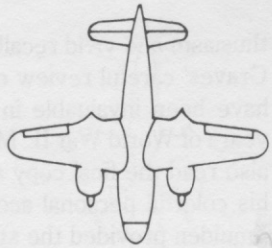


Preface



The call "*bail out*" and the ugly sound of the bell used to signal "abandon ship" are probably the most dreaded sounds to a crewman of any aircraft.

I never heard those sounds except in dry run drills. Fortunately? Yes, very. The sturdy Marauder, in which I spent over 800 hours, never failed our crew to the extent we had to abandon it. We came back from missions with holes in the wings, holes in the cockpit, severed hydraulic lines, and other souvenirs of the German 88mm's, but none that stopped this great airplane from bringing us home.

This book is the story of my affair with the much maligned and criticized Martin B-26, officially called the Marauder. It is not a history of the aircraft. Nor is it a story of its role in World War II, although some of each is a part of my experience. It is a story of a young man of 24 who wanted no part of any war or preparation for war, but one who, once caught up in the military draft, sought to make the most of the experience.

Trained as a company supply clerk at old Fort Lee, Virginia, and winding up a chauffeur at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, didn't seem like much of a challenge. Why not learn to fly? I had never been in an airplane, but it would be different and more exciting than filling out forms in the Quartermaster Corps.

Since the Marauder came to be such an integral part of my war experience, I have coordinated its development with my journey from reluctant civilian to enthusiastic navigator and back to a more knowledgeable and experienced civilian.

My story obviously is intertwined with that of other members of *Tom's Tantalizer's* crew. Their suggestions, comments, corrections and encouragement have been a vital key to that portion of my life. George Eldridge's fantastic memory, Dorr Tippen's en-

thusiasm and vivid recall, Tom Johnson's encouragement and John Graves' careful review of facts and reading of the final manuscript have been invaluable in recording events of those unforgettable years of World War II. Major General Robert M. Stillman (Retired) also read the final copy and made helpful suggestions. In addition, his colorful personal account of the second disastrous mission to Ijmuiden provided the story of the turning point in the Marauder's use in Europe. Many personal friends gave encouragement and suggestions. I especially appreciated my wife reading the entire manuscript for continuity and interest. Keeping tab on my grammar and sentence structure, my daughter, Susan, and my secretary, Beverly Hollje, who also typed the final draft, made many necessary corrections to the manuscript.

The public relations department of Martin Marietta Aerospace provided valuable information and photographs, and some of the material in this book has been published previously by Challenge Publications, Inc. The Air Force Museum and the 136 1st Audiovisual Squadron, Arlington, Virginia, provided several photographs and helpful information about the Marauder. Peyton Magruder, designer of the Marauder, was an inexhaustible storehouse of information and stories. His review of Chapter 1 was especially helpful as was his contribution of photographs.

Carl H. Moore

pilot but a bit bored with shooting landings and cruising over north Louisiana. For excitement he would see how close he could come to cattle, horses, or farmers on the ground. His buzzing became well known, and finally a complaint was filed. As a result, Lt. Young was hauled before a court martial. During the trial his crew chief was called to testify. He was giving full support to Lt. Young's ability and finally the prosecutor asked, "Sergeant, what would you do if Lt. Young said he was going to fly through a barn whose doors were open on both sides?"

Without hesitation the crew chief replied, "How wide are the doors?"

Verdict? Send Lt. Young and his crew to Europe (which is what he wanted anyway). Leaving Barksdale with his Marauder loaded to the hilt for overseas, he climbed a few thousand feet, cut one engine, feathered the prop, and buzzed the tower on one engine.

My personal encounter with Lt. Young was much later at an air base in France. He was up in an L-4 (Piper Cub) and caught four of us walking from operations to our quarters. He repeatedly had us "hitting the dirt" as he chased us with the L-4. We didn't really think he could hit us, but we couldn't be sure.

In retrospect, a flight from Tyler to Reading, Pennsylvania, reflects the progress we have made in our knowledge of weather. The father of a member of the ground crew was ill, and Tom Johnson was assigned to fly him to Reading, Pennsylvania. I went as navigator. We flew east to Atlanta, Georgia, then up the East Coast to avoid the mountains. On the leg from Tyler to Atlanta, I began to get unbelievable ground speeds-over 400 mph. Even with a good tail wind this was out of reason, but there it was. Returning, we encountered the reverse with ground speeds that seemed like we were standing still. Today, this would be no mystery. Apparently, we caught a jet stream that was much lower than usual.

This time spent flying out of Tyler had a special significance to me. It was while stationed here that I met Sue Watkins, a wonderful, beautiful girl from East Texas. We were married in 1945 when I returned from overseas.

A WINNING TEAM

The assignment of men to the different crews was largely in the hands of the pilots working with the Commanding Officer and Operations Officer. I flew with several pilots and got to know them quite well, and even met some of their families. As time neared for our next move, I flew more and more with Lt. Tom Johnson and when



Fig. 3-3. Here's our combat crew: Back row, l. to r: S/Sgt. Charles W. Calkins, Turret Gunner; S/Sgt. Joseph Castoro, Tail Gunner; T/Sgt. Dorr E. Tippens, Radio Operator and Waist Gunner. Front row, l. to r: Major Tom Johnson, Pilot; Lt. George Eldridge, Bombardier; Lt. Carl H. Moore, Navigator. Frank Wellms, Copilot and Sgt. L. O. Thompson who were part of our crew on the flight to England are shown in a picture in Chapter IV.

we returned to Lakeland in December 1943, I was assigned to his crew (Fig. 3-3).

Pilot — Johnson

This is a good time to meet the crew of *Tom's Tantilizer*, a name given to our plane by the ground crew. Thomas F. Johnson, pilot and "Head honcho", was a first lieutenant when he joined our group in Tyler. About six feet tall, slender, quiet and soft spoken, Tom was an easygoing guy. Like most of us, Tom was in this was to get it over in a hurry and retrun to civilian life. His wife, Mary, and young son, Tim, were waiting for him back in Batavia, New York. Tom was an excellent pilot. He treated the Marauder with respect but never failed to ask it to do what was needed—more power, fly on one engine, fly with flak damage—or whatever the situation demanded. His steady hand on the wheel during bomb runs was a critical factor in our crew's success. While he obviously enjoyed flying, he exhibited none of the show off or daredevil tendencies sometimes found in pilots.

Copilot — Willms

Lt. Frank Willms, from Coffeeville, Kansas, relatively new to the Marauder, joined us at Tyler. He stayed with us until he was

checked out in England as "first pilot" and assigned his own crew. (On many of our combat missions a VIP flew as copilot.) Frank was a good pilot, young, eager and anxious to learn. Since he did not fly with us very long, I did not get to know him very well.

Bombardier—Eldridge

George W. Eldridge, second lieutenant and bombardier, hailed from Alma, Kansas. Of average height and weight, he was single and, like most bachelors, was interested in all pretty girls. His hobbies included motorcycles, and he had done his share of racing. George disliked mistakes with a passion but also had a sense of humor that tempered his conversation. As a bombardier, he was the best! He could spot aiming points unseen by others and zero his Norden in on them with unerring accuracy. He was the sharpest critic of my navigation and at the same time my most reassuring companion in the nose of the Marauder. Navigation was strictly by pilotage and often we would have a margin of only a mile or two in our course to avoid flak. Visibility was sometimes limited, and from 12,000 feet it was easy to overlook a check point or to wander off course just enough to catch a blast from the enemy's 88's. George and I sometimes disagreed about our position. In fact, we often thought that if the rest of the crew could hear us arguing about our position, they would have bailed out. I appreciated George very much. With 36 planes carrying more than 200 men following my lead, I wanted all the help I could get.

Radio and GEE Operator—Tippens

T/Sgt. Dorr E. Tippens from Indianapolis, Indiana, was our radio operator on most of our missions. Dorr was tall and lanky and as a radio operator there was none better. He could get a message through any time and he amused himself by listening to other operators in the squadron trying to do the simplest tasks with the radio. He quickly learned to operate the "Gee" box—an early radar device—and assisted the navigator and pilot in determining the plane's position, particularly when cloud cover obscured the ground. Also, he was the only gunner in our squadron to score a "probable" on an enemy fighter and to win the Distinguished Flying Cross. T/Sgt. Tippens was not assigned to our crew until we were overseas. I became acquainted with Dorr (and his wife, Doris,) after the war at Purdue University where we were both students.

Radio Operator—Thompson

For our flight across the Atlantic, Sergeant L.O. Thompson was our radio operator. He was assigned to another crew when we became operational.

An extra comment on Sgt. Thompson seems appropriate. Most men rarely admitted fear even under fire. It was not that each of us wasn't afraid at times and secretly wondered, "Will I ever return to the States and to those I love and who mean so much to me?" But these emotions rarely showed. Perhaps we built a wall around that feeling or pushed it back into our subconscious. To the world around us we were out to win the war and get back home as soon as possible. I do not remember consciously thinking that I might not survive the war. I have met many others who expressed the same thought.

Sgt. Thompson was one who showed his fear. He was a very religious man. He read his Bible often during the trip across the ocean. I don't know his background, but he never seemed comfortable. Perhaps it was a premonition for when flying with another crew on an early mission, he went down in a mid-air collision as our planes moved through an overcast in formation over England. Another man in our Squadron—a pilot—while ahppy-go-lucky on the outside, projected a sense of "something's going to happen." He later went down in his badly damaged plane after nursing it back from the target so the crew could bail out over friendly territory. At the last minute he directed the crippled Marauder away from a village and in doing so lost the necessary time to bail out. Perhaps within each of us there is a sense of direction that cannot be defined or described but that gives the assurance of survival or doom.

Crew Chief—Wren

Our crew chief for the flight to England was M/Sgt. W.A. "Willie" Wren. Again, we had an experienced man who had worked on the Marauders for several years. He knew those Pratt & Whitney engines like the back of his hand and could squeeze every last mile out of a gallon of gas. Also, he kept *Tom's Tantalizer* in top notch condition for our flights. The crew chiefs flew overseas with us for obvious reasons—to keep the Marauder running.

Gunners—Castoro and Calkins

S/Sgts. Joe Castoro from Brooklyn, New York, tail gunner, and Charles Calkins, home town Corning, New York, turret gunner, rounded out our crew. They did not make the overseas flight with us but joined us in England. They were excellent men and performed their duties superbly.

Copilot—Graves

Another man who flew as copilot on several missions (and who had been at Barksdale Field with Tom) was John C. Graves. He was an excellent pilot and had his own crew. He also was a man who respected the Marauder and yet made it perform like the sturdy ship that it was.

Now it was time to take one more leave, visit my family, return to Savannah, Georgia and with the rest of the crew pick up a brand new Marauder and prepare for the flight overseas.

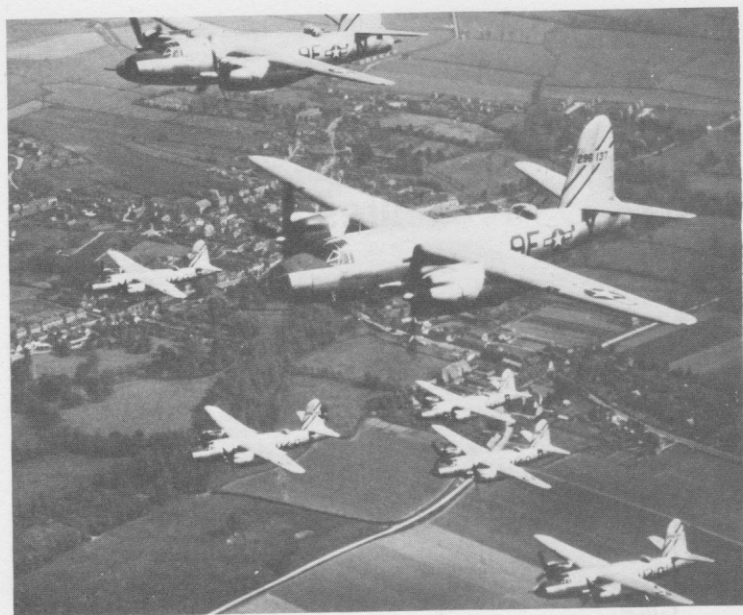


Fig. 6-1. A group of Marauders from the 597th Squadron of the 397th Bomb Group over England heading for another enemy target. These planes with all paint removed to reduce wind resistance were sometimes referred to as the "Silver Fleet." Most Marauders were originally painted a dull green. Later some were painted with a variety of patterns as crews attempted to make them less visible to the enemy. Some were green on top to make them less visible from above and silver on the bottom to make them less visible looking toward the sky. Some green paint was on the upper side of the nose of all planes to prevent glare in the pilot's eyes (courtesy U. S. Air Force).

Getting ready to fly the Marauder on a combat mission required careful attention to details. Here is a description of a typical mission in which *Tom's Tantalizer* participated.

PLANNING

At Group Headquarters, a squadron navigator, a pilot, and a bombardier will have been "on duty" through the night. When targets have been assigned for the next day, word comes down from Wing Headquarters giving the target, time over target for the mission, time and place of rendezvous with fighters, type and size of bomb load, and number of planes to be involved.

Beginning with the time over target, the duty navigator plots the course (place of landfall is usually given) using information on winds and normal airspeed. He works back from the time over

target to arrive at takeoff time, engine start time and wake-up time. He also prepares a detailed flight plan showing headings, ground speed and turns.

The duty bombardier gives instructions to the armament crew as to bomb loading. Everyone prepares maps for briefing and notes any other useful information such as location of troops, unusual features of the target, etc.

Our crew is listed on the "loading list" at Operations, so we know we will be flying if a mission is called for the next day. About two hours before takeoff time we are awakened (if it is an early flight) by the C.Q. (Charge of Quarters). Dressing, but still half asleep, we stumble out to the mess hall for breakfast. Dried eggs, reconstituted powdered milk, bread and jelly, maybe sausage or bacon, and coffee get us started. Conversation is light with only a hint that we are concerned about which target we will hit. Breakfast over, we pile into a jeep or mount our bicycles and head for Group Headquarters and briefing.

As we enter the briefing room, all eyes go straight to the large map on the wall. There a red string indicates the target and route to be flown. Red circles show the location of known anti-aircraft guns. By now we know where the hot targets are and where the "milk runs" are, so one glance is enough. If it's a hot one, a few appropriate remarks are exchanged about the ways of fate and how at least it's one more mission and we're that much closer to being rotated back to the States.

Today the target is a railroad bridge southeast of Angers, France. It will be a four-hour mission and we will lead the second box of 18 planes. Flak doesn't look like it will be too bad, and we will have fighter cover. Nevertheless, we plan our approach to the target carefully. As navigator, I quickly begin copying the flight plan prepared by the duty navigator. With the bombardier and pilot, I plan our approach to the target in great detail, including evasive turns from the I.P. (Initial Point) to the exact spot where I will turn the plane over to the bombardier. The hotter the target the shorter time he will take for the bomb run.

Keeping in mind that the flak gunner needs 30 seconds of straight and level flight to get his 88mm shell to us, we reduce the bomb run to under 30 seconds, if the target is a hot one. This requires careful planning. George presets windage and ground speed in the Norden, and if we roll out on the proper heading over the correct check point on the ground, he will have almost no corrections to make. It is a tribute to Tom's ability to hold the plane

steady, rolling out on the correct heading, and George's ability to pick up the aiming point in the Norden quickly, that a bomb run of 25 seconds can be effective. These skills enable us to avoid losses over the target. A straight run of a minute or more gives the German gunners time to put their shots right on the formation—and those 88's are deadly. However, on this mission we will give George nearly a full minute since no flak is expected over the target and bridges look very small from 12,000 feet high.

BRIEFING

The briefing officer explains the mission, giving any available information about the route or conditions likely to be encountered. Since it is in support of ground troops, the "bomb line" will be marked clearly and the briefing officer warns everyone not to drop too soon and, if our plane is hit, make every attempt to bail out behind our lines (which seems logical enough). The weather man gives all information on weather likely to be encountered going out, over the target, and returning to base. This includes clouds, visibility, and any fronts likely to be along the route. Pilots are given code words for the mission and where the fighter cover will be picked up. Ordnance men explain the type of bomb being used and what damage is needed on the target, i.e., anti-personnel for troop concentrations, delayed action for gun placements, or contact fuzes for bridges.

With all this information, we load into a jeep and head for our Marauder. By this time the ground crew has loaded the bombs and the machine guns and checked out the entire plane, including radio, instruments, fuel, etc. As navigator, I fold my maps and flight log so they can be read easily. I go over the route again with the pilot and bombardier, taking special note of known anti-aircraft gun positions.

As time to start engines approaches, everyone climbs aboard and checks his equipment. I have everything I need in my maps and flight plan. I cannot use the radio, and I surely have no need for celestial navigation equipment. I have already given the pilot the compass heading to use leaving our base. I check my watch and give the pilot an indication of when to start engines. All around the field, 2,000 horses in each Pratt and Whitney engine begin to sputter and then roar as they spin 12-foot props, grabbing for air!

EXECUTION

Commanding the lead plane, Tom waves the ground crew away and leads the second group of 18 Marauders away from their hard



Fig. 8-7. Our bombardier, 1st Lt. George Eldridge, showing his skill at "bridge busting" as we attack a railroad bridge at Wolksmarsen, Germany, on March 19, 1945. First photo shows the first bomb from our plane hitting on the aiming point with the balance of the pattern engulfing the end of the bridge and the buttment. This concentration of bombs was made possible by six Marauder pilots flying almost as one plane. Each flight of six planes in the box formation would move into a trailing formation at the Initial Point; then the lead bombardier in each flight would sight for his flight of six. The group reassembled into the box of 18 formation after leaving the target (courtesy U. S. Air Force).

eight oak leaf clusters, returned to civilian life following the end of the World War II and was involved in several business operations. Tim, his oldest child, was born during World War II, and subsequently Pat, Peg, and twin girls, Jane and Joan, were added to the family. He now boasts 11 grandchildren. Unfortunately, Tom suffered a stroke in 1972, and for a while it looked like he would not be able to walk again. However, with strong determination and hours upon hours of therapy, he now participates in many activities. He has his own woodworking shop and has almost complete use of his arms, legs and hands. He and his wife, Mary, reside in Batavia, New York.

George Eldridge, Bombardier and also recipient of the DFC (Fig. 10-6), Purple Heart and Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters,



Fig. 10-4. Author receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from Major General Samuel E. Anderson.

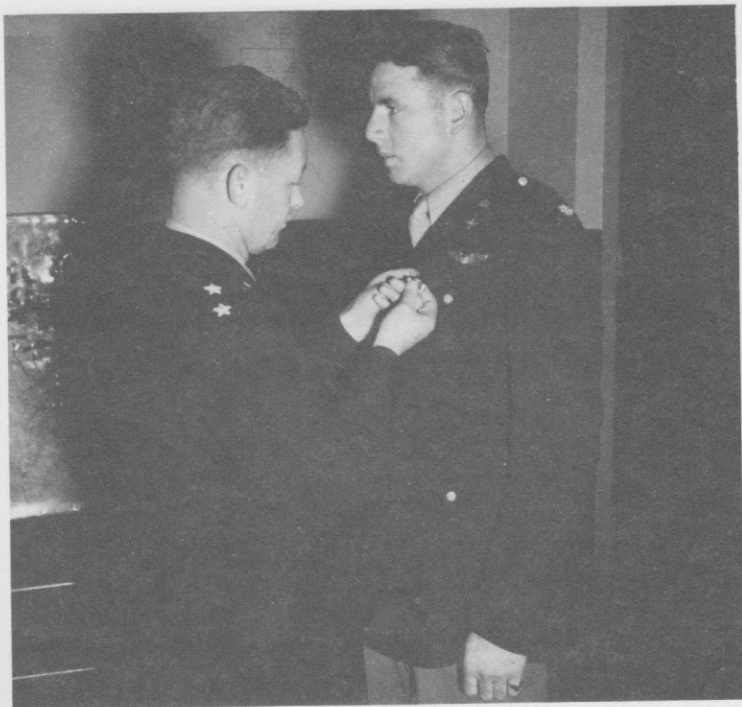


Fig. 10-5. Major Tom Johnson receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from Major General Samuel E. Anderson.

remained in the service following World War II and attained the rank of Colonel. He attended Air Tactical School and was a member of the first full class of Navigator Bombardier-Radar operations trained for the B-47 Bomber. After teaching in the school for four years, he flew as crew member in the Strategic Air Command for five years. Another five years in headquarters of the 8th Air Force and six years as a missile squadron commander were enough, and he retired in 1969. Today, home is Nampa, Idaho, where he sells cars, builds racing cars, does some racing himself, and stays busy in a variety of activities. He and his wife, Elena, have five children.

Dorr E. Tippens, Radio Operator and Gunner, and recipient of the Purple Heart, DFC (Fig. 10-7), and Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters, and the only one in our crew to score a "probable" on an enemy fighter, returned to school following World War II and obtained a BS Degree in Chemical Engineering from Purdue University. Following an additional year of graduate work, he joined the American Sugar Refining Company with which he has been associated since. Professionally, he has developed several improve-

TAB 2311

WWII



FLYING THE B-26 MARAUDER OVER EUROPE

An exciting, realistic account of a great warplane . . . and the inside experiences of the men who flew her!



BY
CARL H.
MOORE