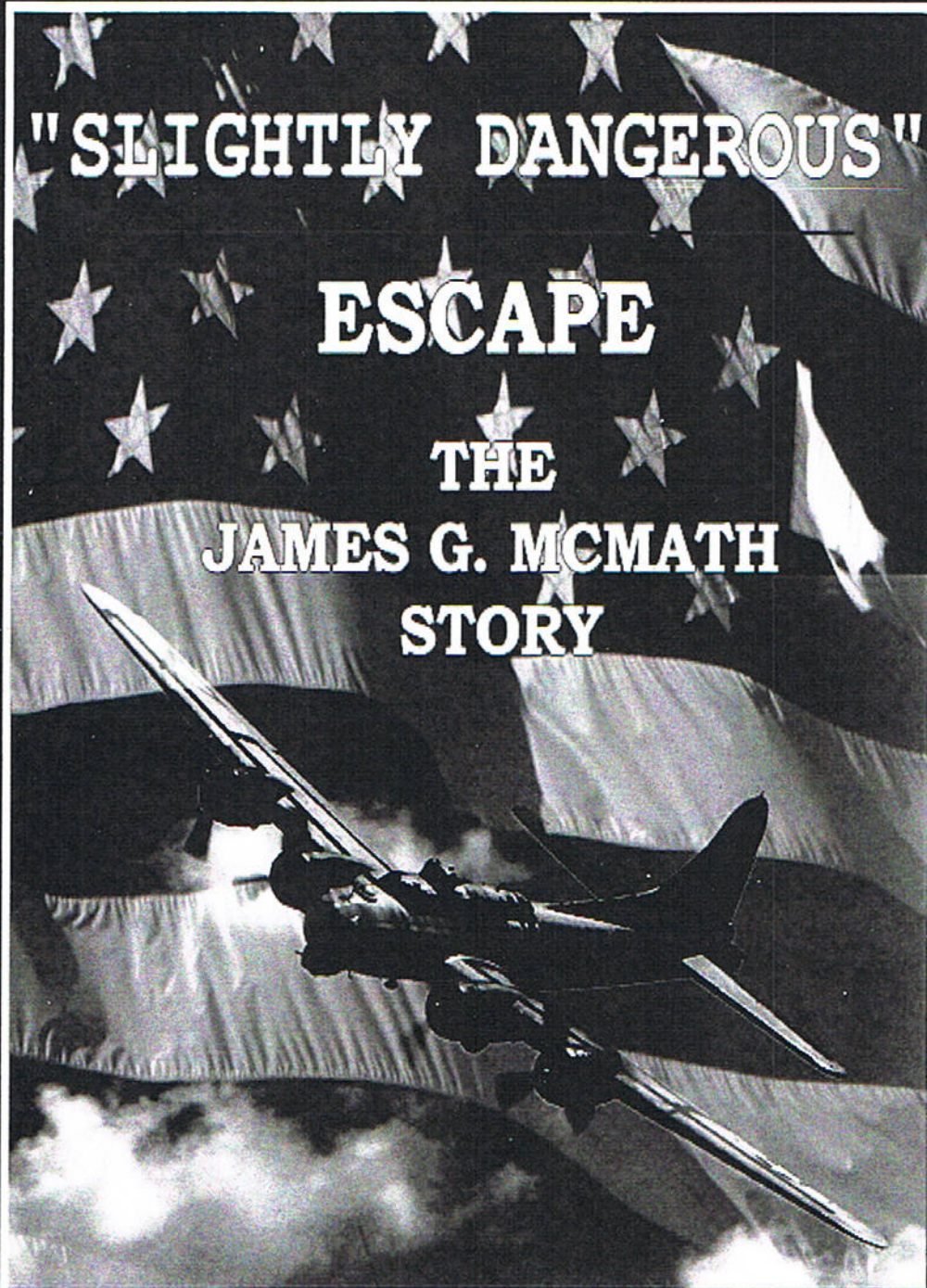


"SLIGHTLY DANGEROUS"

ESCAPE

THE  
JAMES G. MCMATH  
STORY



## INTRODUCTION

After many years of urging, pleading and cajoling from our mother, their children and grandchildren, our dad has decided to try to put into words his experience as a B-17 pilot during World War II, highlighting of course, his plane being forced down over France and all that happened to him during his months of trying to escape. He could not do this without the help of Mother. Some of this she wrote many years ago when the events were a lot fresher in their minds, and some of it much later. Nevertheless, they got this done for us. This truly is the greatest legacy they can leave us.

We have always wanted Daddy to do this, but he was always hesitant, and for many years really did not like talking about the experience. Several years ago, Jodi, his Granddaughter, gave him a notebook for he and Mother to start writing in and they did some, but did not complete it. In the notebook, Jodi wrote a beautiful inscription which I will include later in this into. Some years later, Jodi decided that the notebook was not going to cut it and she gave them a mini tape recorder complete with extra tapes and batteries, but somehow it just never got done.

A few weeks ago, they decided they needed to get it done, so we would have something to treasure for always. It begins when Daddy enters the Army Air Corps in 1942 and continues until he leaves active duty in 1945.

## **INSCRIPTION IN NOTEBOOK FROM JODI WISE**

Here's your pad and here's your pen,  
Now tell me Granddad where you have been.

I want to know everything of the days gone by,  
I want to know when you laughed,  
I want to know when you cried.

Tell me about the mountains you hiked,  
In the shoes that were too small.  
And tell me about the feelings you had when  
You made it here safely after all.

In you mind there lies a treasure,  
A treasure you have to share.  
So that when I hear talk of World War II,  
I'll tell them my Granddad was there.

## ENTERING THE ARMY AIR CORP

I entered the Army Air Corp in the summer of 1942. I began my training at Randolph Field in San Antonio, where I had pre-flight training. I then went to Ballinger for my initial flight training. I spent Christmas of 1942 in Ballinger, Texas.

John Malcolm, Little Hoss Lindsey and Marpe and I were all there together. Marie and Marpe's girlfriend, Marge Keek came from Iowa to spend Christmas with us. We ate our Christmas meal in a small steak house restaurant in Ballinger.

From there I was assigned to Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo for basic training. Then I went to Waco for advanced flight training. Marie was teaching in Henderson at the time and she came to visit me in Waco and I gave her an engagement ring at Easter. I got my wings in May of 1943 in Waco and Marie came for the ceremony. Malcolm and Justine got married there and Marie and I were their attendants.

I then went to Washington State—Euphreta Washington. There I received an assignment to Walla Walla Washington. Then I got





Marie & Mary Blanche  
Smith taught together  
at Henderson High  
School



James G. & Marie in  
San Antonio Tx. 1942



Marge Keek (Marpe's  
Girlfriend)



Marpe 1942  
Ballinger, Tx.

the news that I was going to be sent overseas. I called Marie and told her to come to Walla Walla so we could get married. She rode the train from Fort Worth to Denver. While in route on the train, there was a wreck ahead of them on the tracks, so they were put up in a hotel in Denver until they could get the track cleared.

From Denver, they went through the mountains to Pendleton, Oregon. They changed trains there to a narrow gauge train to go to Walla Walla. The total trip from Fort Worth took about 4 or 5 days. All this time Marie had on her suit, hat, gloves and carried her bags.

She finally arrived in Walla Walla. She had reservations at a hotel, I was out flying when she arrived. She had to go to the court house and plead competency because normally there was a 30 day waiting period for a marriage license. She also went to a jewelry store and bought 2 wedding bands, ordered gardenias, called the Church and a got a minister, Glenn Mell, lined up to perform the ceremony. We originally were to be married June 28, however I was out flying over the Pacific and our navigator brought us in

over California instead of Washington. Onalee Jensen, the wife of one of my crew called Marie and told her the crew was over California, so we knew by the time we got back it would be too late for a wedding. So we postponed the wedding until June 29, 1943.

After we finally got back to the base in Washington, we did not have any passes to get off the base. There was a man there in the hospital who had a pass, but couldn't use it so Onalee Jensen brought his pass to me and then went back with the same pass to get Jensen off the base.

We finally got married about 5:00 PM on June 29 at the Christian Church in Walla Walla, Washington. The minister, Glenn Mell performed the ceremony. The Jensens were our attendants. After the ceremony, we all went to dinner. Our wedding dinner consisted of fake meat, it was very difficult to get real meat during wartime.



# Miss Marie Egan, Lieut. McMath Wed

Miss Marie Egan, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Egan, west of Denton, became the bride of Lieut. James Gordon McMath, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. A. McMath of Krum, June 29 when the double ring ceremony was read in the Christian Church of Walla Walla, Wash., by the pastor, Rev. Mr. Mell.

The bride wore a powder blue gaberdine suit with brown accessories and a shoulder corsage of gardenias. She was attended by Mrs. James C. Jenson, wearing an aqua crepe with black accessories and a corsage of talisman roses. Lieut. J. C. Jenson was best man.

Lieut. and Mrs. McMath both are graduates of Teachers College, and she taught in Henderson last year. Lieut. McMath entered the U. S.

Air Corps in August, 1942, and received his wings and commission May 24 at the Army Air Base in Walla Walla, where the couple is at home for the present.

James and Marie's  
wedding announcement



Glen Mell  
Minister who performed  
wedding ceremony



Christian Church where James and  
Marie were married  
Walla Walla, Washington  
June 29, 1943



Onalee Jensen



on left Onalee and Marie waiting to  
board train to Nebraska 1943



Marie and I spent the night at the hotel. The Jensens stayed in a private home where Onalee had been staying. The next morning Onalee took us back to the base.

That night the USO was having a dance, only USO members and military were allowed to attend, so Marie and Onalee joined the USO so they could come to the dance. They rode the USO bus to the dance. The dance was held at the Officer's Club. After the dance was over, Marie and Onalee and practically 2 whole squadrons hid in the parking lot of the O Club. After all the buses had left, we all went back in the club and turned on all the lights and set up drinks and food and we partied all night.

The next day Marie and I stayed in touch by telephone. Jensen and I were going to Nebraska. Mother and Onalee and Jensen and I got on the train and headed to Nebraska. When we got there I found out I would be going to Bangor Maine where I would be leaving to go overseas.

Marie and I never saw each other after we got to Nebraska. We only talked on the phone. From Bangor we flew to Greenland

where we refueled. We then went to Prestwick, Scotland, and from there on to England. I did pre-training for bombing runs and we got our crew assignments.

On our first run to France, our plane was shot up and 2 crew members were wounded. Little did we know, but our third mission was to be our final flying mission. So begins the story of “SLIGHTLY DANGEROUS” ESCAPE.

CONFIDENTIAL

MILITARY LIAISON OFFICE  
AMERICAN CONSULATE  
GIBRALTAR

29 October 1943

SUBJECT: Orders.

TO : Personnel named below.

1st Lieut. August Winters, O-729532, 306th Bm. Grp.  
2nd Lieut. Leonard J. Fink, O-796510, 384th Bm. Grp.  
2nd Lieut. William E. Harnly, O-736703, 92nd Bm. Grp.  
2nd Lieut. James G. McMath, O-680668, 384th Bm. Grp.  
Tech Sgt. Norman Kreitenstein, 35114035, 100th Bm. Grp.  
Staff Sgt. Pasquale J. Del Vento, 31104691, 95th Bm. Grp.

having reported at this station on 29 October 1943, you are placed on temporary duty this office. Upon completion of this temporary duty you will proceed by first available transportation to LONDON, ENGLAND, where you will report without delay to the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army. Under authority of WD Cablegram Number 45, 4 February 1943, in lieu of subsistence, a flat per diem of \$6.00 is authorized while traveling on official business (except by belligerent or government vessel) and while on temporary duty this station, in accordance with existing law and regulations. TDM FSA 1-5600 P 432-02 A 0425-24.

By order of Colonel FORSTER:

GRADY LEWIS,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Executive Officer.

OFFICIAL:

*Grady Lewis*  
GRADY LEWIS,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Executive Officer.

Distribution.

MIS  
Hq ETOUSA (A.C. of S., G-2)  
Personnel concerned  
File

CONFIDENTIAL

James's orders to go to England



## BACKGROUND

The day this story starts we were an average crew of Americans aboard a B 17 named “Slightly Dangerous”. We were on our third raid over enemy territory, the going had been tough. We had been to Stuttgart, Germany, and we knew we stayed in the target area too long. When we got back over France, all our engines were out, but one. We prepared to “take her in.” Giving up all hope of reaching our base in England again that day, we concentrated our hopes on a safe landing and “ESCAPE”, if we were lucky. The day is September 6, 1943.

Our crew members were:

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lester Aufmuth  
Pilot-----Prisoner of War

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James G. McMath  
Co-Pilot---Evaded Capture

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James C. Jensen  
Bombardier---Prisoner of War

2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Charles Downe  
Navigator----Evaded Capture

S/Sgt. James Wagner  
Ball Turret Gunner---Evaded Capture

T/Sgt. Charles Fisher  
Flight Engineer/Right Waist Gunner—Evaded Capture

T/Sgt. Robert K. Price  
Flight Engineer/Gunner---Prisoner of War

T/Sgt. Robert C. Corpening  
Radio Gunner---Wounded on 1<sup>st</sup> Mission (eventually killed in  
action)

James Weatherford (Shorty)  
Fill In Radio Gunner---Evaded Capture

S/Sgt. Joseph H. Smith  
Left Waist Gunner---Prisoner of War

S/Sgt. Carl E. Bachman  
Tail Gunner---Evaded Capture

# **“ESCAPE”**

## **CHAPTER 1 PANCAKE**

Our B 17 landed swiftly but safely in a broad level hay field, tumbling the peaked haycocks as it bumped to a sudden stop. Out we poured dressed in Mae Wests and parachutes, momentarily full of gladness to feel the solid earth again under our feet.

Les Aufmuth, our pilot told the crew to beat it for a patch of thick dark woods that lay about a fourth of a mile to the North. They scarcely stopped running in their haste to find cover. We officers had to stand by to set fire to the ship. She wasn't badly damaged, and would make a fine prize, but firing was easier said than done, it took us nearly a half hour. The hay wouldn't burn and the few books, papers, orders, and other inflammables were scarcely adequate. Finally, by using flares and incendiaries, we managed to start a parachute, which gave us a hot blaze for the front of the ship.



Below are several newspaper clippings reporting  
James being missing

## LT. J.G. McMath Is Listed Missing In European Area

Mrs. James Gordon McMath has been notified that her husband, Lt. James Gordon McMath is missing in action in the European area since Sept. 6.

Lt. McMath is the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. A. McMath of Krum. He received his wings and commission on May 24 of this year at Waco. After a short training period in Washington and Nebraska, he was sent to England and has been stationed there since the last part of July.

He is a brother of the late Jack McMath, who was killed in this theatre in May. Lt. McMath is a graduate of the college and was a member of the Falcon fraternity. He was married in June to the former Miss Marie Egan, also of Denton. He was a co-pilot on a B-17 named "Slightly Dangerous."

1943

PAGE THREE — II

into preparing the French for the day when they can fight with the Allies.

For instance—the French ought to be part of the Mediterranean Allied Commission, which thus far includes only ourselves, Britain and Russia.

—Back the Attack—

### James Gordon McMath Is Reported Missing

DENTON, Texas, Sept. 20.—Lieut. James Gordon McMath, stationed with the United States Army Air Forces in England, has been reported missing in action, according to a message from the War Department to his wife, who resides west of Denton. A copilot on a B-17 bomber, he has been missing since Sept. 6 when the plane failed to return to its base.

He was the brother of Lieut. Jack L. McMath, who was killed while on duty with the United States Army Air Forces over the European theater May 26, and the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. A. McMath. His wife is the former Miss Marie Egan, to whom he was married June 29.

After graduating from North Texas State Teachers College, Lieutenant McMath entered service in August, 1942. He received his wings May 24 at the Waco Army Flying School. He had been on duty in England since July.

—Back the Attack—

### Capt. Preston Taylor Prisoner of Japanese

JACKSONVILLE, Texas, Sept. —Capt. Preston Taylor of Mix-

DENTON

## No Further Details Received Of Lieut. McMath

Mrs. McMath, wife of Lieut. James Gordon McMath, has received no further word about her husband, since being notified that he had returned to duty.

She previously had been notified that he was missing in action in the air service in the European area, and then received word from his commanding officer that he was safe. However, it was stated that no details could be given because of censorship regulations.

Curiously, all this time I had noticed a farmer plowing in a field not more than half a mile away. He never looked up when we landed or while we were firing the ship, though he must have heard the crash or seen the smoke. I never knew whether he was afraid or stupid.

We were furtively rushing all this time for fear we would be discovered and captured. So as soon as we were sure the plane would burn, we too started to run for the woods. Then we saw the discarded packs, Mae Wests, heavy coats, boots and harnesses of the rest of the crew and it dawned upon us that we were still wearing all of our “gear” too. You can’t run far on a hot day, especially dressed in a Mae West harnessed onto a parachute. Freeing ourselves as we ran, we made a fine trail to the woods. It was about 1330 by this time, and so far no one seemed to be aware of our plight.

Resting only a moment, we made our way rapidly through the patch of woods, then to another, and thus from patch to patch. When we came to the edge of the woods, we could see people and

duck back into coverage as we progressed. Shorty had to stop once to get something out of his shoe. This gave us time to rest. By 1800 we figured we were at least 10 miles away. We watched carefully and stopped frequently to examine rabbit warrens and animal traps, to listen and to hide out at the least sign of discovery. We tried to travel in a Southeast direction, but the woods ran another way and we needed the woods for cover, so we traveled with the woods.

Shortly after 6:00 we had reached the edge of a patch of woods bounded by a cross road. Now we were stopped, completely exhausted, and showing marks and scratches we had received going through the thick underbrush. The trees were huge, black oak, and the underbrush was knee deep in thorny briars. On stopping, we found our pant legs were full of thorns.

From the edge of the woods we could see a large house and cluster of small thatched covered houses about a hundred yards in the rear. There were high fences and hedges around these houses. As we stood there viewing the scene in the gloom of evening, and



not knowing exactly what to do, we saw a girlish appearing French woman leaving one of the houses. She was riding a bicycle, and she was coming down the road toward us. We turned instantly and ran down a little trail away from the main road and dropped down behind some trees. Coverage was scant here, we thought we would let her pass, and I am sure we were an anxious looking trio as we crouched behind the trees waiting for her to go on.

There were three of us together now and this trio consisted of Les, the pilot, me, the co-pilot, and Shorty the radioman. Suddenly, as if by providence the woman turned her bike down the trail and came our way. It was impossible to run now, and the trees wouldn't hide us, therefore, we crouched there dumb with surprise as if frozen to the ground. Les said, in an excited whisper, "Mac, she's coming this way." "My God", I said as I swallowed my heart and poor Shorty was so scared that he was simply speechless with terror.

When the woman saw us, we weren't the only ones who were frightened. She screamed slightly, as if she had seen three ogres

all at once, then she jumped off her bike. Although she was overcome by our presence at this particular point, she stood her ground. I had my French sheet out by this time and impulsively walked toward her trying my level best to show her some words on it and saying “Americanos”, “Americanos.” She stood there steadily sizing us up and down as I approached her. Finally, when we made her understand, she got very excited and was shaking hands with herself trying to welcome us, but we were not sure about it at first. This was our first introduction to what we later came to know as the French handshake. Then as we felt a small degree of relief, she shook hands with us, still chattering some French that none of us understood. We began making conversation by pointing to words on the French sheet and soon we were all trying to shake hands with her at once. We were equally as excited as she.

She was a small woman, dark hair, with a boyish haircut, brown skin with pinkish looking powder to cover otherwise unwashed features. Her dress was simple and faded from wear and the sun,

certainly not from washing. She was bare legged and wore inexpensive canvas sandals. I remember how volatile her breath was. It smelled as if she had been saturated in garlic for many many seasons.

We weren't getting very far with our French sheet, but she didn't speak English so it was our only hope of trying to talk to her. We tried pointing to various words which she promptly misinterpreted and apparently thought one of us was ill. Every effort seemed to be futile. Then she made signs that she was going back to the house and as a gesture of assurance, left her bicycle with us. We were pretty scared, you may be sure. Les said, "shall we trust this dame or beat it?" What else could we do but trust her? The next person might not be as friendly as she. Tired, hungry and desperate, as we were, we unconsciously followed our instincts as dogs do when they meet a friendly master.

Running hurriedly she quickly disappeared through the gateway of the house across the road. In a few minutes, that seemed much longer, she returned from the house with 2 old ladies and a small

girl about 12 years old. These women were truly French and just as excited as Frenchmen are reputed to be. They waved their hands, chattered a lot in subdued voices, and pointed at us. All of this made us feel very foolish until the small girl made a motion asking to look at the French sheet. I was still holding it and waving at them. The young girl seemed to make the old ladies understand by reading the phrases we pointed out to her. We learned later that the girl spoke German also, but she couldn't speak a word of English. She was as helpless in English as we were in French.

This went on for three or four minutes, then they motioned for us to follow them. This we did, but we weren't sure that we were going gladly, as the woman, whom we had seen first, got on her bicycle and went down the trail, while we sneaked across the road. The gate was 100 yards from the house, so we crawled through a wire fence to reach the house quickly. One of the old ladies caught a shoe in the fence. When we looked back, she was stuck there sputtering. We hid in the weeds while the woman and the girl

helped her. When the fat one got her shoe unhooked, and they came up to us, we sneaked along with them and entered the basement of an ancient stone out building. We weren't long in discovering that it was a deserted cow shed, approximately 12 x14, with a ceiling not over 9 feet high. The basement part of the building was about two-thirds underground.

We were worried naturally, but we were also very thirsty and this was beginning to be one of our main concerns. The three of us had had no water a greater part of the day, and our road work through the woods left us with dehydrated throats. Of course, we had had a cup of coffee at 0600 and we had flown six hours on oxygen and bucked another six hours through the woods after that. So as soon as we were in the basement, we pointed to the French word that meant drink, Boisson. The girl told one of the old ladies, the one we assumed to be her mother, and promptly we were present with a big tall bottle of wine. Very good grade wine too, I might add. We drank most of this and I tried to make them understand we wanted water. This time I was sure the point was



over, but instead of water we were given another big bottle of wine. We finally gave up and drank this too. I am sure I can speak for all three when I say we were beginning to feel much happier about the entire situation by now.

Then when we thought we would live on wine alone for the remainder of our life, Les saw a faucet. “Gee, Mac, I know they got water, I saw a faucet outside the door.” I just got to have some water soon,” he said. “Damn this wine anyway.” Then by a system of complicated motions, Les succeeded in leading the little girl to the door and pointing to the faucet. She got the point and soon got us glass after glass of water from the faucet, laughing at us all the time. This was the first time we ever knew that in France only animals drink water, people drink wine. It both surprised and amused them immensely to see us soak it up.

One of the old ladies left for the house and came back in 2 or 3 minutes with an old man who she bossed as if he were her husband. They had some peasant clothes for us and the old man had a cap he gave me. Then I gave my wings and bars to the little

girl, much to her delight! I am sure she hid them where no one could find them for to be caught with such was asking for trouble. Fortunately, I left my dog tags in England that day.

We shook hands with the old man as he was very friendly, then he and the women began some intensified chatter. One by one they would disappear and reappear with this and that article of clothing for us to try on. Shorty was nearer the size of these people and was easier to fit with clothing, but there was a catch to it, he had to take his other clothes off first. The women weren't about to clear out, but were insistent about his going on with the change. This nearly killed Shorty, but he went on with it. He had on GI underwear which only added to his embarrassment. Then they brought pants for me and Les. When the ladies wouldn't leave the room or even turn their backs, we had to do the same as Shorty. They were urging us to hurry and they seemed to sense our embarrassment. When we were finally clothed, we burned and buried our uniforms. I had a shirt that was a night shirt and tucked

in my pants in the daytime. It looked like flannel and was not clean.

It was growing dark now and they decided to move us to another house. Maybe it could be called a house, but it was about as comfortable as a barn. In a short time, which seemed like years, one of the women brought us some boiled eggs. There was one for each of us and she gave us some peaches, too. Never had such a meager meal seemed so adequate. Our stomachs were so full of excitement, I'm sure we didn't relish the food as we should have.

About 8:30 the young girl, who had talked to us using the French sheet, came and told us we were to move to another building quickly. In the conversation, she told us the Germans had been there earlier in the evening looking for us. She led us through the darkness, crouching and crawling along very slowly. We did not know it at the time, but we were to have quarters in the house where German officers stayed when they came to this part of the country on a hunting trip. All of this moving added to anxiety.

After we were safely in the house and upstairs, the girl went out

and locked the door. We were so tense and worried, we hardly knew whether to stay there or not. Les and I talked it over and decided to take a chance on what might happen. Shorty was so thoroughly frightened that he followed our decisions with no comment. We agreed to take turn keeping watch and thus try to get some sleep. I was to sit up and keep watch first while Les and Shorty slept. No doubt, I had the easiest job, because I was very much awake.

Around midnight, I was waking Les to take my place and let me sleep for a while, when we heard a noise downstairs. Shorty woke up instantly too, and we all sat very rigid while two people apparently were coming up the stairs. No doubt, we were very wide eyed when the girl and an old man came into the room with a small light. The girl told us we were to get up and go with the old man.

This old man was definitely French, small, rather dried up, wore a long mustache, and was quite dark. He had a wonderful sense of

humor, and we soon began to refer to him as “uncle”. This pleased him greatly.

We left our first harbor and now we traveled with the old man down a highway.. He had a bicycle that he had obviously ridden coming after us, but he pushed it now and walked along with us. It was so very dark we could hardly see each other, much less where we were going. The old man seemed to know the road and country intimately and managed to make us understand the way we were to go.

We had traveled some distance when we noticed a light moving quite a way down the road. The light seemed to come toward us, then it would turn and go the other way. Soon it would turn and come our way again. All the time we kept walking nearer to it and soon we could hear a clanking noise that resembled the sound of German troops moving. We were almost certain that it was the Germans looking for us.

Then the light turned and went the other way until it grew dim. We thought it was going away when suddenly it turned and came



back directly toward us. Instantly we scattered. “Uncle” and I ran down the ditch, but Les and Shorty ran out into the field and burred up in the newly turned soil. The light kept on coming. Uncle and I ran on our hands and knees down the ditch through grass that was knee high. I hid behind a tree and Uncle ran on, struggling with his bicycle and hid behind a hay stack. The light seemed to move back and forth, then it seemed the more I tried to hide, the more the light came around me. When I thought I could stand it no longer and that my heart would pound out of my body, I realized and saw what it was. It was some poor Frenchman plowing his field and the clanking noise was the chains on the horse harness. Uncle had seen what it was too about the same time, for he came over to find me. Then I went to the edge of the field where the other two fellows had gone, and whistled low. There was no answer. Again and again I tried with the same results. Finally I called “Les”...”Shorty” , but still there was no response. Uncle and I began walking out into the field and finally came upon them still half buried in the dirt. Even then, it took a lot of talking to

convince them that we were right, but once convinced, we were soon on our way again. This episode was later very amusing to Uncle and he would tell it to his friends and laugh very heartily.

That night, as we traveled toward the little town where Uncle lived, we could see ack ack—anti aircraft firing-- go off. Every few minutes Uncle would hurry us, because he was afraid we would not reach our destination before the light came. The country was very hilly and walking over it was very tiresome. It was getting light and it seemed to come very fast. We hurried down back alleys. There were lights in some of the houses, but we met no one. We came at last to a narrow street that had high stone walls on either side. It was still rather dark in here and soon we came to a gate and went into a place that looked something like a big Chateau. We went over to a small house that looked like a one room house with a lean-to. When we got to the door the old man called inside and a girl came and opened the door. It was the girl whom we had first met on the path the afternoon before. This man was obviously her father.

## OUR STAY AT “UNCLE’S’

The house was a two room affair, however, we never saw anything but the one room which was the kitchen, living and dining room all in one. Our quarters constituted a small attic over this room. It was completely unfurnished with the exception of two old quilts and a very adequate supply of fleas. It was small and we had to stay there in the daytime unless we were called down to eat. We could get outside at night to stretch and get some fresh air, but only one at a time then. We didn’t get much sleep at night because of these cramped quarters as well as the ever present fleas. I guess we were a little apprehensive as Uncle showed us round the Chateau after it started growing dark the second night. He kept showing us the walls and reassuring us.

There was an old woman who lived here too. She must have been Uncle’s wife. She was as filthy as the house. Her skin was soft, but very dirty. She was crazy and going blind. Her hair was clipped and she sat in one chair most of the time. She was a Catholic and wore a rosary. If her husband and her daughter both

left the house, she would call them and cry and raise the devil.

This almost drove us crazy and finally I talked to her to try to quiet her down. Then she sat down and held my hand and cried and talked to me. She spoke in French and I talked to her in English. We were certainly talking about different things, but it seemed to satisfy her. Soon the daughter came home and we went to the attic and the fleas. After a short time, however, we were called down to eat.

The table was black with grime and filth. It had never been washed. They never washed the dishes, they just wiped them out with a cloth and stacked them in a corner. There was practically nothing in this room except for the table, a few chairs, stove, a stack of dishes and a small pile of twigs for fuel for the stove.

We had very little to eat and we felt like eating very little. While I was sitting at the table I noticed these people were half starved, but they were willing to share their food with us. Even though they had very little, they ate their food in courses. The old lady had a dog sitting by her and as soon as she finished with one

course, she would hold her plate down and let the dog lick it out before she ate the next course.

When the meal was finished, the daughter wiped the dishes and stacked them, not neatly, in the corner. Later in the day when I came down again from the attic, there were two small chickens in the room. They played over the stack of dishes as if hunting for one small crumb. They came in and out of the door at will.

The next day it rained and was very cold and miserable. It looked fairly safe here and we were some distance from the main road. We did find some consolation in that fact.

That morning, I went down into the room below and I was almost overcome by the filth, but there was no one here and I decided immediately to wash the dishes. When I looked out, I saw the 3 members of the household down in a little garden away from the house. I got the largest pan, filled it with water, heated it on the stove and proceeded to wash the dishes—it turned out to be a fair size job as the dishes required a lot of soaking and scrubbing.



I had finished with the dishes, but was still downstairs when they came in. They immediately noticed what I had been doing and they had plenty to say. However, I could not understand what they were saying so I never knew whether or not they objected.

After a few days at Uncle's he carried us to Gizores to get on a train for Paris. He purchased our tickets and we waited around until a large crowd gathered and then we pushed into the crowd onto the train. We walked around Paris looking for a contact.

While, we were there, Uncle peed in the street. Needless, to say we were a little shocked at that. We spent most of an afternoon in the back room of a bar. However, no contact was made and we returned to Uncle's on a train.

The next few days were spent at Uncle's, in the attic, eating grapes and scratching fleas. There were grapevines along side of this barn and we ate all we could reach. We were still unbathed and in the same dirty clothes we had been given, the day our plane came down, but there was no way to clean up or get clean clothes.

We made a second trip to Paris on a train to make a contact. We went to a big house that was empty but had a piano. The daughter was a concert accordionist.

Word came of a contact—a man from the resistance movement—we went back to Paris with him and met two young men who carried me and Shorty to Madam Denué's. Les, the pilot was taken with a different group. We went by Metro and this is the place where they were checking id's—since we had none these guys led us to the center of the crowd and pushed us on through. Madam Denué ran a bakery and we were quartered in one room above—there were 2 rooms, but one was sealed off. They kept all their valuables in it and there was no way to enter it. We entered Madam Denué's through the back door through a courtyard. Other apartments and businesses used the courtyard and there was only one public toilet—"Thunder Mug" (pee pot). It was a hole with an indentation—it had a water tank above and a pull chain to flush. Only one of us could leave the room at a time to use this facility.

While at Madam Denué's we ate bread made with sawdust and lots of cabbage—cabbage was a main stay, cooked and raw. We had water to drink. We had a window that opened to a street where we could see the Eiffel Tower. We had a bed and some chairs. We would watch a store owner across the street who sold fish and snails. He wore an apron and visited with all the passersby. When he was alone, he would stand there and eat snails, picking them out with his pocket knife.

We could hear anti aircraft guns going off and shells would fall in the street—big chunks of metal. There were planes constantly going over.

We finally received our ID's, after that different men would show up to take us sightseeing. My ID card said that I was a French deaf mute. We saw the Eiffel Tower, a big Cathedral and the Arche de Triomphe which was near German headquarters.

We were taken to barbershop to get a haircut—one patron was there with a dog. When the sheet was taken off of him, we could see he was an SS Officer. After he left, the guys who had brought

ETAT FRANÇAIS

# CARTE D'IDENTITÉ

NOM: **MASSON**

Prénoms: **André**

Fils de **André** et de **Marie Couvreur**

Nationalité: **Française**

Profession: **Agricole**

Né le: **22 juillet 1916**  
à **Haguenau (Nnd)**

Domiciles successifs: **me Edmund Roland**  
**N°19 Toulouse**

Empreintes digitales et Signature au Timbre

Pièces justificatives produites:  
**Acte de naissance, Livret Militaire**

## SIGNALEMENT

Taille: **1m 82**

Cheveux: **Châtains**

Montagne: **Montagne**

Yeux: **Fus vert**

Front: **haut**

Nez: **maxim**

Visage (forme générale): **Ovale**

Teint: **mat**

Signes particuliers: **Sont mat**

Établie à **Toulouse**

le **29** **1943** No **11213.C**

COMBES IMP. MACON

Above is an I.D. card given to James by the French Underground. He was to pose as a deaf mute, his given name was Guy Masson



Above are also some pictures of James issued by the French Underground

us there started laughing and pointing at us, they thought it was quite amusing us sitting there beside an SS Officer. Madam Denué ran the bakery and she had a daughter who lived there with her, however she worked in a fashion store and not in the bakery. Most of the time food was brought to us, not regular meals. We would go through the kitchen on our way to the courtyard. The only bath was in her kitchen.

We stayed at Madam Denué's quite a long time. We were given some advice from some Parisian policemen to not give escape money to guides. (Each flight crew member was given money each time they went out on a mission, so they would have money if they were ever shot down like we had been.) One day we were taken to a movie, while we were there the Germans came in and rounded up 50 people and executed them. It was a retaliation for the underground killing of a German labor recruiter.

One guide carried us to a wholesale grocery man's house—we had Sunday dinner with plenty of food. While we were there, Shorty played the violin and made a bridge on the violin with his



knife and he began to play country music. The man was most upset with Shorty for putting the knife in the violin and I don't think they were too fond of the country music either. There were several other "escapees" at the grocery man's house this day. We were still in the same old clothes we got the first afternoon. We were able to wash up at Madam Denué's, but still having the same old dirty clothes, I am sure we were getting very "ripe."

On one tour of Paris, the guide carried us to see the result of the United States bombing of a rail yard. When we got there, much to our chagrin, our bombers had completely missed the rail yard and had wiped out a whole row of houses.

Madam bonnet, an old lady in her 80's, came to visit us several times. She was an American and spoke English. She had married a French man and had lived in Paris for years. She had a daughter or some family who lived in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Madam Bonnet wanted us to let them know she was ok.

One day around noon, some resistance people came. Madame Denué's daughter went with us to interpret. We walked to the train

station. (We never got in cars in France.) We knew we were going South toward Spain. We didn't know it but our tickets were for Toulouse France. While at the railroad station we saw a big mob trying to get an airman away from the Germans.

Our guide and some other guides got us and a group of others on the train. There was a girl and a man in our compartment and when the Germans came to check ID's—these two started making out like mad.

Outside of Toulouse, we stayed in a house where we had lamb stew for dinner. After we ate, we went into the bathroom and saw the bathtub full of lamb wool and guts. It didn't do a lot for our appetite. After that we referred to this house as the "gut house." There we were given hob nail shoes that were too small and a coat, sort of like a sports coat that was too little.

From Toulouse we walked to Andorra which was about 40 miles away, a very long and arduous walk. We would be able to get on a train there to go to Barcelona. During our walk we had to stay in the mountains away from German soldiers. We slept

sometimes in trees. When we finally got to Barcelona we boarded the train. On the train, Franco's men boarded at some point and began checking ID's. There was a pregnant lady who had to hide under a seat—while she was hiding, she peed all over herself and it ran out all over the floor. They put her off the train. Shorty was on one end of the train and I was on the other. When our guide realized ID's were being checked he got me and 3 others and we hopped off the train and continued walking to Barcelona.

Franco's men got Shorty and he spent 60 days in jail, which we did not find out until later.

Once we were in Barcelona, our guide took us to the British Embassy—the British arranged for us to ride on a train to Madrid. In Madrid we first went to a house and met a woman who had 2 daughters, we stayed there for a period of time and then we were taken to a hotel, which was near an art museum.

From Madrid we went by train to Gibraltar, where I had to be hospitalized with dysentery. After I was released from the hospital I was sent back to London. Another escapee who was waiting to

De Tassin

GIDRALTAR

$$3.1 \times 143$$

○●●○●●

Casualty Officer:

Hospital admission slip in Gibraltar 1943

go back to the states and I flipped a coin to see who would get to be the special courier to come home first. I won the coin toss. I flew into Washington D.C. for a debriefing. Then I went home to Denton with 30 days leave. After a reunion with Marie and my family, we were to report to Miami, Florida for a rest camp. I received no further orders for 6 weeks.

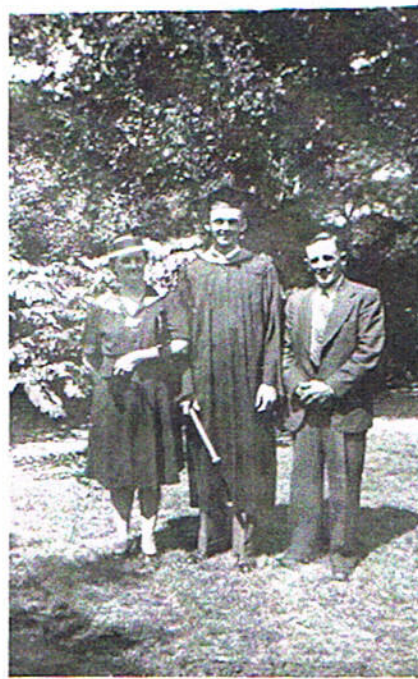
After 6 weeks in Miami I was ordered to report for duty in Salt Lake City—We spent about 2 weeks there, then we were sent to Rapid City, South Dakota, I was to be a test pilot. From Rapid City, we went to Columbus, Ohio for B 17 school.

From Columbus we went to Lincoln, Nebraska, then on to Colorado Springs. I was assigned to the flight section for the Second Air Force. I tested planes coming out of the depot. I became Brigadier General Upston's Aide and Pilot. We then were assigned to the Pentagon. While there I had 2 plane crashes, one in New Mexico and the other one while flying General Giles' B 17, we crashed at Peterson Field. The fuselage broke in two.

While in Washington D.C. we lived in the Frontenac apartments in the beginning, then we bought a house in Alexandria, Virginia. We spent 2 years at the Pentagon. When we left the Pentagon, I went into the Air Force Reserve and we moved to Odessa, Texas, where we began our second career in the teaching and administrative fields in education. We had four children beginning with Mary, who was born June 2, 1951, Patricia, born April 4, 1953, Susan, born June 7, 1955 and James, born March 22, 1957. I eventually put 20 years in the Air Force Reserve and I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.



Virgil Solomon, Marie and Jack  
McMath  
College Graduation 1941  
North Texas



Grandmother McMahon, James, and  
Granddaddy McMahon  
College Graduation 1942  
North Texas

LIEUT. J. L. McMath

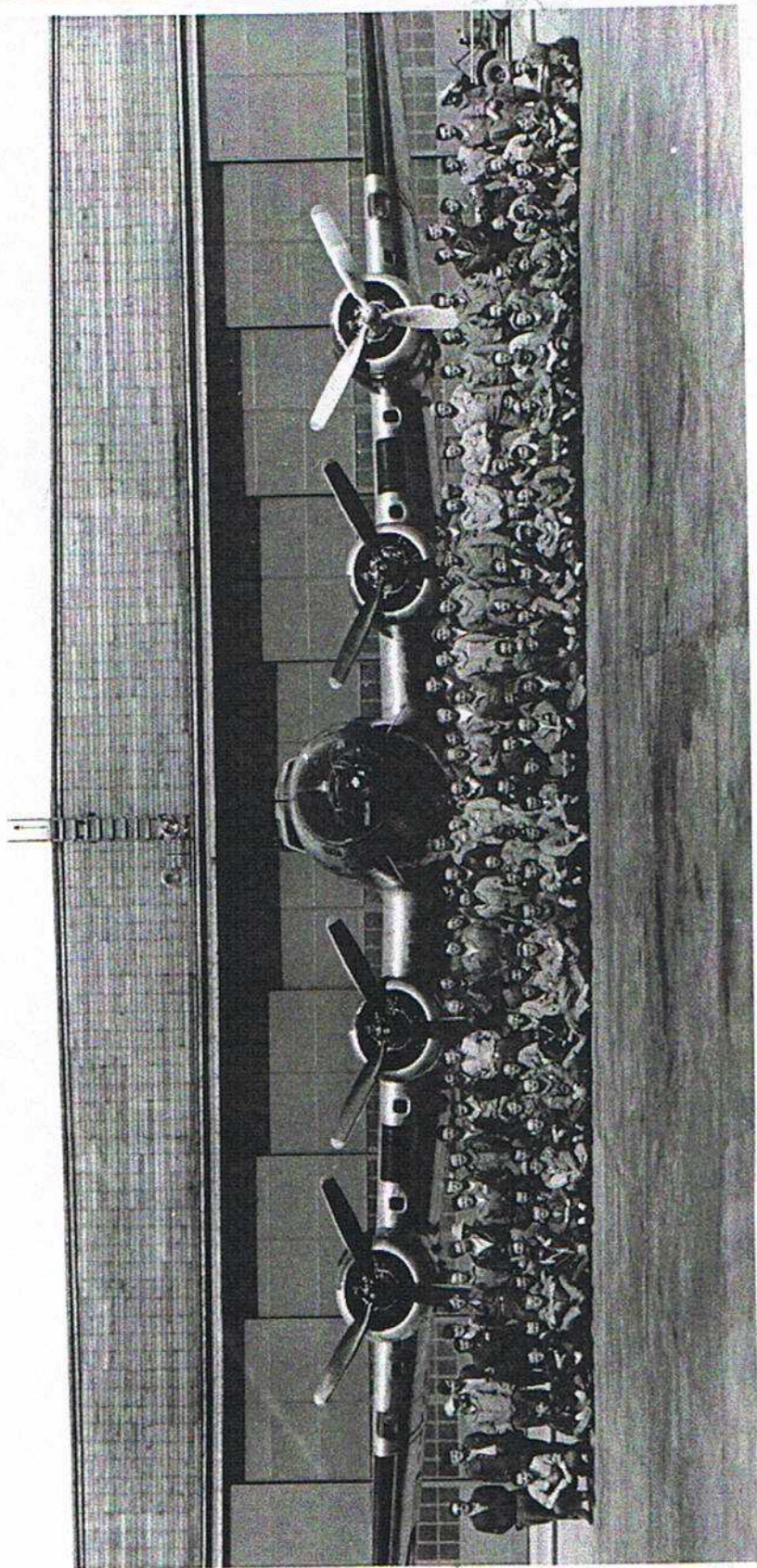
Mr. and Mrs. D. A. McMahon, west of Denton, have received word that their son, First Lieut. Jack L. McMahon, 26, is missing in action in the European war theater. Lieut. McMahon had been stationed in England with the U. S. Army Air Forces since the first of May, but has been missing from his base since May 29.

A graduate of the Teachers College in June, 1941, he entered Air Force service that year, and after being trained at Santa Anna and Taft, Calif., received his wings and was commissioned a second lieutenant May 21, 1942, at Taft. He was stationed at fields in Florida, Idaho, Washington and Texas before being assigned to foreign duty. He was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant in October.

Lieut. McMahon has two brothers serving in the U. S. Army Air Forces, Lieut. James Gordon McMahon at Ephrata, Wash., and Pfc. Harry Foy McMahon, New Orleans, La.

Article in newspaper regarding Jack  
McMath being listed as missing  
1943





James's Flight Training Class  
Waco, Tx. 1943



HEADQUARTERS  
384TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Group Commander

AFC 634,  
7 September, 1943.

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : 2nd Lt. James Gordon McMath, 544th Bombardment Squadron,  
384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF.

1. Although you failed to return from our last mission over Germany on September 6, 1943, I take great pleasure in being able to commend you for your meritorious achievement on that date. Your performance of duty on that important mission was superior. In spite of heavy fighter and flak opposition, you coolly accomplished your duties as Co-Pilot. By your skillful airmanship and courage you enabled our Group and Wing to deal a vital blow to the enemy. It is through such acts that we are able to continually press home our blows to the enemy and assures us of ultimate victory. The courage, coolness, and skill displayed by you reflects great credit on yourself, the 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF, the Army Air Force, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

2. Myself, as well as the whole 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF, are proud of you for your gallant actions and we sincerely hope that you are safe and we shall be able to again fly with you wing to wing.

*Budd J. Peaslee*  
BUDD J. PEASLEE,  
Colonel, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

544TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Squadron Commander

25 October 1943.

Mrs. James G. McMath  
Box 1032  
Grapevine, Texas

Dear Mrs. McMath,

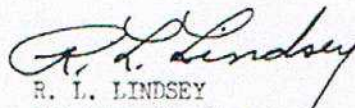
Your letter of October 4 addressed to Colonel Budd J. Peaslee has been forwarded to this office for reply. We are very sorry that due to censorship regulations we are unable to give you any definite news concerning your husband's status, the number of 'chutes that left his plane, and other information that you requested.

We can say, however, that the unofficial reports concerning your husband and his crew were very good and we have utmost faith that we shall receive some definite word of his whereabouts soon. Our hopes are with you in that Lt. McMath and his crew are safe and that they soon shall return to this Squadron.

Many of our "missing" crews have returned safely, others have been taken prisoners of war, but very few have been reported killed in action. We have no doubt that your husband is safe and we trust that you will receive some definite word of his status soon.

Our thanks again for your very nice letter and if we can be of further service to you, do not hesitate to write us. We regret that we can not give you more definite information at this time but we trust that we will be able to relay some good news to you soon.

Yours very truly,

  
R. L. LINDSEY  
1st Lt., Air Corps  
Executive Officer.



## CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

# WESTERN UNION

1204

## SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter  
NT = Overnight Telegram  
LC = Deferred Cable  
NLT = Cable Night Letter  
Ship Radiogram

A. N. WILLIAMS  
PRESIDENTNEWCOMB CARLTON  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARDJ. C. WILLEVER  
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

KRUN. TEX.

D 33 Govt 7 Extra Attempt phone from FtWorth uncs no fone  
Washington DC 1121 PM Nov 7th

Mrs. Marie E McMath  
RFD 2  
Krum, Texas.

Am pleased to inform you report received states your husband  
second Lieutenant James G McMath who was previously reported  
missing in action is returning to duty.

Stg UTio The Adjustant General

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

## CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

# WESTERN UNION

1201

## SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter  
NT = Overnight Telegram  
LC = Deferred Cable  
NLT = Cable Night Letter  
Ship Radiogram

R. B. WHITE  
PRESIDENTNEWCOMB CARLTON  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARDJ. C. WILLEVER  
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

DA85 13=BF DA=LAS TEX 6 141P

MARIE EAGAN=

510 1/2 EAST JACKSON

1942 APR 6 PM 1 55

HOPE YOU ARRIVE OKAY. REPORTED FOR ARMY. 30 DAY LEAVE WRITE  
LATER LOVE=

GORDON.

30.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE



TELEPHONE A 397

Gibraltar, 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1943.

Mr. J. M<sup>c</sup> Meth

Room 32

To HOTEL RESTAURANT VICTORIA. Dr.

**PROPRIETOR: A. M. MUSCAT. (LATE R. N.)**

	£	S.	D.	Ptas.	Cts.
To accommodation	1	10	0		
only		3			
	£	1	13	0	

RECEIVED PAYMENT WITH THANKS  
3/11/13  
W. Godwin  
MANAGER

Receipt from hotel in Gibraltar where James stayed after getting out of hospital.



**CONFIDENTIAL**

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS  
EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS  
UNITED STATES ARMY

OFFICE OF THE A. C. of S., G-2

DATE: 5 Nov. 1943

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, Ray L. Lindsey, Lt. A. AC, O-565996  
hereby certify that I have known and been associated with James Gordon  
McMath, 2nd A. AC, O-680668 prior to his being reported  
missing in action over enemy territory. The person whose signature and  
right thumb print appear hereon is the individual referred to above.

Ray L. Lindsey  
James G. McMath

RIGHT THUMB PRINT:



The individual whose signature and right thumb print appear  
hereon has been identified to the satisfaction of this office as

James Gordon McMath, 2nd A. AC, O-680668  
previously reported as missing in action over enemy territory.

J. F. Miranda  
SPECIAL AGENT, C.I.C.

CONFIDENTIAL

Letter verifying James's identity after returning to  
England

## WESTERN UNION

(THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY)

## CABLEGRAM

FH

ANGLO-AMERICAN TELEGRAPH CO., LD.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS.

RECEIVED AT 22 GREAT WINCHESTER STREET, LONDON, E.C.2. (TEL. LONDON WALL 1234.)

NOV 12 AM 7 01

M3251 (33 62 29) DENTON TEX EFM

LT JAMES G MCMATH 0630663

AMFYAS LONDON

237

LOVING GREETINGS FROM ALL OF US BEST WISHES FOR A SPEEDY RETURN  
LOVE

MRS LORA EGAN.



Please send your Reply "Via WESTERN UNION" You may telephone us for a messenger

## WESTERN UNION

(THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY)

## CABLEGRAM

FH

ANGLO-AMERICAN TELEGRAPH CO., LD.

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS.

RECEIVED AT 22 GREAT WINCHESTER STREET, LONDON, E.C.2. (TEL. LONDON WALL 1234.)

NOV 12 AM 7 01

M3252 (30 14 31) DENTON TEX EFM

LT JAMES G MCMATH 0630663

AMFYAS LONDON

238

DARLING MANY THANKS FOR TELEGRAM ALL MY LOVE

MARIE MCMATH.



Please send your Reply "Via WESTERN UNION" You may telephone us for a messenger

Dearest Marie,

No doubt you have received word that we are missing in action, however, we are all safe and hope to return home pretty soon. We came down in France, so if every thing goes okay we'll get out safely but it may take quite some time. I wish there could have been some way to have kept you and the family from hearing that I had been lost. We are all in good health so it shouldn't be long - remember all boys were safe when came down.

all My love Marie,  
Lordon M. Mathis

Letter from James to Marie he tried to send after plane went down. A couple of years later, French woman who harbored James gave letter to Lt. Paul Benedict, who in turn mailed it to Marie in Colorado Springs.





## Cine Bellas Artes

Programa para el día 25 al 31 octubre

CÓMICA

de la Pandilla

y

## San Francisco

Soberbia evocación de una ciudad  
que sucumbió bajo el más pavoroso  
de los cataclismos.

Imp. CRUZ Hnos.—Madrid.

Movie that James attended in Madrid after getting out of France



## Lieut. McMath Returns to U. S.

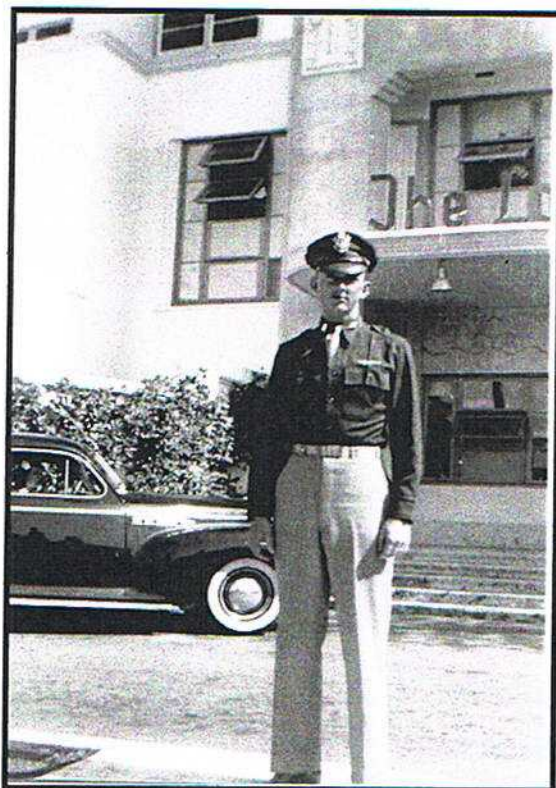
Lieut. James Gordon McMath, who previously had been reported missing as a pilot in the European theater of operations, has returned to the United States and is now in Washington, according to a message received by Mrs McMath here.

He has been promoted to the rank of first lieutenant.

Lieut. McMath is expected to visit in Denton later.



Grandmother McMath, James and Marie  
1943



James

## Missing Flyer Returns to Duty



LIEUT. J. G. McMATH

Lieut. James Gordon McMath, above, who was reported missing in action early in September, has returned to duty, according to a communication received from the War Department by his wife.

McMath, who has been stationed in England since the latter part of July and was co-pilot on a B-17, "Slightly Dangerous," had been missing since Sept. 6.

McMath is the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. A. McMath. He and his wife, the former Miss Marie Egan, are graduates of Teachers College. Mrs. McMath is teaching in the Grapevine junior high school.





Troy and Elsie Acord & James and Marie in front of B-17 at Peterson Field in Colorado.



James in a B-17 cockpit



James and Marie with Hal and Harriet Goodlad at the Broadmoor Hotel Colorado Springs





James in Alexandria Va.  
circa 1945

#### McMATHS GUESTS AT DINNER FOR PRINCESS

Capt. and Mrs. Gordon McMath of Washington, D. C., formerly of Denton, were among the 16 guests who recently attended a small dinner party for Princess Amina Toussoun, cousin of King Farouk of Egypt.

The party was given by Major Gordon C. Ickes, who spent more than a year in Egypt as aide de camp to Lt. Gen. Benjamin F. Giles, theater commander.

Honored also at the dinner, which was largely a military affair, was Mme. Gertrude Wissa, a friend of the princess, who is accompanying her on her tour of America.

Mrs. McMath is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Egan of Krum and Capt. McMath is the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. A. McMath, Bernard Street.

Article regarding McMATHS attending dinner for Princess Amina of Egypt.



Marie in dress she wore for Princess Amina's dinner Alexandria, Va.  
circa 1945



**WILL RENOUNCE TITLE**—Princess Amina Toussoun, above, a cousin of King Farouk, disclosed that she plans to give up her Egyptian citizenship in order to marry Cornelius B. Bretsch, an analyst with the Federal Housing Administration. (AP Wirephoto).

Princess Amina

#### Princess Feted At Dinner Party

A small dinner party for Princess Amina Toussoun, cousin of King Farouk of Egypt, was given last night in the Congo Room of the Carlton Hotel by Maj. Gordon C. Ickes, who spent more than a year in her country as aide de camp to Lt. Gen. Benjamin F. Giles, theater commander.

Honored also at the dinner, which was largely a military affair, was Mme. Gertrude Wissa, a friend of the princess, who is accompanying her on her tour of America.

The royal visitor spent several weeks in New York after her arrival in this country and will continue her tour of the States after a few days in Washington.

Princess Amina was exquisitely gowned last night in a black Lanvin model, set off by an unusual silver fox cape and handsome jewels. Mme. Wissa also was costumed in a black Lanvin gown and silver fox furs, and wore the famous Wissa diamonds.

The Wissa family, wealthy landowners, claim direct descent from the first Pharaohs. The large Wissa estates came to be known to many American soldiers for the wonderful hospitality extended them during the war.

Among the guests last night were Maj. Gen. Charles B. Stone, Brig. Gen. and Mrs. John E. Upston, Brig. Gen. and Mrs. John Samford, Mr. James Underwood, Mrs. Benjamin F. Giles, Maj. C. O. Mason, Capt. and Mrs. Gordon McMath, Mrs. Ann F. Bennett, Lt. C. T. Rives and Capt. Don Jones.

Newspaper article regarding Dinner for Princess Amina

**M. THÉRÈSE BONNEY**  
**117 E. 30 St. Mu. 4-6562**  
**new york city**

September 14, 1946

Dear Lt. McIlhath:

I am an American War Correspondent, author of Europe's Children. I have just returned from Europe and have spent much of the last six months visiting the families, men, women and teen-age children, boys and girls, who saved the American aviators who came down in France between our entry into the war and the invasion.

I found village after village, home after home, which had hidden one, often many, of our boys..talked with those who had picked them up in the fields, cared for them, shared their rations with them, gave clothes, off of their backs, so that in disguise they might escape, and did.

You know the story, but do you realize that five thousand American aviators were saved by thirty thousand Frenchmen and their families? Do you realize that many of those who saved you or another boy were shot, deported to Germany, there tortured and maybe died of starvation in Extermination and Concentration Camps, sometimes only because they answered the knock on the kitchen door?

I visited many homes, saw the widows and children of those who will not return. One little woman, a butcher's wife, whose husband died in Buchenwald, said to me, "Mademoiselle, we only did our duty. If after my husband's arrest, another American aviator had knocked at the door, I would have hidden him, too."

Wm. Phillips Simms and others predict for Europe the worst winter since the Middle Ages. Most of these people who helped you or another boy will have a desperate time.

Your debt, our debt, to them can never be acquitted. A sacred bond exists between them and you, between them and your family, father, mother, sister, wife and children, between those saved and those who saved them.

Doubtless many of you have been anxious to contact these people, wondered if there was anything you could do for them, some really personal thing, were not able to act until the war was over.

Would you be willing too:

- 1 - send a food package every month to a specific family or village?
- 2 - send clothing?

Letter from war correspondent regarding French Underground.



Let me know by return mail what you can and want to do, giving name and address of specific family or village. A group in Paris now in formation will see to it that your package reaches the very family or village. This group will arrange for an A.P.O. address, so that, no time will be lost.

It will serve as liaison between you and the families or villages concerned, make contacts and expedite deliveries so that in face of the present difficulties of transportation and communications, your package can reach these people directly and immediately.

In this way you will ease the strain of the coming winter.

Please send all details about the French family or families, the story - who helped to save you, as well as name, or if you can, names, and addresses of other boys who were saved.

Anything that you can tell about your experience may be helpful in helping them.

Sincerely,



Address, until September 20th  
117 East 30th Street  
New York City

Thereafter:

Care of

"They Saved Our Boys" Committee  
10 Boulevard de La Tour Maubourg  
Paris, France.



which needs  
government,  
by itself."  
Jefferson

# THE ODESSA AMERICAN

HOME EDITION

(AP)—Member Associated Press  
UPI—United Press—Loose Wire

ODESSA, TEXAS, FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 1952

Price: Five Cents A Copy  
Throughout The Permian Basin

## Ian Dies juries Smashup

Two men were killed in a crushing head-on smashup on Hwy. 80 about three miles west of Odessa last night.

One man died outright in the roaring crash of the two cars. Two men died before being taken to the hospital and the last victim died at 11:30 a.m. today.

State highway patrolmen and ambulance workers from the Rix and Hubbard Funeral Homes worked many minutes trying to extricate the mangled bodies from the tangled wreckage of the demolished cars.

Ray E. Chek, 31, and John Fruehlinger, 59, were pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Ernest Lee, 31, died about an hour after arrival, and Edward Stewart, 32, died about an hour after arrival, and Edward Stewart, 32, died at about 4 a.m. today.

Lee C. Guley, 28, only man to live through the night, died at Medical Center Hospital here at 11:30 this morning.

The bodies have been taken to Monahan where funeral homes there will be in charge of burial.

### On Wrong Side of Road

According to investigating highway patrolmen, Edward Stewart had been charged with driving on the wrong side of the road at the time of the crash.

Previously Stewart had been reported to have had a wreck at 10:45 p.m. Thursday on Hwy. 80 about five miles west of Penwell, colliding with a car driven by Donald Raymond Lorenz, Santa Clara, Calif.

State patrolmen state Lorenz said Stewart didn't halt, after side-swiping the California car. The license number was checked with Monahan officers, and a pick-up on Stewart had been broadcast by Odessa police.

### Under Oxygen Tent

Ernest Lee, driver of the other car, was kept in an oxygen tent at the hospital, and given oxygen by Rix ambulance in a vain effort to save his life.

Stewart was alone in his car at the time of the crash and all the others were passengers in Lee's vehicle.

## Defense Begins In Barber Trial

PORT WORTH, April 11 (AP)—Court-appointed attorneys for Robert H. Barber Jr., began their defense Friday against a charge the 25-year-old ex-convict murdered a Fort Worth policeman.

The state rested its case at the end of the trial's second night ses-



JAMES McMATH  
Named Odessa  
High Principal

James McMath, principal of Ruck Elementary School, has been selected as principal of Odessa High School, filling the vacancy of W. T. Barrett, who was recently appointed as superintendent of Odessa schools. The transfer will be effective July 1.

The Ruck county Board of Education approved the transfer in a regular monthly meeting held last night.

"I appreciate very much the confidence in me shown by Mr. Barrett the Board of Education, and the school administration," McMath said.

Barrett, who recommended McMath for the post, said "I have every confidence in Mr. McMath's ability and industry. I am confident he will do a wonderful job at the senior high school."

**BEGAN CAREER IN DENISON**  
McMath began his career in 1942 at the Denison High School. He taught for two years, 1947 to 1948, in the Crockett Junior High School in Odessa, and was principal of the Travis Elementary School here during the school year of 1948 to 1950.

He has been principal of the Ruck Elementary School for the past two years.

A veteran of World War II, McMath served as pilot in the U. S. Air Force for five years, with active duty in the European theater, and holds the Air Force Medal. He was discharged as major in 1947.

McMath and his wife, Marie, live at 820 W. 19th. They have a 10-month-old daughter, Mary Jane McMath.

Barrett, succeeded W. A. Miller as superintendent recently when Miller announced that he had accepted the presidency of Corpus Christi University.

## Ike Quits; Will Europe Post In

### Secretary Of Defense Reveals Resignation Will Choose Successor

WASHINGTON —(UP)—The White House announced Friday that Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower had asked to be relieved June 1 as supreme commander of the Allied powers in Europe.

Eisenhower sent a request dated April 2 to Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett, asking that he be relieved by June 1 and placed on inactive status upon his return to the United States.

The general, however, did not give the date when he expects to return to this country and take an active hand in his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.

Presumably he would return in early June.

The White House announcement at noon Friday was made on the day and hour selected by Eisenhower.

White House Press Secretary Joseph Short said President Truman is not yet ready to announce the selection of a successor.

"I don't know how long that will take," Short said.

The White House disclosed that on April 10 Lovett, acting with the approval of the President, sent this brief reply to Eisenhower:

"Dear General Eisenhower: 'In accordance with your request contained in your letter of 2 April and with the approval of the President, I am taking appropriate action to secure your release from assignment as supreme commander, Allied powers Europe effective 1 June, and have you placed on inactive status upon your return to the United States.'

Eisenhower in his letter to Lovett said his request for relief conformed with an understanding he had when he accepted the original appointment in Europe, in December, 1950.

He said the June 1 relief date would leave "ample time for the appointment of a successor and for any preparation and counsel that he may desire from me."

Eisenhower stated that he felt the specific purposes for which he was recalled to duty in 1950 and sent to Europe had been "largely accomplished."

According to Short, the general also sent a personal letter to the President advising him of the step he was about to take. The President sent Eisenhower a long hand-

### Brother Charged In 'Tank' Death Is Back in Jail

Marion Chester (Bill) Bunch, 21-year-old accused killer in the city jail "stomping" murder last year, was back in county jail today, less than 24 hours after his release on \$5,000 bond.

Bunch, with his brother, Floyd O'Neal Bunch, 22, was accused of the killing of Jack Strickland, 45, Ft. Stockton filling station owner, on July 26 last year.

The older brother was convicted of murder without malice by a District Court jury and a five-year suspended sentence set by the jurors on Jan. 30.

### Released Thursday

M. C. Bunch had been held under \$25,000 bond in the murder until Thursday, when it was reduced to \$5,000 and he was released from county jail.

Sherriff's deputies were called to the Fort Second Motel last night to stop a fight in a cabin at the "D" Court.

Bunch, Dowell Jack Porter, 21, and Sue Mitchell, 27, were all picked up by the officers and placed in the county jail. Bunch is booked as drunk and disorderly, and for assault.

Miss Mitchell paid a \$14 fine in Judge M. Newman's court and was released.

According to an eye-witness account, half a dozen men were in the cabin with Miss Mitchell when Bunch got into an argument over whom she liked the most.

Taken to Hospital



POLICE BATTLE PICKETS—Pickets in front of the W. delphia, skirmish with police Thursday after police attempt permit office workers to enter the building. Police were Communications Workers Union later pulled off the picket line.

## Missouri Sweet After Flooding

PIERRE, S. D. (AP)—History's greatest Mississippi stream communities today after dropping here all but just over 25 feet.

Army Engineers gauges showed a 24.75 foot upriver tributaries still pouring in huge quantities has passed. Flood stage here is 15 feet.

The Big Muddy, normally 1,000 feet wide, spans three blocks of nearby Fort Pierre and 30 blocks of Charles Fales, an alert 85 year old Fort Pierre ever seen more water in the Missouri.

"Only Noah," he replied.

Fales was a witness to the 1881 flood, called the worst until now. The Red Cross declared 12 Nebraska and Iowa counties disaster areas.

Damages from the overflows

## Christians Commem

By The Associated  
Christians throughout

Article in Odessa American when James was named principal of Odessa High School



## Home before Christmas

# Escape to freedom

By Melanie Johnson

32 years ago, a B-17 bomber set out for its target of Stuttgart, Germany. It was a flight which would send its co-pilot, James G. McMath, now superintendent of the Nacogdoches Independent School District, on four months of suspense and danger and almost cause him to miss Christmas with his family in the states.

In recalling this flight which sent him into the heart of Nazi-controlled Europe, Mr. McMath explained: "We hit the target but when we were over France, about halfway back to England, we were attacked by German fighter planes. They shot three of our engines. We knew we couldn't stay up long, so we told our crew they could bail out. They elected to stay aboard. We picked a hayfield for our landing as we had steadily been losing altitude. But we landed safely."

Once on the ground, though, more trouble began. Everyone ran for the woods except for the pilot, radio operator, and Mr. McMath. They stayed to burn the plane, and while doing so, they could see the German motorcades coming after them.

They spent all of their afternoons running through the woods, sneaking across highways, and through villages. Then with the help from some of the native Frenchmen, they found themselves in the small town of Gisors, just north of Paris.

There went the next few

weeks in a barn near the town, living off of grapes and leeks. They later found refuge in the subways of Paris. The city was under constant bombing by the Allies and this ironically increased their chances of discovery by the German soldiers.

Still accompanied by Shorty, the twosome met some of the town civilians who helped them.

One day, Mr. McMath recalls specifically, two underground members took the two of them sightseeing. "We had gone to a barbershop to get our hair cut. When we came in a German officer was in the barber's chair. Our guides died with laughter; they thought it was funny. Here were two Americans soldiers right under this officer's nose. We were scared to death."

After they received I.D.'s prepared by the chief of Detectives of Paris, they walked the streets more freely now. Mr. McMath's I.D. stated that he was a deaf mute so in case of capture he would not have to speak.

Finally it was time for their escape. They rode a train to Toulouse which put them in free France. Then they crossed the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. It took about three to four days to cross this rugged road to freedom.

Yet their freedom wasn't as close as they had hoped. While in Spain, Shorty was captured



Second Lt. James G. McMath

for two months. It was now Mr. McMath and his underground guide left to face the perils of escape alone and make their way to Gibraltar.

When they finally reached freedom, the British Embassy had Mr. McMath hospitalized

and then he was flown back to the states to meet his wife. He had been listed as lost in action for four months, arriving home only days before Christmas of 1942. It was definitely a Christmas for him to remember.

This is a clipping from the Nacogdoches, Tx. newspaper  
circa 1975

James was superintendant of Nacogdoches School  
District

### Editor's postscript

This document came to me in 2010 from a generous and thoughtful donor on the faculty of The University of Texas at Arlington. A missing page was provided by James McMath's daughter Mary.

Although minor format changes have been made, not one word of the text has been changed, in keeping with our policy of letting the veterans tell their story in their words.