

AN EIGHTH AAF BOMBER STATION, ENGLAND.--- Not only plain guts but also a decided sense of honor is a requisite for the kind of men who fly America's big bombers in combat.

The other day, Dick Maggart returned from France with a plane that more closely resembled a flying Sieve than a B-17 Flying Fortress. He had only one of his four engines functioning and he had to crash land because the landing gear refused to be lowered.

The bomber had bulld its way through a veritable curtain of German anti-aircraft fire to get back to England, but that was secondary. What Dick remembered most vividly was the sight of Len Galloway, his pal since boyhood, now doubling as his navigator, knocked out of his seat by a burst of flak, and sent sprawling.

"Galloway looked like an overturned beetle, with his arms and legs flailing the air," Dick said, throwing back his head and laughing.

On the Army records, Dick is 1st Lt. Richard E. Maggart, 23, a Fortress pilot and his pal, is 2nd Lt. Leonard Galloway, 23, who came to England as a bombardier but went into combat as a navigator. The two grew up together in Cromwell, Ind., which is still their home, Lt. Maggart maintaining that they first became friends when they were infants. They attended the Cromwell schools and finally wound up on the same combat crew, carrying explosives across the English Channel to drop on targets on the continent.

Lt. Galloway was the first to enter the Armed Forces, enlisting in the Army before the United States became involved in the war. He was stationed in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and soon afterwards entered cadet training, emerging as a bombardier.

Lt. Maggart became an air cadet in November 1942, and upon completing his pilot's training was sent to Salt Lake City, where his crew was to be assembled. Looking over the lists of men available for the various positions on a Fortress, he found of his best friend at the top of the bombardiers' list...that was his man.

The two arrived in England with their crew in April, but Lt. Galloway was a bit later than Maggart in being assigned to combat duty.

"They decided to convert me into a navigator," Galloway explained, "so Dick got the jump on be in getting started while I was attending navigation classes. He's seven missions ahead of me, with 22."

But back to their latest and hottest escapade over enemy territory, an experience that was shared by another Indianian, Staff Sergeant Derral B. Wittwer, 23 of Fort Wayne, the ball turret gunner.

Their formation was going in on its bomb run against a German airfield in France when---WHAM---a direct burst of flak caught the left inboard engine of their plane. Flames began licking out from beneath the cowling, but Lt. Maggart snuffed them out by turning off the feed valve of the oil line. However, the engine was useless.

At the same time, Lt. Galloway was picking himself up off the floor of his compartment in the ship's nose. He had been spent sprawling by the concussion of the explosion and by one fragment that had struck his machine gun, bounced off and penetrated the wooden-backed pad on which he was making notations.

The shell burst had knocked the Fortress out of formation and as the pilot strove to bring it back into position---WHAM---another anti-aircraft shell exploded in the open

bomb bay. Fragments riddled the bomb bay doors with holes, ricocheted off the cargo of bombs, drove up into the fuselage, snapping control cables, and smashed into the radio compartment, destroying the radio equipment. That the radio operator, John W. Johnson, 20, 1105 Marshall St., Paris, Ill., wasn't hit by the pieces of flying steel was short of miraculous.

Almost simultaneously with the burst in the bomb bay, the bomb release man, Staff Sgt. Cecil A. Hamilton, 20, of Bairoil, Wyo., dropped the explosive to avert their detonation while still in the racks.

The bomber had been jolted still farther out of alignment and Lt. Maggart again attempted to return to his place when---WHAM!---a third direct hit smashed into the right hand wing behind the right inboard engine, gasoline gushed from a punctured fuel tank and the engine ceased functioning, leaving only the two outboard engines still in working order.

"I'd had enough by then," commented Lt. Maggart, "so I decided to leave the formation for good without any more urging from the Jerries, and head for home while I still had half a plane."

But what had already transpired, the bomber crew soon learned was merely the introduction.

Nearing the French coast, the crippled plane became the target for every anti-aircraft gun in the vicinity.

Sitting in his plexi-glass inclosed position, Lt. Galloway looked out upon a sky black with flak bursts. Down in his similarly constructed ball turret, Sgt. Wittwer felt somewhat akin to a clay pigeon.

"They seemed to be intentionally firing ahead of us and trying to drive us back inland where they could pick us off leisurely," said Galloway. "Dick went into evasive action in effort to get away from the fire, "but we must have been over an entire anti-aircraft battery." This was the setting when a third engine, the left outboard one, was hit and rendered inoperative---three down and one to go. The pilot was able to lock the propellor of only one of the damaged engines into position, and the other two whirled wildly, violently shaking the plane and threatening to break it up in midair.

"The hell with this, I'm getting out of here," Lt. Maggart shouted into the ship's intercommunication system, and like a fullback tucking the ball under his arm and smashing through the center of the opposing line, he bulled the Fortress through the cordon of flak and headed out over the channel toward England. The plane received numerous additional fragment hits as it drove through the anti-aircraft fire but none were especially crippling.

The Fortress left a trail of equipment behind it as it struck out for home, the crew members tossing overboard everything available in order to lighten the ship and help that one good engine struggle along.

Reaching the English coast, the crew spotted an emergency landing field and decided to come down there rather than attempt to gain their home base. Lt. Maggart made preparations for landing and started to let down his landing gear, but only the right wheel could be lowered. The other had been damaged and refused to budge.

Coming in on one engine was hazardous enough, but without landing wheels was just asking for additional trouble. To further complicate matters, oil from the damaged engines had been blown back against the pilot's and co-pilot's windows, where it froze into an opaque coating.

With one functioning engine, two whirling, uncontrollable propellers, no landing gear, a strong tail wind and with his head out the side window so that he could see what he was doing, Lt. Maggart brought his flak-riddled bomber down for a belly landing, which under the circumstances, was perfectly executed.

Some 300 holes had made a collander out of the bomber, the interior of the fuselage was a jungle of dangling control wires, and the radio compartment had been shot from beneath and around the radio operator---but not a man of the nine-man crew received so much as a scratch.

"It was pretty exciting day for a milk run," was Lt. Maggart's summation of the experience. "They picked exclusively on us, because of all the other planes from our outfit that were over there today none of them had flak come anywhere near them".

As a balm for its trouble, the crew was given a two-day pass.

Both Lt. Maggart and Lt. Galloway are married. Mrs. Maggart residing at 1097 East Tipton St., Huntington, Ind., and Mrs. Galloway at 211 Water St., Ligenier, Ind. Lt. Maggart's mother, Mrs. Ruth Maggart, lives on Route 3, Ligenier, and Lt. Galloway's parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Galloway, make their home in Cromwell. Before entering the Air Corps, Lt. Maggart was employed by the General Electric Co. in Fort Wayne.

Sgt. Wittwer, the Fort Wayne member of the crew is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Otto Wittwer, 3304 Webster St. He is a graduate of South Side High School and was employed as an aircraft electrician at Patterson Field in Dayton, Ohio, prior to entering the service.

Other members of the crew not already mentioned are Flight Officer George H. Seidlein, 24, 1991 29th Ave., San Francisco, Calif., the co-pilot; Staff Sgt. Charles F. Gregory, 21, Eatonton, Ga., the top turret gunner; Staff Sgt. Andrew Kobulik, 21, 5025 Blair St., Pittsburgh, Pa., tail gunner; and Staff Sgt. George L. Huff, 20, 611 North Ninth St., Lebanon, Pa., waist gunner.