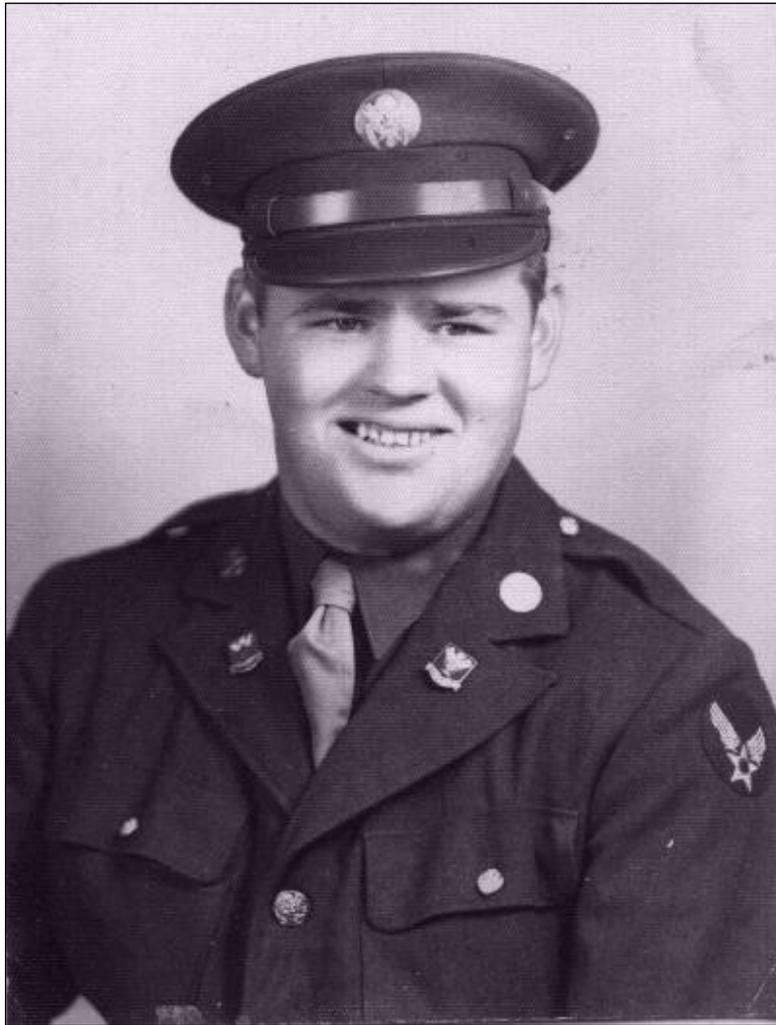


The World War II Memoirs of Tech. Sgt. Frederick L. Stemler

June 1942 through October 1945



Edited by: Elizabeth Wiemann
© 2003
Northampton, PA

JOINING THE ARMY AIR CORPS

I was working at the New Jersey Zinc Company in Palmerton when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. In June, 1942, a man approached me and said that I was a draft dodger because his son had a higher draft number than mine and he had been drafted. I was so upset that I went into the East Plant oxide office and told Mr. Green that I wanted to call Dr. Roeder, the head of the Carbon Draft Board. I told Dr. Roeder that I did not like to be called a draft dodger. Dr. Roeder knew me because I had played sports at Palmerton High School. He immediately called the draft board office and within 15 minutes he informed me that I was 4F and that I had flunked the physical two months earlier. I told Dr. Roeder that I had never had a physical. He told me the draft board would make a better check in their files. That evening Dr. Roeder called and reported that my files had somehow got behind the drawer. The Frederick Stemler who had failed the physical was from Packerton. I guess I never would have been called if someone had not called me a draft dodger.

Early in the morning on July 13th, I had to be in Lehigh, Pennsylvania, to take a train to Allentown for a physical exam. If you passed, you were sworn into the U.S. Army. I was sworn in at 3 PM July 13, 1942. As a group we then boarded a train that took us to Fort Meade, Maryland. The next morning we were given uniforms. They did not have size 13 shoes, so I was told not to drill or do any training.

There were some older men (over 40) in our group. They were promised that if they passed the physical and were sworn in, the Carbon Draft Board would give them a 7 day leave to get their home business in order. So after 3 days at Fort Meade, we all had a 7-day furlough. When I got back to Fort Meade, they had a pair of size 13 shoes for me. There was no more drilling; it was time for aptitude tests, radio, mechanic, IQ, etc. After the testing, I was given the choice of Tank Commander School or the Army Air Corps. I chose the Air Corp and was sent to Atlantic City for Basic Training and more tests. I was stationed in the Chalfonte Hotel on the Boardwalk. The Steel Pier was across from the Hotel so every evening we watched the Diving Horse Act on the Pier. The horse act was so well lit-up and our hotel had a black-out. What a joke! We were four fellows to a room on about the fifth floor. Our basic training consisted of carrying a dresser to the hotel garage for storage. There were thousands of men in all the hotels. Hadden Hall, next door, was used for a hospital. After the war, the Chalfonte was torn down and Hadden Hall is a casino. We were only allowed on the Boardwalk from 6-8 PM because there were hundreds of prostitutes plying their trade. Except for taking tests, we had nothing to do but eat and sleep. We hiked up the Boardwalk to another hotel for all our meals. I was called once to do KP duty over night. I reported to the Mess Sergeant at 8 PM. I was told that when I had enough toast made for the thousands of soldiers' breakfast, I was finished. The toaster took 6 slices at a time on a conveyer screen. It went into a large toaster and came out the other side and dropped into

big bread boxes. All I did was open the bread wrappers and put the bread on the conveyer. I know now why the bread was cold for breakfast. About 4 AM the bread was all toasted. I had just gotten back to the hotel when everybody was awakened and we were marched to Convention Hall. There were two long lines formed for several blocks on the Boardwalk. The lines went up to the stage and we were given a short arm inspection for venereal disease.

On August 17th my Mother and Dad came to Atlantic City to celebrate my 21st birthday. I was only allowed to stand outside and talk to them because I was told I was on alert to ship out.

TRAINING

I was sent to Lincoln Air Base, Nebraska, which was a base for airplane mechanics. Arthur Webb (a teacher in the Lehigh High School) was assigned to the same barracks so I knew someone from home. I was elected student captain of the barracks. The title meant you had to keep down the noise and fights. We had about 30 good fellows, so I had no problems. I finished Airplane Mechanics School with a 90% average for 12 phases. We had Christmas dinner at the Lincoln Air Base in 1942. I was on a Pullman Train bound for Santa Monica, California, on New Years Eve. The barracks were not completed when we arrived, so we stayed in the Grand Hotel for 2 weeks. In the morning they would bus us to the Douglas Airplane Factory to learn about the A-20 attack bomber airplane. I graduated with an excellent rating. I went to the Hollywood Canteen and I got Gracie Allen's Autograph. I still have the card in my photo album.



**On base in Lincoln Nebraska as
Student Captain**

At the end of January we boarded a Pullman Car to travel to Oklahoma City. We were never told our destination. We had a porter on our car and I found out why when our Pullman Car was backed into a siding at Tucumcari, New Mexico. An officer brought box lunches and told us we could go into town. A new train would head for Oklahoma City in the morning. Tucumcari was a very small town. There were planks for sidewalks; otherwise it was mud. I was still a private when I arrived at Oklahoma City.

416 BOMB GROUP FORMED

The 416 Bomb Group (L) was formed at Will Rogers Field in February 1943. At this time, the pilots were Flying Sergeants. They had their own mess and privileges. I took pictures of these pilots leaving for North Africa when they buzzed the field.

One morning I was called to the Orderly Room. The man in charge gave me a list of eight men whom I should take at 6 PM to a certain building. When we reported, there stood a Master Sergeant in full dress uniform. He said we should change the bad engine and put all the accessories onto a new engine. He said he was going into town. I asked him who would supervise us, as we had no experience on the engine. He then said to go back where we had come from. The next morning I was called to the Orderly Room. The man in charge told me that I was right to ask who would supervise, but he told me to watch my step when talking to Master Sergeants. He said that I would be an airplane crew chief when we got our airplanes.

The newly formed 416 Bomb Group moved from Oklahoma City to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where I received a B-25 Mitchell Bomber; the last three numbers of the serial number were 579. The airplane was used to teach the pilots to fly two engine airplanes with tricycle landing gear and to fly blind. I flew many hours as a flight engineer with many good and also bad experiences.

On one occasion the pilot, a hot shot, flew under the Port Arthur Bridge. Another time, on an early morning flight, as we were coming in for a landing the tower called on the radio to abort the landing. Lt. Sommers, a very efficient pilot, was within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the runway. He pushed the throttle ahead and the one engine backfired and stopped. He made a quick decision. He feathered the prop and landed on the opposite runway. We later learned that a new pilot was landing in the wrong direction.

In the summer of 1943 a hurricane was approaching the base. Lt. Huff and Lt. Behlmer informed me to pack my tools and clothes, as we would be flying to Oklahoma City within $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. When we arrived at Oklahoma City, we were informed that there was no space for us. Our outfit refueled and took off for a small town. (It could have been Broken Bow.) Lt. Huff asked me if we had enough fuel for a five hour flight. I said I would make sure the tanks were topped off after the pre-flight. Then we took off for NW Kansas to the home of his parents. We flew over their farm and buzzed the hired hand in the field and we also buzzed the town. On this flight to Kansas I actually flew the B-25 on part of the trip. It was the first time and it sure was a thrill.

The next day Lt. Gullion flew my B-25 and he buzzed a place that had wooden water tanks on the roof. He sucked the roof off of one of the tanks. Somebody got the number of the plane. Lt. Gullion lost pay for repairs to the water tank.

One day we were at a bond selling rally in Oklahoma. I saw a fighter plane fly into a

B-25 during a mock fighter attack. The sales that day could never recover the loss that occurred that day.

The outfit returned to Lake Charles. Every morning I would pre-flight the airplane. The engines would usually cough or backfire and flames would come out of the cowling. The only way to stop this was to keep cranking the engine and then it would suck back the fire. The base fire fighters would be sent to put out the fire. In order to keep the fire department from coming each morning, I would call the tower on the radio and tell them I would be doing pre-flight tests. One morning when I came out to pre-flight the B-25, I noticed a cracked windshield. On further examination I found the copper jacket and a bullet on the floor. The guard on duty had climbed into the cockpit and had played with his caliber .45 pistol and it had gone off.

I was still a Private and I was in charge of men who were coming from Airplane Mechanics School who were corporals. When I would tell them to do certain work, they would refuse because they were corporals and I was a private. I went to the office and reported that the men wouldn't follow orders. That week I was promoted to sergeant.

I was in the service for 3 years, 3 months, and 9 days. I had one 7 day furlough in July 1943. I went home by train standing all the way from Lake Charles to Chicago. I had a seat from Chicago to Philadelphia. I then rode the Liberty Bell Trolley to Allentown and bummed a ride to Bowmanstown.

While at Lake Charles, I flew many hours a month so that some of the pilots could get their four hours flying time. After all the pilots were trained on the two engine B-25, our squadron received the A-20 Bombers. We were soon moved to Meridian, Mississippi, for maneuvers. Since Mississippi was a dry state, there were many flights for whiskey.

My brother Clair was in the SeaBees, stationed at Gulfport, Mississippi. It happened that I had to go with the airplane to Biloxi so that the pilot could get gunnery practice over the Gulf of Mexico. Another plane would tow a sleeve and my pilot would try to hit the sleeve with his six forward machine guns. Clair and I had a nice get-together in Biloxi.

Lt. Gullion was again assigned to my airplane. One day he brought a parachute and told me that we would fly to another base to have the nose guns sighted in. I put on the parachute and climbed in the lower gunners compartment. When we were in the air, Lt. Gullion called me on the intercom and said that he would get even with me for the flight in Oklahoma City when he damaged the water tank. I was thrown around, up and down, while he worked over the airplane. I finally got to the intercom button on the sidewall and told him that I was bailing out. The maneuvering stopped. Lt. Gullion became lost, so he called and asked if I knew where we were. I said I saw railroad tracks which he could follow. In a minute, he wanted to know how to switch to the bomb bay fuel tank. I told him that there was no bomb bay tank. He called again and said the fuel gauge showed a bomb bay tank 3/8 full. I answered and said that bomb bay tanks were only installed to ferry planes overseas.

Because he said that he was getting low on fuel, I told him to switch to the auxiliary fuel tanks, as they were full. I also told him that I would bail out if the engines sputtered. With that, we flew over Jackson where I saw the name on a roof. The pilot said he now could get back to our home base. When we landed I told him that I would never fly with him again. He just laughed at me. He was just a big kid!

About a week later, I was inside the engine nacelle of the A-20 checking for an oil leak. I was tapped on the shoulder and when I came out of the nacelle Lt. Gullion said that I should salute the General. I told him that I didn't have to salute when I was in a working position and oily. He then said, "Dad, this is the man who won't fly with me." The General said, "I don't blame you, Sgt." The General saluted me and told Lt. Gullion to shape up.

Another time, the engine on my airplane stated to misfire. I replaced the spark plugs and it did not correct the problem. I wanted to change the spark plug wiring but I was told that it was a job for a civilian employee at the Base Depot. I told the Master Sergeant in charge of us that I wouldn't have a paid civilian overseas to do this job. That changed his mind, so I changed the harness wiring and the miss was corrected.

GOING TO EUROPE

In December 1943 our training was over and we boarded a troop train for Camp Shanks in New York. Wade Butcher, Horace Joyner, Ray Hansen, and I got passes to go to New York City. Butcher and Joyner had whiskey with them. We had heard about Jack Dempsey Nite Club, so we went inside and got a table. Being soldiers, we thought we were special and we ordered free cokes. When the waiter saw Butcher and Joyner's whiskey on the table, he told us that we had to buy our drinks in the club. Someone told off the waiter and we were escorted out of the club by the biggest 4Fs that I ever saw.

We were given physicals and all kinds of shots for overseas. I was missing teeth and they said I had to have a partial plate to go overseas. In the morning they took an impression and that afternoon I had a partial plate which I never used. Because we were on alert for overseas, New Year's Eve was spent in the barracks.

In January, 1944, we were trucked to the port of New York to board the ship. I think it was the Ile de France. It had been a cruise ship before the war. I sure did not feel too good when we passed the Statue of Liberty. We were told it was the largest convoy up to that time to cross to Europe. The bunks went from floor to ceiling and the ship was really crowded. We were located at the rear corner of the convoy. Navy destroyers were continuously going back and forth. We were told we would get into a bad storm. The storm was bad; the waves would go over the bow of an aircraft carrier in the convoy and the little destroyers would disappear from sight because of the high waves. In nine days we entered the Clyde, where there were many ships being built. It was a Saturday and they were not work-

ing. We remarked to each other “at home they are working seven days a week.” I was seasick for the entire trip. We docked at Glasgow, Scotland. We then traveled by train to Weathersfield England, a field near London.

A-20

We were housed in Quonset huts. Outside of our hut was a bomb shelter. A short time after arriving at Weatherfield, I was assigned to an A-20 airplane as crew chief. Major Campbell said to me that he wanted to flight test hop the airplane in two hours, and I was to have the airplane completely checked in that time. On the flight, when Major Campbell was ready to lower the main landing gear, they would not come down. He tried all kinds of maneuvers to get them down and he was about to bring the A-20 in on its belly when they came down. After landing he told me that I should be a private for not checking the clearance on the landing gear locks. I told him he could not expect a complete inspection in two hours time.

Lt. Willard Land was assigned as pilot of my A-20. He was always very nice to the crew. He never aborted a mission to which he was assigned. He would come out for a mission and say, “Tiny, is she OK?” I would say, “Yes.” He would go on the mission and when he returned, he would always thank me. I guess for getting him back safe.

I was awarded the Bronze star for doing a job that I was trained to do. If the airplane would have been aborted for a mission for mechanical failure, I would not have gotten the medal.

On some missions, the airplane was damaged by flak. Then there was plenty of work to get the airplane in shape to fly again. The worst damage the airplane received was on D-Day. We changed many major parts and patched many holes (125). A hub of roads and rails was bombed on D-Day. The German panzer divisions were prevented from interfering with the invasion on the coast of France.

I had an assistant Crew Chief, Arthur O’Hare. He received a fractured skull in a very odd way. Our A-20 came back from a mission and the pilot (I lost pages from my log on A-20 missions and pilots) said the fuel pressure needles stood 1/8 inches apart and he wanted them together (they are in one gauge). I opened the panel on the outside of the left engine to get into the nacelle to adjust the fuel pressure on the left engine to show the same as the right engine. While I was removing the panel, the armament workers were checking the machine guns in the hose and taking care of the bomb bay racks. When the armament men left, I told O’Hare to go up into the cockpit and run both engines to 1600 RPM and then higher to check if the fuel pressure stayed the same. He started the engines and signaled me to up the pressure. I went into the left nacelle and adjusted the fuel pump higher. I came out and signaled O’Hare to check again. He signaled me an OK at 2000 RPMs. I signaled to stop the

engines but with that he started to flail his arms. I saw blood coming out the side of his head above the left ear. I tried to get on the wing to stop the engines but the prop blast kept my mechanic, Kenneth Bailey, and me from getting to the cockpit. Finally, it seemed like a long time, O'Hare pulled the throttles off. We were afraid he might start firing the nose .50 caliber guns or take the brakes off and the plane would run over about 50 yards into another airplane. We got him out of the cockpit. On the floor was a 12" blade from a screw driver. The engineering officer checked our 3 tool boxes. We had all our tools, so we were not responsible for the accident. O'Hare was



Fred Stemler, Arthur O'Hare, and Kenneth Bailey in front of the A-20, 'Daddy Land's Commando'

taken to the hospital with a spider web fracture of the skull and we never saw him again. O'Hare was 45 years of age at the time of the accident. He was old enough to be my father, a fine man to work with. Now we were down to a crew of two to do all the maintenance and repairs.

I bought a bicycle from Sgt. Hancock and nights, when I got finished working on the airplane, several of us would climb the fence and go to town for a couple pints of half & half. I took a couple of good spills running off the road in the dark. The towns had halls where dances were held every weekend. They used to do the quickstep and the waltz. I always made flight line in the morning to pre-flight the airplane. I had a wooden box in which I kept my tools along side of my hardstand. Some mornings I would get into the box for some sleep while the airplane was on a mission. By early May, the missions were piling up and I had 50 missions without an abort.

Our airfield in England was close enough to London, so that the first few months in England at night the sky would light up with searchlights and we could see bombers (German) flying over to bomb London. We could see the flak bursts, but we could not see if bombs were dropped. We only saw the sky over London. We had a good view of buzz bombs going toward London. Some were off line and we had several hits on our base. We

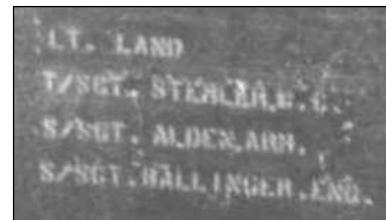
were warned to stay away from the wrecks. The Intelligence Units wanted to find the gyros and the guidance systems. You never forget the sound of a buzz bomb. Many times I would watch B-51s and other planes fly up to the buzz bombs and tip the wings of the buzz bomb so that they would go into a dive and crash. Then came the V-II Bombs. They went so high and then came down with no warning. They had a big bomb.

The A-20 #181 was named 'Daddy Land's Commando.' Several times I had major damage. It required replacing vital parts, and then the crew chief would go along when testing the plane to show that they would stand by their work. One time we were testing a tail change. A group of B-17s were circling to get altitude to go on a bombing mission. The pilot feathered one engine and lowered the flaps to fly as slow as the B-17s. This was an insult to the B-17, and the waist and upper turret gunners turned their guns toward us. I waved to them and told the pilot over the intercom to get the hell out of there. I was in the upper turret and it was a tight squeeze.

Our group lost planes and crews on missions. Major Campbell was shot down and became a prisoner of the Germans. We supported the invasion forces as they moved deeper into France.

The 416 Bomb Group went to Melun, France on September 15, 1944. I flew over on the A-20 plane on which I was crew chief. Lt. Land flew his last mission on September, Friday the 13th, 1944. The A-20 airplanes I crewed were:

- #43-9181 79 combat missions 'Daddy Land's Commando'
 - #43-9673 8 missions
 - #44-3102 3 missions
- 90 missions on A-20 aircraft



Names under the cockpit read:

- Lt. Land**
- T/Sgt. Stemler**
- S/Sgt. Alden**
- S/Sgt/ Hallinger**



Arthur O'Hare preparing to remove blocks from the wheel

THE A-26

We converted to A-26 airplanes on November 1, 1944. We had training flights and mock repair training. #43-39232 was the first A-26 that I crewed. The first mission was on November 17, 1944.

When we landed at the airfield at Melun, France, I was surprised to find the remains of a burned German bomber that had been bulldozed to the side of the hardstand where my airplane was to be parked. Later I took pipes and a little tank from the German plane to make a heater for our tent. It burned 100 octane gas and it sure helped to keep us warm through that winter.

Each squadron had 4 flights of 4 airplanes each. The flights were listed as A-B-C-D. I was in A flight. There were 3 men assigned to each plane for maintenance – a crew chief and 2 mechanics. I had only 1 mechanic since O'Hare had received a fractured skull in the accident while in England. We were issued a twelve man tent and told to put it wherever we liked. We made a wooden floor for the tent from wooden boxes that the Germans left behind. They were boxes that German bombs had been stored in. The ground was all mud when it rained, so the wooden floor was a big improvement. It was hard to get used to seeing French kids – 12 years and up – walking through the airfield with rifles looking for French girls who had been fraternizing with the German soldiers. They looked like they would shoot you if they thought that you were Bosch (German). They were called the 'Free French Fighters'.

About two weeks after we got to France, a shower was built for us. We were crusty from working in grease and we were used to using our helmets to wash in only cold water. We dug a pit for a latrine and the French brought buckets to empty the fertilizer. We also dug a bomb shelter trench.

We were stationed at Melun about a month before Ray Hanson and I went into the town. We met a young French boy who spoke English. His name was Rene Harvard. His father had a butcher shop. We met the entire family and the boy translated the conversation. These were the only French people that I talked to. There are pictures of Melun in my album, also a picture of where my airplane was parked.

One of the worst nights I had repairing our airplane was when there was a modification to put stronger ailerons on the plane. We struggled from early evening when the replacements were brought to us until after 5 AM to get the new ailerons put on the plane. I could hardly get my big hands inside the wings to start the bolts and nuts, and then to put cotter keys in place. Finally the covering had to be zipped together to prevent air buffeting over the aileron. The weather felt about zero degrees it was so cold. Cpl. Bailey and I did the work since we were still a two-man crew. Each airplane ground crew had to guard their

airplane at night. Col Bailey would guard the plane until 1 or 2 AM, and then I would guard the plane until I had to preflight the airplane for a mission, usually about 5 AM.

About the middle of December, 1944, the Battle of the Bulge took place. Weather was so bad that the airplanes were grounded. We started flying December 23rd to support the troops at the Bulge. December 25th, Monday, Christmas Day my airplane received so much damage that it had to land at another base (Base-70). It had flak damage to the fuselage, the right engine knocked out, gun turret damage, hydraulic system damage, and holes in the fuel tank. I never got this airplane back. After it was repaired at Base-70, it went to the 670th Squadron. I got a new A-26, #41-322354 which I then crew-chiefed.

During the month of February we were moved to Lyon, France, where we were stationed until the war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945.

On March 4, 1945, Lt. Hackley flew upside down in a cloud bank on the way back to the base after a mission. The gunner bailed out and landed safely. I then named #354 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine' because of Lt. Hackley's erratic flying. The cockpit was often a mess after a mission, but the pilots had to do their own clean-up in the cockpit.

About March 1945 I received a man to replace Arthur O'Hare, the mechanic in my crew who had been injured while we were stationed in England. We had been a two-man crew for 6 to 7 months. I forget the new man's name. He said that he had been in the Battle at Bastogne. He was a mean-looking fellow who had a rifle and a .45 on him at all times. He had no tools, no knowledge of airplane repair, and he was no help in our work. On Fridays, in the late afternoon, he would get a Jeep and he would return with a burlap bag of champagne bottles. I believe he stole them.

I remember that on a mission 2 bombs failed to release over the target. It took three days of searching by the ordinance man, the electrician, and myself until we finally found that a small piece of flak had cut the bomb release electrical wire to the one rack. It had been hit while the bomb bay doors were opened on the bombing run.

On another mission #354 went to the Depot because the electrical gun sight was not working for the upper and lower gun turrets. I received a replacement airplane until 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine' was returned. The replacement planes' number was #43-22496, a



Merril O'Neil and the newly christened 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine'

plane converted from a C to a B model A-26. All the pilots complained that it fishtailed. It only flew six missions when ‘Tom Swift’s Flying Machine’ came back to my hardstand.

Our airplanes carried many types of bombs – Incendiary, Fragments, Demolition – in weights from 50 lbs. to 1000 lbs.

Back to the story of Major Campbell who, while we were still in England, had been shot down on a mission and became a prisoner of the Germans. Before the war’s end, one day a Jeep came along the ramp to my hardstand. The Jeep stopped and I noticed that it was Major Campbell. I saluted him and he then asked me “Why are you still a Crew Chief?” I answered, “Sir, I never lost an airplane.” The Major’s only remark was “Driver, drive on!” I never saw Major Campbell again.

The airplanes I crewed missed some missions because of weather and repairs. The totals are accurate (from the log book I kept):

The A-20s on which I was Crew Chief had 90 missions

The A-26s on which I was Crew Chief had 75 missions
165 missions

The A-20 #43-9181 ‘Daddy Land’s Commando’ 79 combat missions

The A-26 #41-322354 ‘Tom Swift’s Flying Machine’ 59 combat missions

The record for the A-26s:

#232 10 missions

#354 59 missions

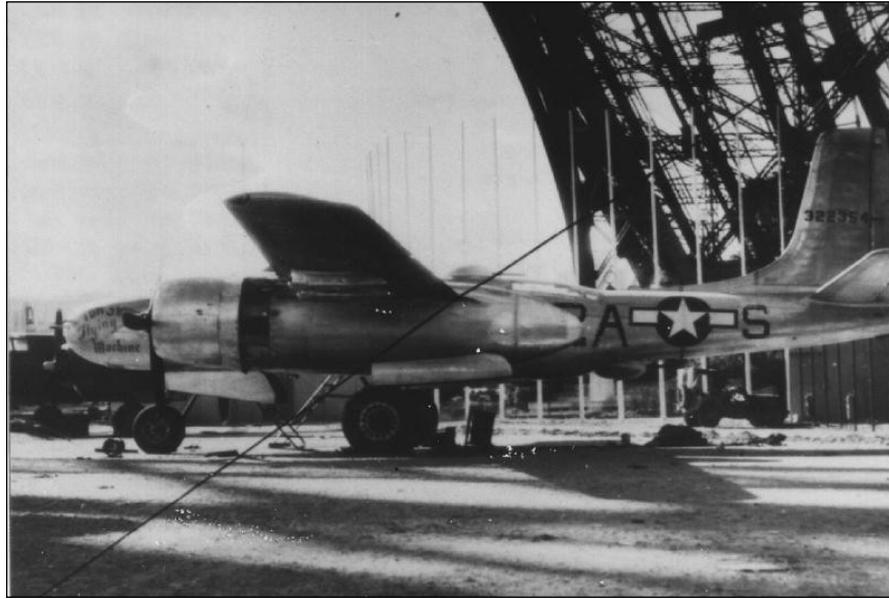
#496 6 missions

75 missions

‘Sure Shot Sully,’ a cowboy throwing a bomb, the emblem of the 669 Squadron, is visible on the nose of ‘Tom Swift’s Flying Machine.’



After the war, one of each of the Allied airplanes flown in the war was exhibited under the Eiffel Tower. 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine' was chosen for the A-26s. A picture is in my album of the airplane under the Eiffel Tower. I got to Paris to see #354 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine' on exhibition before I was flown to Venlo on the Holland-German border.



'Tom Swift's Flying Machine' with the tower visible in the background



Fred Stemler standing before the Eiffel Tower in Paris



Fred Stemler with 'Tom Swift's Flying Machine'



A Martin Marauder flew me to Venlo. I was so sick that I threw up in my helmet. The B-26 Martin Marauder had a reputation for flying like a stone. While I was in Lake Charles as a crew chief on a B-25, I saw a B-26 crash on take-off and burn up. I got to Venlo a little lighter in weight and very ready to go home. I laid around on my cot for about a week. Then I was called to the Orderly Room. When I got there, an officer standing alongside of a Jeep told me to get into the Jeep. He took me to a B-26 airplane and told me to pre-flight it. I told him that I had never pre-flighted a B-26, but he said that I was a crew chief and that I should get to it. I thought "What the hell," it would be a challenge to find all the switches, etc. The officer left, so I climbed into the cockpit and after a few minutes I knew I could do the testing. I checked out the airplane and was satisfied that it was OK. Soon the officer (Col. or Major) came back in the Jeep. I saluted him and he then walked around the Jeep and got two parachutes. He said, "Sgt., take this, we are going flying." I said, "Sir, I will not fly for 2 reasons. First, I am not on flying status, and second, I have enough points to go home." All he said was "Get back in the Jeep." I went back to my cot and a few days later a Sgt. came to the tent telling me the CO wanted to see me. I went with him to the Orderly Room and was told that if I signed up for 6 months I would be a Master Sergeant. He said they were replacing the B-26 with A-26 aircraft and they needed someone to train their new crews. I told him that I wanted to go home, so I was sent back to the tent. I only got out of the tent for meals and to get rations. I don't know what had happened to their crew chiefs, or whether they needed my experience working on A-26s.

I laid around until some time in late September when I was taken to 'Camp Top Hat' in Antwerp, Belgium. I was put on a ship named the S.S. Winchester Victory. (This was the ship that had just taken Fritz Kuhn back to Bremerhaven, Germany.) It was the maiden voyage for this ship as a transport ship taking soldiers home. I came back sleeping on the hold of the ship on the plank floor with only a blanket for cover. I laid over the propeller drive shaft and it was a continuous bumping on every revolution of the shaft. We were in the hold all the time and I was very sick.

When I arrived at Boston Harbor on October 10, 1945, there was another troop transport ship in the harbor bringing back the 416 Bomb Group. I took a screwing, having had enough points to come home, and then being laid up in Venlo, Holland, for three months. The men from the East Coast that were to be discharged were sent to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. The place was so full that they told me to go home for a week. I returned to Fort Indiantown Gap to be discharged on October 22, 1945.

I was very fortunate to have had the airplanes that I was crew chief of, which flew 165 combat missions without having an abortion on a mission and with no injury to the personal flying the missions.

OTHER PICTURES



Each pilot signed the log upon returning from a mission

PARTIAL LIST OF MISSIONS

34
31
12/4

89
75/4

250
1000

LAST MISSION ON 43-9181 - A-206-25

SEPT. FRI-13TH LAND. 89 MISSION
IN FRONT FOR FLAK NO ABORTS
X DROPPED ON ENEMY DROPPED AT RANGE

MISSIONS ON A-26 B-15 41-79232

1 - NOV-FRI-17TH - SMITH, DEM, 1TA 250

2 - NOV-SAT-18TH - BUTLER, DEM 2TX 1000

3 - NOV-SUN-19TH - STREET DEM 1TX 250

4 - NOV-SUN-19TH KAHOLE DEM 1TX 250

5 - NOV-WED-29TH MARTIN DEM 1TX 250

6 - DEC-SAT-9TH VAN ROPE DEM 1TX 250

7 - DEC-SAT-23RD PECK DEM 2TX 1000

8 - DEC-SAT-23RD PECK DEM 1 1/2 TX 250

9 - DEC-SUN-24TH PECK DEM 1 1/2 TX 250
CUTTIE, BRAKE RETRACTION

10 DEC MON-25TH BUTLER DEM 1 1/2 TX 250
DOWN AT A-70 - RT EN. RANGE, TORRETS
HYD. SYSTEM SHOT OUT ALSO FUEL TANK

MISSIONS ON A-26 B-15 43-22354

1 - JAN-TUES-16TH - JOHNSON - DEM 2TX 1000
PILOTS WINSHEILED

2 JAN - MON - 22ND EE SMITH, DEM 2 TX 1000

3 JAN - THUR. 25TH BA SMITH DEM 1 1/2 TX 500

4 JAN MON 29TH J SMITH DEM 2 TX 1000
LANDING GEAR NOT RIGHT

5 FEB-THUR-1ST - SMITH. DEM 1 1/2 TX 250
BOMBS FAILED TO RELEASE

6 FEB-FRI-2ND - JORDEN DEM 1 1/2 TX 250
BOMBS FAILED TO RELEASE

7. FEB 9TH JORDEN - PAPER WHAT 1000

8 FEB - 16TH JOHNSON - DEM 1 1/2 TX 500

CYL BARRIERS - OIL COOLER DOOR, FUSELAGE

9. FEB-19TH WRIGHT DEM 2TX 1000

10 FEB 21ST FARLEY DEM 2 1/2 TX 1000

11. FEB 22ND CHEROSKY DEM 1 1/2 TX 500

12 FEB 23RD FARLEY 500 DEM 1 1/2 TX

13 FEB 24TH TOURNER 250 DEM 1 1/2 TX

2 HOLES IN WING PARING.

14 - FEB 25TH VAN ROPE DEM 1 1/2 TX 500

BOMB BAY DOORS, COWL FLAPS

15 FEB 25TH HAYTER - DEM 1 1/2 TX 500

16 FEB 26TH DEALEMER 1000 DEM 2TX

17. FEB 27TH HALLWAY INC. 1 1/2 TX 500

18 FEB 28TH MARCH-1 - JORDEN 500 1 1/2 TX DEM 2

18) MARCH 2 HASKLEY - 500 DEM - 1 1/2 TX
 19) MARCH 3 JORDAN INC 500 1 1/2 TX
 20) MARCH 4 HASKLEY 500 DEM 1 1/2 TX
 GUNNER FAILED OUT IN CLOUDS
 21) MARCH 5 DEINER, 500 1 1/2 TX
 1 BOMB FAILED TO RELEASE
 22) MARCH 6 WEINERT 500 DEM 1 1/2 TX
 2 BOMB DROPPED ON DOORS
 23) MARCH 9 WEINERT 500 DEM 1 1/2 TX
 1 BOMB DID NOT DROP
 24) MARCH 11 DEFAULT 500 DEM 1 1/2 TX
 25) MARCH 11 WEINERT 500 DEM 2 TX
 26) MARCH 12 WEINERT 500 DEM 2 TX
 27) MARCH 13 WEINERT 100 DEM 1 1/2 TX
 28) MARCH 13 WEINERT 100 DEM 2 TX
 29) MARCH 14 DEBOS 1000 DEM 2 TX
 30) MARCH 15 WEINERT 1000 DEM 2 TX
 31) MARCH 15 WEINERT 1000 DEM 2 TX
 32) MARCH 16 CHEROSKY 1000 WEINERT DEM 2 TX
 33) MARCH 18 WEINERT 500 DEM 2 TX
 1 BOMB FAILED TO RELEASE

354 WENT TO DEPOT
 TURRET GIGIT OUT
 RECEIVED 43-22 H96 CONVERTED
 C 18 B, FISH TAILS
 (34) MARCH 21 - HAUSLEY 500 INCIND 1 1/2 TX
 (35) MARCH 21 - HASKLEY 250 FRAG, 2 1/2 TX
 TOTAL MISSIONS NO ABORTIONS
 A - 43-19181 - 79 - 27
 L - 43-201673 - 8
 L - 44-33702 - 3
 99 TOTAL A-20,
 A-43-3232-10-1
 322 354-59 ← UNDER EIFFEL TOWER
 41-39996-6
 75 TOTAL A-26
 TOMB SWIFTS FLYING MACHINE
 IS ON EXHIBITION AT PARIS
 GRAND TOTAL
 165 NO ABORTIONS

ENLISTED MAN'S IDENTIFICATION CARD
 European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army

This is to identify **Frederick L. Stemler**
 whose description and signature appear hereon, as a member
 of the United States armed forces, serving in the European
 Theater of Operations.

Grade..... **T/Sgt.** Assn. **33185881** Race..... **White**
 Home address..... **White St. Bowmanstown, Pa.**
 Birthplace..... **Bowmanstown, Pa.**
 Birthdate..... **17 Aug 1921** 5 101
 (Da.) (Mo.) (Yr.) Height ft. ins.
 Weight..... **200** lbs. (**14** stones) **4** lbs.
 Color hair..... **Brown** Color eyes..... **Blue** Complexion..... **Ruddy**
 Scars or distinguishing marks..... **None**

(Signature)
 (Signature of soldier)

Identification card of
 Fred Stemler.

The signature is too
 faded to copy, but
 still visible on the
 original card.