombardier had to draw up separate maps. Mean while the other 4 men, Bill D., Ed J., Frank H., and Ellis S. were out at the ship giving it a thorough check.

At four thirty that afternoon we all went to weather briefing and were told our takeoff time and what cargo we were dropping to the underground. After briefing we rested until 9 o'clock, at which time we were due at the operations office. Here all the necessary equipment was handed out escape kit, chocolate bars, gum, parachute and life preserver. Each man checked his own thoroughly. At about nine- thirty we all piled into a truck and were driven to a dispersal area where our ship was. After a final check of the ship, each man to his specialty, we had a few minutes to sit around and talk. Since the day was the Fourth of July all the ships on the field were shooting off flares, so we obliged and joined in the celebration.

Take off time was near so we started the engines and let her warm up for a while. Out onto the runway I taxied, and with a final check of every thing I shoved the throttles forward and we began to roll. It wasn't long before we were airborne, made a circle around the field, and took up our correct heading. We were only a few minutes out when the waist gunner called up and said we had a gas leak. Smoking was ordered stopped and the engineer went back to investigate. He said the gas was siphoning out through the cap because it was too full. No one smoked for fifteen minutes as a precaution. After that everything went fine. It wasn't long before we hit the English coast and were out over the channel.

The weather was fine up till now. Ahead could be seen some scattered clouds starting to move in. The next thing I heard the bombardier say we were approaching the French coast and the usual evasive action was begun. Up a thousand feet, down five hundred and change course around ten degrees back and forth. Jim L., the copilot, and I used to keep up a running conversation on a hundred different topics, and this night was no exception. Over the French coast we hit a cloud formation and did not break out until we were smack over the middle of Rouen. This unfortunate town was being plastered by the R.A.F. at the time so we made haste to remove ourselves from the scene.

Huge fires and tremendous explosions could be seen as the town was taking another of its nightly beatings.

From Rouen we stayed beneath the clouds and got back on course. A little south of Paris the overcast started breaking up and the clouds became thin scattered. We were about thirty miles south of Paris when I spotted another plane. It was essing (S) underneath us. I remember telling Jim, sort of jokingly, that it didn't look like a B-24. He said it might be a B-25. The whole ship was alerted and the interphone was buzzing with speculation as to the type of ship. The tailgunner said it was a ME-110, and this brought a general agreement.

Our ship was not equipped with a ball turret, waist guns or nose turret. The purpose of our mission was to fly into occupied France, find our pinpointed target and drop the supplies we carried to the waiting underground agents. We flew only at night and usually only at that time of month when the moon was partial.

The moon was rather bright this night, and I figured it would be impossible to loose the ME 110 by hitting the deck and staying there. Up at about seven thousand feet there was some cloud cover. I thought if we could reach it we would loose the enemy plane. Up we went. Every thousand feet we would climb the enemy did likewise. We made the clouds and started evasive action. During the evasive action it was imperative that the navigator follow the changes in heading closely so he would know our position. The cloud cover was not really thick enough, but we all thought we had lost the ME 110. I remember saying to Jim, "I guess that lost him". Jim felt sure it did. We lost him all right, but he didn't lose us.

The ME 110 came in from five o'clock, medium low, and really sprayed the ship. He must have had some twenty-millimeter explosive shells in with fifty calibers . The bomb bay burst into flames and number two engine was hit and burning. The elevator control cables must have been hit because the ship started into a steep dive. The next minute I was working and praying furiously. I tried to level off the ship; ring the alarm bell; find my headset, which has been knocked off; check the instruments and try to grab my parachute, which was behind the seat. Between parts of the Hail Mary I screamed at the radio operator and engineer to "get the hell out' of the ship; get going". They had both grabbed fire extinguishers and were trying valiantly to put out the fire. I saw them both leave. I told Jim, the co-pilot, to get going. His last words were, "keep your hand on the alarm bell". I shouted "okay". When he jumped I thought everyone else was out so I started out myself. The flames were licking all around the bomb bay. I covered my face with one arm and pushed with the other..

The tail turret gunner did not get out. I was told by the French, who found his body, that he had been shot and his body was burned. The bombardier told me later that he and the navigator went as soon as the bell rang. The waist gunner said he lived because he was laying on the floor. We saw the bullets rip through the side of the ship. He said he figured the tail gunner was killed outright.

After I cleared the ship on my jump I could not find the ripcord. I tumbled over and over while I madly and frantically groped in the dark for it. I remember saying to myself during the fall, "I had better get systematic about this", then I went all around the outside of my chest type chute and found the handle. Of course it is always in the same spot, but I was so excited I couldn't think or feel. I must have fallen about two thousand feet before I pulled the ripcord. The ship was hit at seven thousand feet and I bailed out around four or five thousand feet. When the chute opened it snapped my neck and I saw red spots before my eyes.

The change from all the excitement to the peace and relative security of swinging slowly back and forth in a parachute was a sensation I shall never forget. At first I had the feeling I wasn't going down.

Then, as I neared the ground it seemed I was descending too rapidly. I feared for a while I was going to land on the burning ship which had hit with a terrific impact and explosion. Then it seemed I was going to land in the middle of a little village, but the wind kept blowing me back until I was over a clump of small trees. When I saw I was going to land in the trees I covered my face and put my feet together as I had been instructed at school. I crashed through the trees, which were about twenty feet high, and hit in a marshy area.

The moment I landed I took off my harness, along with the chute and life preserver and started to run. I should have hid my equipment, but I had no inclination to climb a tree in an attempt to retrieve my chute. I did not know the direction in which I ran, only that it was away from the burning plane. I ran a short distance and fell flat on my face in a swamp. I picked myself up and started off again. I ran part of the way in a little stream or irrigation ditch to throw the bloodhounds the Germans use to search my trail. I ran all night over hills, into valleys, crossing roads and through wheat fields. I had no gun and was fearful of the consequences if I were caught. During this headlong flight, I felt I wasn't covering enough ground in my escape so I tried a main highway. I thought I saw a man approaching from the opposite direction so I ran off the road into a wheat field and stayed there for nearly half an hour. While laying in the wheat field I remember trying to pick strands of wheat to cover myself. No one came towards me so I figured it was my imagination and started off again. This time I took a little side road and walked until almost sunrise. Then I found a small wood to hide out in. Here I tried to organize myself. I took out my escape kit and put each item in a pocket where it would be handy. I took the map provided in the escape kit and attempted to figure out where I was. This was not too successful. Every time a bird would fly through the trees and make a noise I would freeze up.

At about eleven that morning I decided I would try to get help. I sneaked back down to the little dirt road and hid in the bushes on the side of it. I was there only a short time when an old farmer in a cart passed by, but I was afraid to stop him. A little later another Frenchman came by. I called to him and motioned him into the bushes. "Je suis Americain, pouvey vous aider mois?" This was about the extent of my highschool French that I could recall. He answered rapidly in long sentences. I told him I did not understand. He asked me if I was wounded and told me to wait there in the bushes and he would return. I thought that perhaps he might go straight to the Germans, but that was a chance I had to take. He did not return, but sent his two sons. They brought food consisting of a stale loaf of bread; some wine in a filthy bottle and some canned dog meat. The sons gave me civilian clothes and I gave up my flight jacket and coveralls. The civilian clothes consisted of a white pullover shirt and a worn, faded blue suit. They then led me through a woods and wheat field down into a valley where the old man and his two sons lived.

I was taken right past the house and told to crawl into a cave he pointed out. Once in the cave I was covered with potato sacks and there I stayed for almost four hours. I was by now worn out, physically exhausted and in a state of anxiety thinking about the rest of my crew. One of the sons came back about three in the afternoon. He had two bikes and I was told to follow him. We rode for about an hour and a half and it was difficult for me keep up with him. We eventually came upon a lonely road where a truck was waiting. He shook my hand and waived goodbye.

Two men who in the truck came around to the back and told me to get in. They piled old tires and rags on top of me and started off. We drove about forty-five minutes before we came to a small town called Merreville. I was taken out of the truck and told to follow the one fellow through his garage and up into a hayloft. Here the real questioning began. The French underground took no chances on having a German agent slip into their ranks and I was not completely clear of suspicion. With the aid of two French-English dictionaries I was able to present my case to them. I gave my name, rank, serial number and stated that I was flying a Liberator painted completely black. My interrogators wanted to know my target and what supplies were aboard the ship, but I was not a liberty to tell them.

During the interrogation a woman from the house came up to the hayloft. She had some fried eggs, orange juice bread and water. This tasted like a turkey dinner. Later she brought some water and soap and a towel. With my little escape kit razor I shaved and cleaned up very well.

That night I was taken out of the hayloft to a house across the street. There a fine room with a big bed and clean white sheets awaited me. The family name of my protectors was Chevallier. I really slept that night. I was awakened about nine the next morning and served breakfast. A few patriots came in to shake my hand, and I was glad to shake theirs. That afternoon Pierre Chevallier came into my room and said that three men in my crew had been killed. He said their agents found the co-pilot dead with his body wrapped in his chute, and that the tail gunner was dead at his position in the ship. He did not know who the other dead man was. I gave him the names of the entire crew and he promised to find out all the information that was possible.

The following morning Pierre came into my room and told me that John B., Bill D., and Ed J. were accounted for and that he was sure only two crew members were killed. I remained at this house for four days. Everyone treated me well. One day another underground agent, Monsieur Plisson, brought his daughter, who was a medical student, to see me. She spoke English very well and with her help I was able to answer all the questions asked of me.

About five days after I was shot down Pierre Chevallier told me to follow him to his truck. I was driven to a large farm about eight miles from Merreville. There I was introduced to one of the organizers of the underground for that region. His name was Louis Biertot. He had a wife and two young children. The same night at this farmhouse I met up with John B., Ed J., and Bill D. and another pilot from a B-17 who had bailed out in Belgium in April. We had a big party. All the wine, cognac and champagne these had been saving were put out on the table and everyone had his fill. We sang French, English and American songs and, for a while at least, the fear, anxiety and danger was forgotten. We all stayed over that night. The next day we were split up in pairs. John B. and I went with Pierre Chevallier in his car, which he drove with stolen German gasoline. Bill D. and Ed J. were taken to another town, and the B-17 pilot stayed on at the farmhouse. On the way back from the farm Chevallier took us past the remains of our B-24. Only the twin tail boom remained intact. Next we were driven to a little cemetery in the small adjacent town of Autry. Here Pierre got out of the car and checked to see that there were no German guards around. He then motioned us to follow him and he led us to the graves of Jim L. and Ellis S. It was a very sad few moments while we looked upon the graves and thought how useless and wasteful wars were. The French had buried them with all the dignity and honor possible in an occupied country. The grave of each was covered with flowers, and over each a large tri-color flag gently waved. We left the cemetery quietly and sadly and returned to the house of Pierre Chevallier. Here we stayed for another week. The inactivity and hiding was getting on our nerves.

After a week we left Pierre's house and were taken to the home of another patriot named De Rosier. Here we were to stay for a week. Every day Monsieur Plisson's daughter, Michelene, would drop over and talk or play checkers. One day, when it was noticed how badly in need of exercise we were, the De Rosiers rounded up six bicycles and we all went for a ride in the country. We rode past many a German soldier and passed an airfield, which was a mass of bomb craters and wrecked buildings.

Two days later, when John B. and I were out walking in DeRosier's yard, I noticed a neighbor looking our way with much interest. I reported this to Madam DeRosier who said that the neighbor was suspected of being a collaborator. That night about twelve we both were awakened by the tramping of many feet. This was followed by loud, heavy rapping on the door. We both thought this was the end, but nothing happened. The next morning no explanation was given to us, but we were moved back to Chevallier's house. Here we stayed a few days. With each passing day we were getting more

impatient to be started on our escape. Then one evening around supper an agent dropped in and said we were to leave for Paris the next day. I felt happy though very nervous.

The next morning Madam Chevallier gave us clean shirts. These were much needed. We were set to leave the house at three-thirty that same afternoon. About two-thirty some of the members of the organization dropped in to give us a send-off. Wine and champagne flowed freely again and it was not until five-thirty that John and I were put into a car and driven to Etempes.

Etempes is a medium size town about fifteen miles north of Merreville. It was at the time the center of the German organization in France. In the town there were about six thousand German civilians and seven thousand German soldiers. We drove past a row of barracks housing the soldiers and into the center of the town to a house set back from the street. In this house we met the leader of the organization for the area. We also met the leader's wife and son (age 16). They were both very active agents. We ate at seven, and later that evening were taken to another house closer to the railroad station. While walking from one house to another we followed about one hundred feet behind the father and son so that if either they or we were stopped the Germans would have no evidence to connect us. The next morning at six, Monsieur Pointeau, the leader, called for us and gave us each a satchel and some French magazines. We followed him to the station and sat in an inconspicuous corner while he purchased the tickets. We were supposed to meet Ed J. and Bill D., but they never showed up. A few minutes before the train left we got on and pretended to read our magazines. Shortly after we started the conductor came around to collect the tickets and John couldn't find his. My heart was pounding right through my shirt, and I could see how scared he looked. Monsieur Pointeau gave John his ticket. Just before the conductor came to us John found his ticket and returned the other to Monsieur Pointeau.

For a while things went along okay until we made our first stop. There two hundred German soldiers came aboard. French railway cars have seats for three and they face each other. John and I were each at a window and Monsieur Pointeau sat next to John. Sitting along side of me was an old man who seemed quite harmless. Two German soldiers occupied the two vacant seats. They shoved right in, guns and all, and crowded us against the sidewall. I tried to act nonchalant and continue reading my magazine, but I could feel my armpits growing wetter and wetter. The apparently took no notice of us, and I hoped I was making the same impression. We were on the train about three hours before arriving at the Paris station. Here we got off and followed the usual distance behind our guide. As we left the gate I noticed a black uniformed S.S. trooper looking at me. I wanted to run but knew this would be foolhardy, so I kept at the same pace and passed by him going out the gate. We climbed a flight of stairs, turned right and entered a little coffee shop where we were motioned to sit at a certain booth.

A few seconds later Monsieur Pointeau came over with four other agents. We were introduced to a husband and wife team, a young married girl, whose husband was in a concentration camp, and another very beautiful girl. The beautiful one showed me an Air Corp shoulder patch she received from a former parachutist evadee. Wine was ordered and a few toasts were offered. All but the married girl left in a short while. Then we were motioned to leave and follow behind her at a short distance. We walked a long way through the streets and parks of Paris, and finally entered an apartment house. We went up five flights of stairs to the top and entered a small apartment. Here we met Madam Crystal. She was an old lady, about sixty-five and, as we found out later, we were the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth parachutists she helped escape. Here we also met a navigator who had bailed out in June over Nogent, and a gunner who had bailed out in May. Joe and Bill were their names.

The four of us slept in one room. Two of us slept in the bed and two on the floor. For two weeks we did nothing but eat and sleep, and the eating was rather meager. Breakfast consisted of bread, which was generally black, but occasionally brown, and coffee, which had almost everything and anything, it but coffee beans. I usually drank water. Dinner was macaroni and supper was macaroni fixed a little differently. Sometimes, for a treat, we had bean soup and some carrots. This did not happen often as food was very scarce. One day during the week a lady, who was American by birth but lived in France most of her life, brought us some fiction detective novels. This helped pass the time. While at this apartment we met Mademoiselle Genevieve who seemed to be a cashier for the organization. She took one of our escape photos and data on our features so she could have passports forged for us. My name was Paul Jacque LeFranc. I was a student who had been in a labor camp but was released due to very ill health. I was beginning to look the part more and more.

In the middle of the next week a fellow came and told us we must go with him to another house because four Americans living in one house was dangerous and too hard on the old lady. We said our good-byes and thanked Madam Crystal and followed our new guide. He had a bike and we walked behind. We must have walked for over an hour and went from one side of Paris to the other. At last we reached the apartment, entered and went up to the fifth floor. On entering the living room we fell into chairs and tried to relax our tired legs. No exercise for quite some time was having its affect on us. At this apartment we met Mimi, whose husband was in London. She was quite high up in the organization and rightly so for she was very capable. John and I stayed stayed at this apartment for about two weeks. I was invited to go with Mimi the first morning of our stay, and I did this for the entire two weeks. Sometime Mimi couldn't make it for one reason or another and I would go by myself. I learned the way very well and began to feel quite at ease out walking so early in the morning.

The eating situation was a little better here, and since Mimi spoke excellent English we got along very well. She had a friend in the organization named Janet and they took us out on many occasions. We visited Notre Dame Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triumph, Madeleine, and even went for walks up and down the Seine River. Each of our trips was quite eventful. On one, while riding in the subway a German soldier was accidentally knocked against me. He turned to me and said "Pardonney moi" and I replied "Pardonne". After the word was out I could have bitten my tongue off. I had received strict instructions from the girls that I was to act as a mute, and under no circumstances was I to speak. Luckily, the soldier appeared not to notice anything. We got off at the next stop just to play it safe.

Another interesting experience was my haircut in Paris. I was in need of one when I started on the mission, and by this time the situation was out of hand. Mimi felt that to have hair as long as mine was very noticeable. The fact that it was very blond also added to the trouble. Mimi decided that I should get a haircut and that she would take me. I was rehearsed very well. My fake passport and card was in my pocket and a beret was put on my head to make me look more French. This did not have the desired effect, and we all had a good laugh at my expense. I had to agree heartily that I looked like quite an idiot in the beret. It was decided that I would not wear the beret, and Mimi and I started off for the barber. I was to act dumb. By now this felt quite natural. As we neared the barber Mimi saw someone else was in the chair so we walked around the block a few times and entered the barbershop when it was empty. Mimi went straight to the barber and explained that I wanted a haircut but that I couldn't speak because I had been severely wounded during a bombing raid. Whether the barber believed this or not I don't know, but he gave me a good haircut. I felt better and a little less obvious.

As the two weeks were drawing to a close Genevieve came to the apartment and said it was all fixed up for us to make our escape over the Pyrenees mountains to Spain. As the day set for our leaving drew near we became very excited. The afternoon for our departure was set, but on that day a

member of the organization called up the apartment next to ours and left a message saying everything was okay and to be at rendezvous at seven that night. The lady who took the message got it mixed up, and she told Mimi that we were not to leave. We were very disappointed. That night after seven Genevieve and another fellow came charging into the apartment and wanted to know why we weren't at the rendezvous. Mimi started screaming at Genevieve for being so stupid as to leave an important message with a lady who didn't know what was going on. John and I were both so mad we could have killed someone. It was decided that we could not stay where we were any longer so we said our good-byes and went with Genevieve to her house where we stayed for the night.

The next day we walked back to Madam Crystal's where we were to wait for another train to Lyon and then to Spain. There was to be another train going south from Paris the following day. Towards evening we prepared to leave. Madam Crystal packed us a lunch, and after bidding her goodbye once more we followed another bicycle to the station. Once again we were sorely disappointed, for on arriving at the station we learned that there was no train and would be no more. The Air Force was really working over transportation lines.

Disgusted and feeling beat we again returned to Madam Crystal's. Here John and I decided we would take off on our own and meet the Americans as they advanced. I personally would have preferred to wait in Paris for the Americans, but John was eager to get going so I threw in with him. The underground agents wanted us to wait too, but it was decided that we would go and we stuck to it. The next morning at five A.M. we started out. We followed a guide to a different railroad station and he bought us tickets for a train to Versailles. At Versailles we left the train, thanked our guide and followed his directions to the road leading to Chartres. This was our first objective.

While walking through the outskirts of Versailles about forty ME 110s and FW 190s buzzed over head probably going up to meet our bombers. We walked and walked and walked, passing German trucks and soldiers on their way to Paris. After walking most of the morning we hitched a ride on the back of a truck. Shortly after another man in civilian clothes got on and started talking to us asking us questions. We needed a guide to aid us so John decided to tell him who we were. I had picked up a heavy club and was ready to kill him if he threatened to give us away. It turned out that he had escaped from a German labor camp and was on his way to see his relatives in Chartres. The three of us decided to go it together.

At Ablis we had to get off the truck and continue on foot. The man with us had a badly wounded right hand and his feet were raw from walking all the way from Germany. About one in the afternoon we stopped at a farmhouse for food but the owner would not help us. We went a little further and tried again. This time we were more fortunate. The occupants gave us a fine meal and let us rest there for an hour. Off we started again. My face was getting red and raw from dirt and sun and wind after being in a house for so long, but we had to keep going. About four in the afternoon our friend could hardly walk any further so we stopped at another farmhouse. Here the fine, charitable occupants bathed his feet and put some kind of ointment on and then bandaged them up. We started off again, but by now all of us were feeling real sick and weak from the sun and the walk.

About seven miles outside of Chartres a German officer came out from the bushes on the side of the road and asked us why we were going to Chartres. He had John by the arm and I thought this was it. John managed to mutter, "Mon pere" and it was apparent that because of this stupid and arrogant officer we would now soon be dead or in a prison camp. The German officer kept up the questioning, but we let our newfound guide do all the answering. I believe that the German did not speak French too fluently and rather than appear stupid he just answered "oui" to everything. A second German soldier on the side of the road called the officer and we continued on.

We went about another mile when another soldier coming from the opposite direction put up his hand and motioned us back. We kept on walking and he again warned us to stop. Not heeding this sign either, we continued on. Then he went for his gun that was in a holster at his side. We decided it was time to stop so went into a siding by the road and lay down. There were about twenty other French people there, all of who wanted to get to Chartres. From where we were laying we could see about a hundred Germans setting up gun emplacements right next to us. They would walk past us and over us and never heed us much. I was trying to do some inconspicuous spying, but couldn't learn much. After about an hour of rest we decided it was best to make Chartres by getting off the road and continuing through the fields. We got away and walked through the wheat fields staying away from the clumps of trees where the Germans were getting ready for a stand. Once, as we approached a small dirt road a car came by filled, from all appearances, with high-ranking officers. We ducked down in the wheat and waited for them to pass. We then continued on. As we hit the outskirts of Chartres we saw once again the damage and desolation war brings. By now we were almost exhausted so we stopped at a house and begged for some water. The woman didn't trust us nor want to help us, but our French partner prevailed upon her and she gave us a pitcher of water and we took turns drinking.

Leaving there we continued through the battered streets passing Germans who were retreating. When we got to the center of the city our French friend left us. We had been planning on him to make connections for us, but I guess he figured we were too hot to handle. We started wandering the streets friendless, tired and hungry. Just then an alert started and we felt lost. We saw all the people running someplace so we just naturally followed. It led us to a huge cave built in the rocks. We entered along with the rest and proceeded to sweat out another air raid. We felt very conspicuous and guilty but no one seemed to notice us. After the alert we left and went down by a little stream that passed through the city. There we both flopped on the ground by a tree and tried to figure out our next move. By this time neither of us cared whether we were caught or not. John noticed a Frenchman who was looking at us, and after a quick decision we approached him and told him our problem. He turned out to be a Spanish loyalist refugee who was eager to help us. He spoke a little English. He took us to a house near the railroad station, which had been previously blasted so I felt it was pretty safe. He brought us into a room and locked the door. He told us we must be very quiet because the Germans were still living upstairs.

He left us with the promise to return with some food. Both of us fell on the bed with utter exhaustion. He came back a little later with an omelet and some bread, and we ate hungrily. We spent the next day and a half in comparative solitary confinement with a visit from our loyalist friend and his buddy. Late that night he came dashing up and told us we would have to leave because the Germans were rounding up all loyalists and taking them with them. The next morning, bright and early, we followed our friend once again through the streets of Chartres to another house where we remained until the liberation. The next five were a mixture of joy and sadness and confusion. We were treated as well as circumstances would permit, but the closer we came to freedom the more anxious we became. It seemed every few hours a Frenchman would run in and shout that the Americans were here. We would make a dash for the window only to be dragged back and told that it wasn't quite true. The Americans were close but had not yet entered the town.

On the evening of the fourth night an agent came in and told us the German were going to blow up the bridge which was near by. He desired to move us to a safer hideout but it could not be done. He said he would return before the time set for the explosion and help us prepare for it as best we could. The rest of the day was spent trying to figure out our chance for survival. About nine that night the Frenchman came back and said the blast was set for twelve midnight. After much discussion it was decided the safest place was under the bed. We went under about eleven-thirty and started to sweat it out. The minutes dragged on and I was sure that if the explosion didn't kill us a heart attack would. Twelve o'clock came and went, then twelve fifteen and half past. Something had gone wrong with the



German plan we thought so we came out from under the bed and passed out exhausted on top of it. Around two-thirty a terrific roar went up and the few remaining whole windows came flying in. Out of the bed we went, John beat me under but not by much. We were lucky we were not cut by the glass or hit by falling plaster. The remainder of the night we could hear small firearms and much confusion in the street below, but we were not allowed to take a look

Morning came and another Frenchman ran in and said the Americans were there. We were skeptical at first but hopeful, and soon we knew it was true. Many of the townspeople ran in and this time took us with them out into the street, which was already thronged with people. My first sight of the American liberation came when a half-track turned the corner off to my right and continued right down past us. "Hi, Yank" I yelled to a corporal sitting up on top with a rifle on his lap, "How's everything going?" He answered, "You speak pretty good English." I replied "I'm from New York, and it's great to see you". He looked dumbfounded and was soon out of shouting range. The people in the streets were going crazy with joy, kissing, shouting, and singing. My benefactors were pulling John and I along shouting that we were American flyers and they had hid us out.

The fighting was not completely over. The Germans still held the Cathedral in the center of Chartres. It was not until late that afternoon that it was cleaned out. We were taken to the Prefect's quarters in the center of town and there turned over to an American Colonel. We expected a grand, triumphant welcome, but were sorely disappointed. He said he was too busy to handle our case and we would have to hitch a ride back behind the lines and have intelligence take care of us.

While in the Prefect's square a Frenchman came up to me and motioned that I follow him. I was tired, but figured I'd find out what he wanted. He led me to what looked like an old stable and opened the door. There, inside, were the bodies of at least 15 men that had been riddled with bullets. It was a human slaughterhouse. It made me feel very ill.

In another section of the square the women collaborationists were being brought in and stood against the wall. It was thought they were going to be shot, for the underground was merciless in its hour of revenge. However each one in turn was made to sit on a wooden box and her hair was completely shaved off. One very old lady was bleeding from the head and mouth, but, she too was given the treatment. They had been our enemies more treacherous than the Germans, but I could not stand seeing this done to any woman. I turned away, and with John started on the way home. The road ahead was easy now for it was filled with friends. We could let our guard down, relax and live again. At divisional headquarters we were able to send cablegrams that we were safe and healthy and would soon be home.

As I write finis I would like to say that I mourn exceedingly the loss of my two friends. Also that I sincerely feel that those who wait at home and hope and pray for our safe return suffer far more than we for whom the prayers are intended.