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PAGE SIXTEEN

With the R.C.A.F. at Dieppe

F/L J. M. Godfrey was a P.P.O. pupil on Course 5, the last officer class to graduate from this Unit before the formation of the Air Training Plan. The following story was contained in a letter to his wife, and is reprinted from The Peel Gazette.

Thursday, August 20, 1942.
6 a.m.

Here I am after the most hectic and exciting day of my life. We were in the thick of things at Dieppe yesterday and no doubt you are anxious to know how your husband made out.

The story really starts with our being suddenly pulled back to our home station from air firing last Friday on an hour's notice. We knew then that something big was brewing. However, nothing happened; but other squadrons started to pour in to the station from aerodromes farther away from France. Then, on Monday, we were all briefed for a sweep to escort Fortresses to Rouen. As we came out of the briefing room, who should be standing outside but Lord Louis Mountbatten with a lot of big shot Army, Navy and Air Force officers, obviously waiting for us to get out so that they could have a conference. We all immediately thought that a second front was going to be established.

Then, on Tuesday, we were on readiness at 5. We patrolled up and down out to sea to stop any Jerrys coming over that might see the preparations afoot. Several were intercepted and we chased them back out to sea before they reached the coast. I landed at 20 to 7 and took off again at 10 to 7 after refueling, and didn't land again until 8.30.

I was in bed by 11 and was awakened rudely at 3. I jumped into my clothes and went downstairs for breakfast. We had an egg, which was a great treat and by 4 a.m. we were all in the flight waiting for instructions. We were told that it was to be a Canadian Army landing at Dieppe and that we were to stand by for further instructions.

The names went up for the second show and I was down to fly No. 2 to John —, who was leading us. I was glad that I was going with John because he had had about thirty sweeps under his belt and was a very cool and cagey pilot.

We waited around about two hours and finally the call came through. We were to escort Hurricane-Bombers on a low level attack on gun positions to the left (i.e., the East) of the town which hadn't been knocked out and which were holding up the landing at that point. Of all the jobs that could have been assigned to us, this was undoubtedly the worst. I didn't feel at all happy, but it wasn't until it was all over and we were talking over a beer last night that I realized that I wasn't the only one who wasn't feeling exactly elated at the prospect.

We took off at 10 o'clock and met the eight Hurri-Bombers over the coast of England opposite Dieppe. There was one other squadron of Spits with us and away we went. It was to be a low level attack and we flew over the water about five feet above the waves, cruising quite slowly at about 200 M.P.H. About five miles off the French coast we gradually opened up so that we hit the coast going flat out to the right of the town. Here there is quite a high hill which slopes down to the water. Up over the hill we went, right down on the deck. We were to the right of the Hurri-Bombers, but the other squadron didn't come in, but waited a mile or so offshore for us to come out. We went inland



Flight-Lieutenant J. M. Godfrey

about three miles, weaving amongst trees, and I don't think I was ever more than five feet from the deck. The lower you are, the safer, because they can't see you coming and you are over their heads and behind trees before they get a shot at you.

After about three miles we swung to the left. I was following John, slightly to the right and about 75 yards behind. All this time we were passing over Jerrys who were trying to take pot shots at us. After we had made our turn to the left, we were in a bit of a gully with trees on either side and no trees ahead. The ground started to rise, and there, at the top of the rise, was a big flak position. We were going so fast that we were on it before we realized it. All hell was breaking loose. There were at least six heavy ack ack guns and I don't know how many machine guns, etc., blazing away at us from point blank range. We had come right up a funnel completely exposed. The next thing I saw was the tail of John's just blow away and the fuselage break in two right behind the cockpit. His kite seemed to go slowly over on its nose. I didn't see it hit the ground as I was past, but one of the other lads saw it and it really spread itself all over the ground. I don't suppose poor John even knew he was hit before it was all over. I weaved wildly to the left and the next thing I knew I was in the midst of the Jerrys. We swung again to the left and headed for the sea. There was a ridge between us and the sea where all the Jerry batteries and ack ack were, that had held up the landing. The ground was cleared for about a mile before we got over the ridge and all hell broke loose again. Over the ridge we went, absolutely flat out, praying to God that our engines would hold out. As we hit the sea, we fully appreciated the reception we were having. There was literally a shower of splashes all around us from ack ack, which

WINGS OVER BORDEN, OCTOBER, 1942

followed us about three miles out to sea. Why I wasn't hit, I don't know. I was following up in the rear of the Jerrys, but soon passed them and then swung around looking for Jerrys that might bounce us as soon as we got out of the flak. The squadron that stayed outside were looking after them, however, so I remained on one side, weaving like mad and expecting to be jumped by a 190 at any time.

About fifteen miles off the English coast I suddenly heard the C.O. yell, "Red 4, you are pouring glycol out of your rad. Climb like hell." Then a few seconds later, "Bail out Red 4." Then, "Nice going Red 4." The C.O. and a couple of other pilots managed to direct a launch to where the pilot was and he was picked up just forty minutes later. His chute evidently just opened before he hit the water and he barely managed to climb up high enough to bail out before his engine quit. He was very lucky, as it must have been a small hole to allow him to get as far as he did and he was also lucky that the C.O. happened to see the leak. The pilot was a flight sergeant in our flight and is none the worse for his experience. Of the six of us who went out from our flight, only four of us came home.

About 1.40 the phone rang again. This time we were escorting 24 Hurries after the same target, and we were the only squadron of Spits going. Evidently the first bunch of Hurries had not wiped out the battery and there was to be another crack at it. We didn't feel at all happy, and were considerably relieved when the G.C. said that we needn't go right in with the Hurries, but stay over the shore and cover their withdrawal. When we were about a mile off shore from Dieppe, we climbed to about 500 feet. There were Focke-Wulf 190's all over the place around 2,000 feet and we were the only Spits at our height. Some 190's started to dive down on the Hurries. We tore after them and they, seeing us coming, started to break away. Just then someone yelled "Red section, break." There were some 190's on our tail. We went into a steep turn to the right and shook them off. I lost the others for a few seconds. The flak started to come up at us in great volume. Red balls were shooting past my nose uncomfortably close. I spotted my No. 1 and joined up with him. Just then the C.O. yelled "Let's get out of here." We dove down onto the sea, going all out and weaving as hard as we could. The Hurries were about two miles out to sea on the way home. We managed to keep the Jerrys busy so that none of them had been attacked. We stayed with them on the way home, weaving around them, with our heads turning about 120 to the minute, looking for Huns. However, none chased us back and we landed with the whole squadron intact.

The C.O. had a hole in his aileron about half a foot square from flak and I had a bit of shrapnel through the fuselage below my seat.

The weather started to close in and we were released about 6. We were in the midst of baths, shaving, etc., when we were told to get back to the flights immediately. The Jerrys were taking advantage of the bad weather to bomb us. We all took off again but the weather was so bad we couldn't locate any. One JU 88 flew over the aerodrome just as we took off, but we lost it in the clouds and rain. Finally, about 9 o'clock we were through for the day and went up and had some dinner. I was in bed by 11 p.m. and up again at 4 a.m.

It is now 2 p.m. This letter has been interrupted by a scramble after some Jerrys. We chased them forty miles out to sea, but couldn't catch them. We are going on another sweep this afternoon and I hope to get a good night's sleep tonight at last.

—RCAF—

HODGE PODGE

A woman is necessarily an evil but he that gets the most tolerable one is lucky.

Note on Hitler

The people have always some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness . . . This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears he is a protector.

In the early days of his power he is full of smiles, and promises, and he salutes everyone whom he meets.

When the tyrant has disposed of foreign enemies by conquest or treaty, and there is nothing to fear from them, then he is always stirring up some war or other, in order that the people may require a leader.

Has he not also another object which is that they may be impoverished by payment of taxes, and thus compelled to devote themselves to their daily wants and therefore less likely to conspire against him?

See the happy moron
He doesn't give a damn
I wish I were a moron
My God, perhaps I am.

I ain't agoin to have mother th'n three children. I read in an Almanac that every fourth pusson borned into the world is a Chinaman.

The surest way to prevent a war is not to fear it.

Along the line our signal ran:
"England expects that every man
EACH day will do his duty."

Being asked whether it was better to marry or not, Socrates replied, "Whichever you do, you will repent it."

A Roman divorced from his wife being highly blamed by his friends who demanded, "Was she not chaste? Was she not fair? Was she not fruitful?" Holding out his shoe, he asked them whether it was not new and well made. "Yet," added he, "none of you can tell where it pinches me."

A liar should have a good memory.
Every day should be passed, as if it were to be our last.

Many receive advice, few profit by it.
R.H.R., R.A.F.



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PAGE SEVENTEEN



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WINGS OVER BORDEN, OCTOBER, 1942