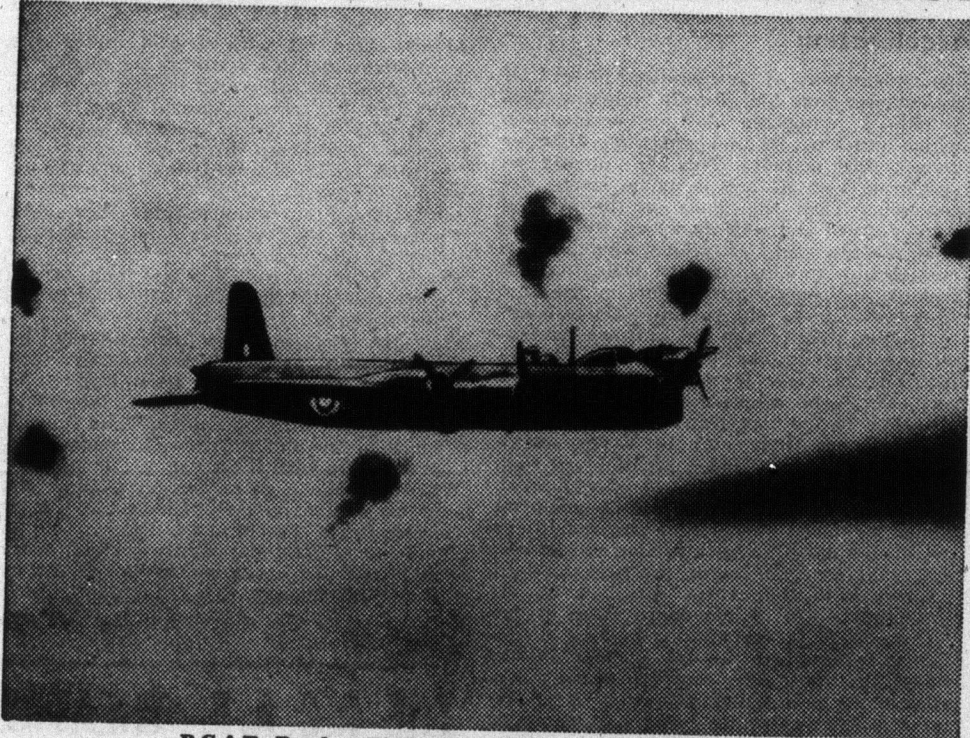


A TAIL GUNNER'S STORY

From Canadian Air Cadet



R.C.A.F. Bomber Finds Target Through Cloud of Flak

I am going to tell you something about the life of a tail gunner in one of our heavy night bombers. But if you expect a long catalogue of thrilling incidents, you will be disappointed. We certainly have our excitements—we get shot up, iced, and sometimes fed up—but for the most part our outings lack the Hollywood element.

A tail gunner is part of a crew, and this crew's life dominates not only his flying hours, but his whole existence.

In our crew the captain and second pilot were Scots; the two wireless operator air gunners were from Canada and the Irish Free State, while the navigator came from the West Indies; and I'm an Englishman.

The two other things that are all-important to a gunner are his turret and his guns. He is entirely responsible for their upkeep and efficiency, and he nurses them as a woman does her child. Daily he cleans them, fills the ammunition boxes, looks to the sighting. As to his turret, it is his home for all his flying hours. He's practically always working in the dark. At first, one is all at sixes and sevens. One puts down the loading handle or the spanner or the dummy round, and cannot find it again. One bangs one's head and tears one's hands. I have shed good blood, not to mention flesh, in my turret. But after a bit it becomes almost lovingly familiar. One knows the exact peculiarities, the strains and stresses of each fitting, and each seems to have a personality which one regards with affection even in its most stubborn moments.

I'll take you with us tonight on an ordinary sortie over Germany. So settle down in the seat, adjust your flying helmet, plug into the inter-communicating set—and there you are. Your parachute is hung up just behind you and you've locked the turret doors. As is probably well known, our turrets are power-operated, swinging easily in any direction, and so you test your turret, moving it to and fro by pressing on a pair of handles, rather like bicycle handles. And you finally load and cock the guns, putting on the safety catches, because one may

meet brother Boche at any moment. All this makes you feel rather hot, because knowing you may fly high, you've got on a couple of pullovers, a leather Irvine suit, which is fur-lined, leather gauntlets with silk linings and heavy flying boots. You apply your body gingerly to the seat. Seven hours is a good long sit. I can assure my listeners that the last few months have made me a connoisseur of contours.

Then you switch over your "intercom" and speak to the captain to show it's working all right; and you hear the others doing the same, for you are all on the same circuit. In this way you get a fair idea of what is going on all round the aircraft. You can picture each member of the crew doing his job from the report he gives or the instructions he receives.

The striking thing about a tail turret is the sense of detachment it gives you. You're out beyond the tail of the plane and you can see nothing at all of the aircraft unless you turn sideways. It has all the effects of being suspended in space. It sounds, perhaps, a little terrifying, but actually it is fascinating. The effect it has on me is to make me feel that I am in a different machine from the others. I hear their voices. I know that they are there at the other end of the aircraft, but I feel remote and alone.

Now we are rising slowly over the familiar, darkened landmarks below. A pause, and we have crossed the coast and we ask the captain's permission to fire a burst into the sea, just to make assurance doubly sure as regards the serviceability of our guns. Out at sea, away on my beam, I suddenly see another aircraft; a twin-engine plane flying parallel to us. It is a long way off. Can it be a Messerschmitt 110? I report to the captain and keep it in view, but as it swings in I recognize the high familiar tail fin of the Wellington. Soon it has disappeared again in the darkness. Good hunting.

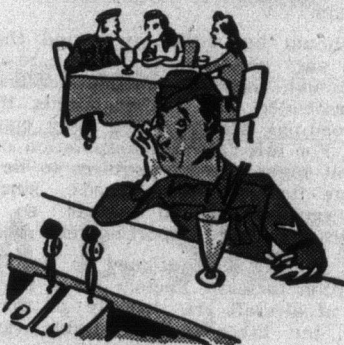
Time passes—we are over the Dutch coast and soon we are flying high above a bank

of clouds. It is lit from below by German searchlights and this gives it a sort of opaque glow. Our captain comes down just above it, so that we can have cover if it is needed. Ten minutes later we are past the clouds, climbing again. We have been this way before and we are getting to know it quite well. Now the Germans are after us with their searchlights—and pretty good they are, too. Out in front there is a flak barrage, otherwise known as an anti-aircraft barrage. You and I in the tail turret can't see the barrage yet. The searchlights keep crossing and crossing. Now one's caught us. But no. After holding us for a moment it passes. Two minutes later, however, they get us good and proper. And very confusing it is, too. You feel a cross between a fly on an arc lamp and a man whose clothes have been pinched while he was bathing. But, of course, it's a good deal worse for the captain, who's flying the aircraft.

We turn and twist, hoping to get clear, and—now the party's starting!—here comes the flak. Personally the German flak has never worried me very much. Perhaps I've been lucky. You can see the pyrotechnics coming bursting up at you, and going off all around you, with a sense of detachment.

Well, we are getting pretty close to the target now, and I can hear the navigator and the captain chattering away over the "inter-com," but actually there is no need to worry about spotting our target tonight, because some more of our bombers have been there first and the factory we're after is blazing away nicely. It's a terrible temptation to sit and watch the bombs dropping. But really we oughtn't to, because we may be attacked at any moment and the rear gunner's job is to watch for their attack, not ours. Still, let's have a peep or two out of the corner of our eye. The first stick seems a bit wide, but the second hits the target square as far as one can judge, and adds to the blaze. "Whoo-pee!" shouts the second pilot. "Whoo-pee!" shouts back the captain, and "Whoopee!" shout you and I from the back.

What a Life!



The girls didn't go for this soldier on leave in spite of the stripe he had on his sleeve. It's all because he has ways he should mend— he has to perspire, but he need not offend.

Bath tonight with LIFEBUOY

The ONE soap especially made to prevent "B.O." (Body Odor)

ALBERT and the HARVARD

With Apologies All Round

There's an R.C.A.F. Station called Borden That is noted for rubble and muck, Where Albert Ramsbotham were posted, Which he said were just like his luck!

A bright little lad were young Albert, His flying on "Tigers" were swell, He'd got "very good" in his log book So tha' know that he must have done well.

A keen little lad were our Albert, He soon found the way to his flight And found the instructors all dormant, A truly somnolent sight!

He went up to the nearest instructor And showing not morsel of fear, He bent down towards sleeping figure And shouted, "I've come!" in his ear! Instructor leapt up from his stupor Did two flick half rolls and a bunt, Returning once more to the parachute rack, He landed with kind of a grunt.

He picked himself up sort of sheepish And glaring as if he were mad, He picked up a spare seven hundred And made a wild swipe at the lad. Th' commotion aroused Flight Commander Who, to fill up his forms had to know "His name and his age and profession, And to which public school did he go?" With all these formalities over Our Albert said, "What about trip?" Instructor said "Jump into Harvard And I'll take thee up for a flip!"

"Break tha' own ruddy neck," said instructor, "Tha'll get no more chance to break mine, And before tha' goes sign seven hundred, And IF tha' comes down seven nine!" You could tell Albert knew vital actions, For, putting the flaps fully down, He loosened th' throttle nut slightly, And raised "undercart" on th' ground. Duty Pilot had viewed the occurrence And didn't know what to do next, So he 'phoned up the C.I. and told him, And C.I. said, "Eh, I am vexed!"

So Albert was sent on to C.O. Who said, "What's all this 'ere todo? I hear that tha's been and pranged Harvard That was straight out of Maintenance, too." Young Albert took purse from his pocket, "I'll pay for't now if I may."

C.O. said, "Harvards cost thousands! We'll have to stop some of tha' pay." Now this made our Albert feel gloomy, He'd nobbut five bob in the bank; He'd given three bob for a Spitfire And promised two bob for a tank. Eventually all was decided, That to clear up this horrible mess C.O. must send recommendation That Albert must try C.F.S.

—D. C. WALLINGTON in "The Penhold Log."

SPORTS DAY, AUGUST 26, 1942

At 1330 hours the starting gun will put into swing a complete list of track and field events on SPORTS DAY, August 26. The individual champions will share in a generous list of prizes and in addition the Trophies and Challenge Cups will be up for inter-Squadron competition. Guests will be welcome for the Day's program, which will be terminated by a Monster Dance in the evening.

Qualifying heats will be run off for each squadron during the week of August 17, so keep your eyes open for further announcements. And in the meantime, men, get those legs limbered up. It is reported that one squadron already has its ace shot-putter working out at night under cover of darkness, to spring a surprise upon the present holders of The Breadner Shield.

—RCAF—

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

(Continued from Page 2)

government from violence to persuasion"—how much progress can you see in a so-called new social order which turns the clock of human destiny back five thousand years and more. Back to slavery! Back to a tyranny which suffering millions groaned and died beneath the hot Egyptian sun, and thousands of sweating backs were lashed into bleeding ribbons by the thongs of those brutal taskmasters of Antiquity.

There is nothing new in slavery! This is the return of a very old order of slavery for all mankind. Only the finality that modern science enables the oppressors to stamp upon the necks of their crushed and bleeding victims in a dozen conquered lands today is new in an age of ruthless totalitarianism.

There is little new—and less efficient in an unholy social order that was created by rapacious and sadistic monsters to rape and pillage, to torture, destroy and massacre. If such a machine is efficient, how came it then to allow thousands of its very elite to die miserably in the cruel blue frost of a Russian winter?

Has not our world proven itself more efficient? Recollect that it was not created for war but for love, life, laughter and the pursuit of happiness. That was and is the only kind of world we wish to live in. When the German people, in a moment of despair, chose Hitler, they threw away the keys to freedom—forever! We have wisely retained in the sovereign will of a free people the right to change our world with the changing times as gradually as the rising sun melts into the noonday zenith. And we use ballots, not bullets.

Judged by dark German standards of blood and terror our world is too soft and pleasant to survive. Judged by our eternal standards of light and love and laughter it will survive for it is an eternal law of the universe that only the good can survive—all evil things carry within them the seeds that result in their destruction. Must a good world die because evil forces prove themselves more powerful to destroy than we are to defend?

We of the R.C.A.F. know this must not, can not be! For this we enlisted. Thousands of our fellow servicemen overseas stand ready to die at a moment's notice to preserve this good world of decent things. They count it a privilege to be of the right age and in the right place at this most crucial hour in humanity's history to contribute their all toward the banishment of this hideous nightmare of a world without hope forever from the green earth.

We in Canada can do no less. There is only one question to be answered. Will it help to win the war? If so, there is no job so large, none so tedious, nor none so difficult into which we cannot and must not fail to put our all. For team play on the station means team play in the air. And team play in the air, and on land and over the sea means ultimate victory so that you and I and all of us will be enabled with God's help to pass on to our children and to their children, not the chains of slavery but the pleasant smiling world we love so well.