

Lavack gets back

It is an excellent webpage. I enjoyed reading about myself but now I realize I should have been more specific in the combat details. I did one tour on fighters, 250 combat hours, before switching to Bomber Command. This I did to get out of the desert and the Middle East in general. On bombers, I did two tours of bomber raids called ops. There were 40 bomber raids on my first tour and 36 ops on my second tour. I was also involved in a number of supply drops to partisans and my group was involved in the Warsaw supply drops in August 1944. The aircraft photo shown was a post-war picture taken when I was serving in the Naval Fleet Air Arm. The aircraft wartime photo I sent was of the bomber and crew with whom I served in 1944. It's the photo that shows me bending down and a friend pointing at some flak hits my aircraft received when bombing an aircraft factory in Czechoslovakia. At that time in 1944 we were operating from an air base in Foggia, Italy.

Gathering these photos together and reminiscing about some of the wonderful characters with whom I served during that exciting period in my life was a 'sweet and sour' experience. The British Government and its original allies, later to be followed by the American Government, could only attack the German-held territories by air. That meant high casualties for the crews that trundled their heavily loaded aircraft through poor weather, flak and fighter-defenders to reach their targets. This activity wasn't at the 30,000+ height and super-sonic speeds of the modern bombers, but at 12,000' and lower and at speeds around 150 mph and less. It must have been wonderful to fly enemy fighters in those days—gaggles of slow-moving targets with .303 machine guns against fighters armed with 20 mm cannon. The crazy part of the story is that it was actually fun playing 'fox and hounds' and realizing that you could live through a tour of 40 raids, go back to an Operational Training Unit as an instructor, or into some other job between tours, then back to the squadrons for a second tour of 30 raids. With an average bomber crew life of 8 raids during the high loss years, being a second and later third tour pilot on these squadrons gave one the feeling of immortality, or perhaps, invincibility, is the better word.

Giving me credit for only one tour in your first article! Really! Now I know you are stressed with making Reading and Remembrance a success ... but ... all is forgiven. You are working on a noble cause that I hope will bring forth more 'sweet and sour' memories for Canadian veterans.

Study Questions

1. Vocabulary: survey your group for definitions of partisans, flak, trundled, gaggles, immortality, invincibility. Look up any words you don't know.
2. Locate Foggia, Warsaw and Czechoslovakia on a map. Why was it better to fly from Foggia to Warsaw and Czechoslovakia than from England?
3. Find out why the allies were flying supplies into Warsaw.
4. Convert all the measurements to metric. What is remarkable about the height, speed and gun size differences Mr. Lavack notes between then and now and between the enemy's guns and the allies' guns?
5. If an average bomber crew survived 8 raids and Mr. Lavack survived 80, how may you mathematically express his astounding survival rate?
6. In your own opinion, why does Mr. Lavack characterize his war reminiscences as 'sweet and sour'?
7. If you were to write a letter to Mr. Lavack, what do you think are the most important points you should include?