

Short synopsis of Capt. Zean R. Moore's flying career in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Royal Air Force (RAF) and American Army Air Corp (USAAC), by his son, Zean R. Moore, Jr., August 22, 2020.

Dad learned to fly under and obtained his private pilot's license from Red Morrison, who was instrumental in founding the Helena, Montana airport. When the World War II started, dad wanted to be part of it. In 1940, dad approached the American Army Air Corp to become a pilot. He was turned down because he needed at least 2 years of college to become an officer which he did not have at the time. Dad then travelled to Alberta, Canada to inquire about enlisting in the Royal Canadian Air Force. The Canadians were very happy to have him and he was quickly enrolled in primary flight school actually learning how fly likely in a De Havilland Tiger or Gypsy Moth aircraft. He completed flight school and was rated as a Pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) September 15, 1941, and hoped to do more training so he could go to England. Dad was advised by an older pilot to stay in Canada and become an instructor pilot to better train him for combat duty. Dad did so. With excellent training under his belt, dad transferred back to the United States and started training with the USAAC and was promoted as a 2nd Lt Pilot on 19 May, 1942. The United States State Department returned his American citizenship back to dad and reimbursed the Canadian government \$25,000 for the cost of his training in Canada.

I think dad travelled to Tyndall field in Florida for further training with twin engine bombers, likely A-20's. I remember numerous times dad explained to me he had applied to go to four engine school but was turned down. Looking back, dad was thankful that decision to fly four engine bombers was turned down because of the terrible losses Eighth Air Force incurred over Germany. He said he probably would have been killed had that course of action taken place. I am not sure how long he was there but he thoroughly enjoyed his time even meeting Clark Cable who was stationed at Tyndall training as an aircraft gunner at that time. Dad trained for overseas combat with the 75th Observation Group, Tullahoma, TN for about 3 months from February to May, 1943. Dad and some other air crews were relieved of assignment from the 75th Obs Gp and ordered to go to England, arriving July, 1943, assigned to the 153rd Liaison Squadron (LS), 67th Reconnaissance Group of the 8th Air Force.

Upon arriving in England, I don't think dad's unit was immediately assigned out for combat duty as there were not enough other American units to put together larger bomb groups. This is where my father's history gets fuzzy for me. I do remember one story vividly. In the early days while stationed there awaiting assignment, dad and his some of his fellow officers were intoxicated one night. One officer started riding a bicycle down the sidewalk or street and knocked down a general who was walking close by. The general was a bit shaken but not hurt and demanded to know who these officers were. The general was told they had not been assigned out yet. The general asking what should be done with them. Dad was quick to suggest verbally temporary assignment to an RAF unit which, of course, the other officers were definitely not too thrilled about. Dad said after that he was not too popular with some of the other officers. I can infer from that the other officers (pilots) perhaps did not want to fly with the RAF. I am not sure if that inference is correct. He and other Americans were transferred to a RAF unit flying, as the RAF called the airplane at the time, the A-20 "Boston". The AAF called it the A-20 "Havoc". It was likely during his time with the 153rd LS and 2911th BS (July, 1943 to February, 1944) that he flew 300 hours of photo reconnaissance missions, piloted ferry/transport flights and was temporarily assigned to the British RAF.

I do remember three incidences he conveyed to me. In the RAF mess halls, meals were served on china and sterling. Given the large pay differential between American and British airmen, dad was just really taken by this experience. Another experience that dad shared was the way the Americans would frequently break up their aircrews. The British tried not to do this. The British would keep their crews together as long as possible. Dad said the American practice was a morale killer for him, and I think he was a little, almost bitter about it.

Another incident dad conveyed to me was one particular RAF low-level A-20 mission to France. Dad's position was back somewhat in the rear of the flight called "purple heart row". On low level missions, the front aircraft could use the element of surprise while back aircraft taking more losses because the Germans zeroed in on them after the surprise element was gone. On this fateful mission, dad was assigned to purple heart row. However, another pilot in a lead aircraft, and (possibly) Irish national, was very late getting back from leave and dad was assigned his place in the mission near the front of the flight which made him very happy. However, the other pilot just barely made it back from leave and was assigned to his original position near the front of the flight making dad go back to "purple heart row". On this fateful mission, dad said the Germans somehow knew they were coming and were ready for them shooting the first five aircraft out of the sky. All of those pilots were killed. The other aircraft further back were able to avoid the flack and return safely to base without further loss. Had the Irish pilot not made it back from leave, dad would have been killed.

The last incident involved a trip to the country of South Africa. Dad was asked to fly a large, single engine (possibly) British aircraft all the way down the west coast of Africa to pick up some very important passenger and return him to England. Dad was assigned a navigator and an aircraft mechanic to accompany him. I only just learned my sister has some photos of dad taken somewhere in equatorial Africa showing dad dressed in native garb. The flight took about a week down to South Africa and a week back to England and went without event. I am pretty sure this trip occurred while dad was with the RAF.

On 7 September, 1943 the American 2911th Bomb Squadron (BS) was formed and dad assigned to it. This squadron flew photographic reconnaissance missions along with two combat bombing missions. Dad was then transferred to the 670th BS, 416th Bomb Group (BG) in February 1944, later transferring to the 671st BS August 1944. He was assigned to fly 36 combat missions with the 416th BG in Douglas A-20 Havoc and A-26 Invaders. My purpose in this chapter is not to discuss the who, what and where of the 416th as these are well documented in the archives. I want to relay four personal stories dad conveyed to me.

While stationed at Wethersfield, dad met and married a young woman named Doris Lilly "Dorrie/Dory" Woodland November 5, 1944. He was later transferred to France shortly thereafter. To this day, we do not know what happened to Dory. My sister and brother-in-law visited Wethersfield a few years ago, located the church where dad had been married and met a 70+ year woman who had been a flower girl at the wedding ceremony when she was about eleven years old. Dad later got re-married to my mother in 1946. Dad never spoke of their marriage to me or my siblings.

On another occasion in France, dad was asked to ferry a B-24 pilot somewhere. They flew in a single engine aircraft. Dad was running short on fuel and asked the B-24 pilot where their position was. The other pilot said "I thought you navigating". Dad said, "no I thought you were". They had to make an emergency landing at an RAF base. A British RAF major was quite angry and refused to provide them

with any aviation fuel to get on with their trip. The major said if you can find a way to get the fuel to your aircraft, you can have some. Somehow a French national who was allowed on the base was able to assist dad wheeling the fuel to the plane by cart. They took off and resumed their trip and got to their destination without further incident. I am sure the French national was well-compensated for his efforts.

Another story of great interest was dad's fateful interaction with the late bandleader Glenn Miller. Again, dad was ferrying one or two pilots from France to RAF Twinwood Farm airfield in Clapham, England, on the outskirts of Bedford on December 15, 1944 in a Noorduyn UC-64A Norseman aircraft. Dad and the pilot(s) completed the trip without incident. Dad had orders to immediately return to the 416th station (Station A-55, Melun/Villaroche, France). The tail wheel on dad's aircraft had a severe malfunction, however, so dad had it taken to maintenance for repair. Dad went back to the operations office. When he arrived, an American major had learned dad had just flown across the English Channel and the major asked very insistently what the weather was like during the crossing. Dad replied it was OK for flying and he encountered no problems. Until very late in dad's life, he had very distinct memories on how urgent the major's line of questioning was. Dad went to retrieve his airplane from maintenance, and to his great dissatisfaction, his airplane was being used for spare parts for another plane. I think dad had to lay over for the night before he could start his return to France and the 416th on Dec 16th. Approximately one week later dad learned Glenn Miller's aircraft had flown from RAF Twinwood Farm airfield on a flight to France the very same day dad was there. Miller's plane was lost and never accounted for. Dad spoke to me a number of times about this incident and always believed the operations authorities at Twinwood would have asked him to fly Glenn Miller to France had his aircraft been flight worthy. Dad died never knowing the answer to that question.

The final story is interesting, also. Dad had finished the required number of combat missions in April 1945 to allow him to remain on the ground. In April, I think dad was assigned to an American army unit as a tactical liaison officer. One day in April, dad and an NCO had heard of a special "camp" the Germans had built. The NCO checked out a Thompson .45 submachine gun and they drove off looking for the camp. They found Buchenwald. The American army had already liberated it and dad arrived maybe 2-3 days later. Dad only relayed this story to me one time I think in 1969 or 1970. Dad described the many dead bodies still on the ground that were stinking and rotting. My dad also had no sense of smell so that part did not bother him so much but many of the American soldiers were still severely vomiting from the stench (they don't show that in the movies!). I think he was allowed to visit one of the cremation ovens, also.

Zean and Dory divorced in 1945 or early 1946. Zean returned to the United States in the fall of 1945 and was stationed at Wendover Field, Utah. There, he met and married Hazel Virginia Black at Wendover in 1946 and they had four children. After Wendover, Zean was stationed at a few other bases including Pepperrell AFB, St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada where he flew Douglas C-54 Skymaster transports to and from Greenland. He left the Air Force in 1949 and returned to the University of Utah where he earned a degree in geology. Zean was a geologist for the U.S. Forest Service until he retired in 1980. Virginia passed away 5 March, 1979 and Zean 11 November, 2006.