

Introduction

Christophe van der Linden, from Belgium, contacted MHAS through the web site and asked if anyone at the MHAS had any information about "Fearless Fosdick" who flew from Martlesham in WW2. Christophe provided two amazing photographs found while he was researching these events in Europe. Those WW2 photographs have been included in the story, below.

In answer to Christophe's request, the team at MHAS Museum sent out a call for information and Ed Malo responded.

And how!

Here is what Ed sent back to Martlesham:

"Below is some of the information that I have about Fearless Fosdick. I have some more information about him and I'll send you another E-Mail. Frank Forsyth is no longer with us but I do keep in touch with his widow who lives in Texas and his crew chief who lives in Ohio.

Eddie Malo Pilot 359th Fighter Sqdn. 1944"

Chapter I - Saga of the unexploded Bombs A. K. A. hand grenade

Kesgrave Hall - 359th Fighter Squadron 1Lt. Edward J. Malo ASN O-818400

In the summer of 1944, 1st Lt. Frank Forsyth, (also called "Fearless Fosdick" by his fellow pilots) a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot assigned to the 359th Fighter Squadron, 356th Fighter Group of the Eighth Air Force, was strafing a train in either Holland or Belgium. The train was an ammunition train and Lt. Forsyth's good shooting exploded the ammunition. Unfortunately, Lt. Forsyth's plane was severely damaged and he was forced to crash land on enemy occupied territory.



After surviving the belly landing, Lt. Forsyth was rescued by the underground and was hidden by them over a pub. While Forsyth was the guest of the underground he went on several forays with them and he managed to dispatch several of the enemy who had been enjoying the pleasures of the pub.



After the allies had overrun the German occupied land, Lt. Forsyth was returned to his fighter squadron at Martlesham Heath. As was the custom at Kesgrave Hall where the fighter pilots of the 359th lived, the pilots occasionally indulged in some spirits at the bar in Kesgrave Hall. Of course, any pilot who had received a promotion or medal or had been credited with an enemy kill was required to foot the bar bill for that evening.

After several drinks, the pilots usually retired to the porch for gentlemenly discussions on various topics such as girls, girls and girls. Also it was the usual practice for the pilots to try to shoot the various rats from the second story windows with their .45 cal. pistols. Although the pilots carried their pistols on combat missions, they were not very good shots with their sidearms. The pistols were carried even though an order from Eighth Air Force prohibited pilots carrying guns on combat missions. The guns were carried, more as a security blanket, to scare off German civilians in the event a pilot went down on German territory and to enable the pilot to escape or at least surrender to the German military.

After the firing of several pistols at rats and the resulting noise, Lt. Forsyth announced that "You haven't heard anything yet". With that Lt. Forsyth proceeded to his room and climbed to the roof of Kesgrave Hall with a hand grenade that he had brought back with him from his underground activities. The hand grenade was British made and dropped to the underground by the Royal Air Force. Lt. Forsyth pulled the pin from the grenade and threw it from the roof of Kesgrave Hall. Pilots, including myself, believe he threw it from the second floor of Kesgrave Hall although Forsyth in later years maintained that he did, in fact, throw it from the roof. The grenade did not make any noise in the tall grass outside the front porch of Kesgrave Hall as it did not explode. Either Major White, the 359th squadron commander or Lt. Col. Philip E. Tukey, Jr. the 356th group commander, heard of the incident. A sign, UNEXPLODED BOMBS, was placed in the tall grass field outside Kesgrave Hall. (Lts. Fain, Malo and two other pilots pictured). Lt. Forsyth was grounded and ordered to find the unexploded grenade. Being grounded deprived Lt. Forsyth of flying pay. Therefore, he was most anxious to retrieve the grenade.



After a week of combing the tall grass and being unable to locate the missing grenade, Lt. Forsyth searched out some friends at a nearby Royal Air Force base. He had served with the Royal Canadian Air Force prior to his assignment to the 356th. He obtained another grenade and had it defused. He then returned to Kesgrave Hall and enlisted the help of a fellow pilot. The grenade was placed in the tall grass and his helpful friend found the lost grenade and was rewarded with a pound note (worth about \$4.00 US in those days).



Lt. Forsyth was returned to flying status and spent his time training new pilots in combat flying. He did not fly any more combat missions as the Eighth Air Force policy did not allow escapees, evaders or prisoner-of-war to fly combat missions after their return to American control (See Note 1). This was to prevent pilots from being captured by the Germans and revealing possible secrets about underground activities.

Lt. Forsyth spent his later years in Texas and attended many 356th Fighter Group reunions. He has always been fondly remembered by his fellow pilots. He passed away in June 1996.

Note 1:

Lt. Frank Forsyth apparently received a waiver to 8th Air Force policy as he destroyed a FW-190 in air-to-air combat on November 27, 1944. See page 75 of ESCORT. The 356th Fighter Group on Operations over Europe 1943-1945 by Kent D. Miller.

Note 2:

At the September 1999 reunion of the 356th Fighter Group in Portland, Maine, I met the pilot who found Frank

Forsyth's lost grenade. After I told the tale of the grenade to Johnny Blewett, he told me that he was the pilot who found the explosive device. He had recently joined the 359th Fighter Squadron and as he was bicycling down the lane to Kesgrave Hall, Forsyth called him and asked him to help find the lost grenade. After several minutes, Forsyth said, in effect "Johnny look over there by the fence post. It might be around there". Sure enough, Johnny Blewett found Forsyth's grenade by the post. Of course, it was not the original grenade!!!

Chapter II - 21 May 2005 update from Christophe Van der Linden:

Here's a picture of little parts of the Fearless Fossdick found in the field on 17 April 2005. I sent a bullet and a part with the plane's picture to Frank's widow.



Frank's son wrote me his father traveled with his mother to Belgium to try to find the exact location and the family that helped him where he went down but without success. His mother wanted to know if I know of a family named Abeal or Beal. This family took Frank in and hid him and they put him in a well and covered him with hay. The Nazis came with pitchforks but did not find him. This family had a fourteen year old daughter who helped him travel around the town disguised as a deaf mute. They even made him a fake identification. When Frank was trying to get back to his US troops he and one other man were given bicycles and they went their separate ways. My father found out later that the other man was killed.

Chapter III - request for photos of aircraft painting

Hello,

My name is Robin Turner Forsyth and I am the wife of Andy Forsyth (Frank's son). We have been in contact with Christophe from Belgium and he sent us a copy of the picture of Frank's plane after he bellied up in Belgium. This is the first picture we have seen of Frank's airplane with the painting of "Fearless Fossdick" on it and it is a poor image in quality. We do have the original sketch of the drawing (see below) but I was wondering if any of the members of the 356th Fighter Group would have a better picture of the plane with the painting on it before it crashed and hopefully with Frank in the picture as well. We have many pictures of Frank in his planes but none of the one with the painting. If I could get a copy of such a picture I would

like to have it framed and give it to my husband for father's day as a surprise. I know he would love it as he misses his father very much.

Thank you so much for your help in this matter,

Robin Turner Forsyth
160 Towering Oaks Ct.
Burleson, TX 76028