

Washington Times

Barry King & Gerry Beauvois in uniform



SG-3 Mrs 'H' Block 1963

Newsletter

Issue 7

Summer 2004



Cover Photos

- Top WF512 (44 Squadron) at dispersal, RAF Coningsby (*Ernest Howlett*)
- Centre Barry King and Gerry Beauvoisin, 149 Squadron pose in the entrance to the Sgts 'H' Block, RAF Coningsby 1953. (*Gerry Beauvoisin*)
- Bottom right 44-62128 (WF495) 'Warm Front' while serving with the 308th Weather Reconnaissance Group photographed at Kwajalein Atoll during 'Operation Crossroads' in 1946. Note the impressive mission tally under the pilot's window, the black undersides (that had gone before she became WF495) and the replacement rudder (the 'W' – weather – tail marking does not cover the rudder). Given that 44-62128 was not delivered until after the end of WWII the meaning of the mission markings is unclear, maybe they denote weather missions flown in support of Operation Crossroads?

Welcome to the latest edition of the Washington Times. Many thanks to all who contributed to it and sorry for those whose e-mails I have not reproduced. However, unfortunately my computer caught a virus that resulted in me losing all my stored e-mails and therefore your contributions. It also resulted in me buying a more expensive virus checker so, hopefully, it will not happen again!

I hope that you continue to find the articles of interest and, as always, I remain most interested in receiving any contributions!

A late question! I have been asked whether the RAF B-29s were in natural metal finish or painted / doped silver. I had always assumed that they were natural metal but this question opened doubts. Can anyone confirm whether the Washingtons were natural metal or painted / doped? Many thanks.

Chris Howlett
The Barn
Isle Abbotts
Taunton
Somerset
TA3 6RS

e-mail chris_howlett@tiscali.co.uk



WF442 photographed at the Royal Air Force display, RAE Farnborough, July 1950. At this time she was serving with 115 Squadron. Later she was transferred to 90 Squadron (see Issue 5 for WF442's history and Don Crossley's memories of flying in her as a signaller). (*A J Jackson Collection*)

Letters

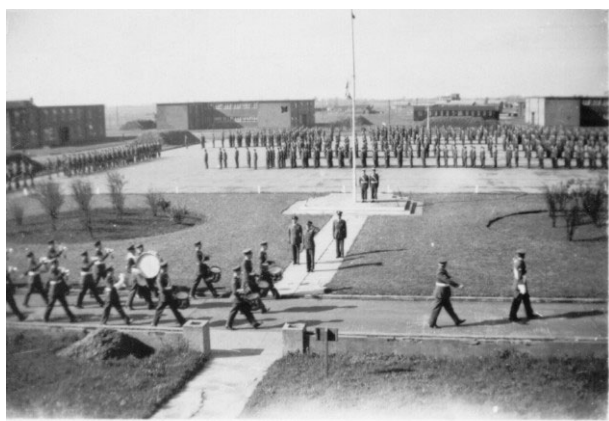
John Laing wrote:

Flu-----Shovel-----Fly

Why did you volunteer to fly? A question many of us have been asked and have perhaps even asked ourselves. Perhaps for some, it was the thing to do, or maybe the glamour, or boredom allied to the desire to do something useful or like my cousin who declared that as he did not wish to walk to war it was either the Tank Corps or the Royal Air Force. After seeing what happened to tanks in North Africa he was glad that he was a Desert Air Force pilot and not a tank commander. I still have the pictorial book about the RAF that he sent me but not, sadly, the letter from which I was able to work out that it was a Blenheim that he had piloted out to North Africa.

I suppose his experience and that of my father who, at the age of sixteen, had a brief love affair with the Royal Flying Corps until a letter from his mother revealed his age and he was transferred to the HLI and kept in the UK, contributed to my preference for the Junior Service. As to flying that was for an elite who had some special talent, or so we were told at the RAF National Service Centre in Edinburgh and feeling sure that I did not have that magic quality I resigned myself to the humdrum lot of the average young man called up for National Service.

So it was off to Padgate on 9th January 1951 to be an ordinary *erk*. Lancashire in January '51 seemed even bleaker than Edinburgh and there was a bit of a flu epidemic. Some time during that week the bug caught up with me and on the Thursday evening my new mates carted me off to the Station sick quarters where I was seen by a very new FO doctor who on taking my temperature muttered something about the poor quality of the government issue thermometers and broke the offending instrument into a waste bucket. His second attempt was no more successful and the second thermometer suffered the same fate as the first. By now I was beginning to wonder what sort of service I'd joined when there came in sight a vision in a blue cloak with a scarlet lining. She bossily demanded to know what was the problem. "It's these thermometers," said the young medical officer. With a snort of disbelief she extracted from a pocket, over her ample bosom, a metal tube from which she took her personal thermometer, stuck it in my mouth for some seconds, took it out and looking at it said, "One hundred and six, Jesus Christ you should be dead."



Two views of a passing out parade at Padgate – these being of 149 Flight, 1950. (*Ernest Howlett*)

Packed off to be in a room all to myself I was offered something to make me sleep but declined, reasoning that if I was going to shuffle off this mortal coil I'd prefer to do so as near fully conscious as my condition permitted.

Daylight came and finding me still alive a fierce WO male nurse decided that there was little wrong with me and as none of my smallpox vaccinations had taken he would achieve success where greater medical men and women had failed. To this end he proceeded to launch a savage attack on my left arm saying something to the

effect of, "That will fix you." Ever since I've wished to be able to tell him that his efforts were as ineffective as all prior and subsequent attempts to make a smallpox vaccination take.

Still undecided about what ailed me I was dumped in an isolation ward where I stayed for ten days and recovered from a dose of real influenza. Seven days sick leave followed and I was mortified to find that I had to travel home in white shirt and red tie feeling some sort of fraud.

Seven days later, back at Padgate, and not fully recovered, the journey from Edinburgh being enough to make me feel that the week's recuperation had been undone. On reporting sick, as instructed, I was given light duty and told to report to one of the orderly offices where I was ordered to chop wood for the stove around which sat sundry Sergeants and Flight Sergeants. They did not have hands in pockets but certainly seemed to have - - - all to do. Being a bit of a country lad and fancying myself as a dab hand with an axe I went eagerly to the job but had to return to the assortment of Senior NCO's to enquire after the whereabouts of their axe. "No axe lad, you use a shovel." So off I went looking for, as I assumed, shovel, diamond, navvy for the use of. No such luck and on further enquiry was directed to a companion set, brass, granny for the use of, the shovel of which I immediately broke trying to split an exceedingly hard piece of wood.

Cold, frustrated and pondering my fate for damaging valuable Air Force property I looked over at the NAAFI where a number of National Servicemen were employed in much more congenial duties which were more worthy of being defined as light than my ridiculous task. From someone who'd spotted my plight and came to commiserate I asked who these lucky chaps were and was told that they were the aircrew volunteers who would be off to Hornchurch in two days time to face medical and aptitude tests. That's it I thought so I marched into the Orderly Room and announced that I wished to volunteer for flying duty. I was asked if I had my GCE and my parents' consent. There was little point in trying to explain the Scottish Higher Leaving Certificate to a bunch of NCO's who couldn't supply an axe, so untruthfully I answered yes to both questions.

Things happened quickly and the broken shovel was overlooked in the rush to get me on my way to a new billet and what turned out to be an experience I'll never forget. Fifty-three years on I still give thanks that the Royal Air Force could not afford a simple piece of equipment: an axe. Of course if I'd not caught flu I'd have followed some other course but instead I became an AG on Washingtons and joined 207 Squadron at Marham in June 1951 where I found for the third time I was to be burdened with a motto of preparedness. My school motto was Never Unprepared, in the Boy Scouts I was adjured to Be Prepared, and now there it was Semper Paratus which the little Latin I'd absorbed told me; here you go again.

Now rather a sad note. John Miles who was an AG on 35 Squadron and a member of Tay Branch of AGA died a few weeks ago. I first came across John at Marham where he was one of the 'aged' AG's who'd held a wartime Commission but had reverted to NCO rank. He'd joined up under age and his aircraft flown in included: Whitley, Wellington, Stirling, Lancaster and of course the Washington. He had also commanded an Air Sea Rescue launch as well as an Armoured Car Group in the Middle East, was Warrant Officer I/C The Queen's Colour Squadron and finished service as a S.W.O. a situation in which he would be a very different animal from many of those who held that post.

The comments by Gerry Beauvoisin about the failure to down the drones reminded me of one of John's stories. Early on in the days of 35 Squadron at Marham, as the conversion unit they were invited to try their hand at the drone targets and at first had no success but Master Gunner Mathews, crafty man, worked out that the Americans had rigged the computer system so that the drones were safe. Mathews instructed his gunners to go manual with commands of '2 Rads up 4 Rads left' as he judged appropriate and drones started to fall victim to old-fashioned gunnery.

On the arming of turrets we on 207 did our own at least twice as far as I can recall but I also know that the armourers also did it for us and I have a vague recollection that there was a case of a crew going into an aircraft and finding, to their surprise, that it was armed for reasons unknown. Mind you, rumour is wonderful!

Ray Jackson wrote:

I saw your request on the Woomera website. I was there in the mid-50s on the 6JSTU (Fireflash) trial and remember the two B29s parked at Edinburgh Field. One had no engines and sat back on its tail. I thought they were derelict but in September of 1956 one serviceable aircraft was produced from the pair for a single flight at the Malaya air display. As far as I know neither of them ever flew again, but I lived at Woomera and rarely visited Edinburgh. The enclosed photo (see page 14) is of the aircraft landing at Edinburgh Field after the display, it is just possible to read part of the serial number (54) on the port wing, which suggests it is WW354.

Gerry Beauvoisin wrote:

I was called up for my National Service on 28th August 1951 and for the first couple of weeks I bounced around the countryside like a shuttlecock. First of all we were kitted out at Padgate — which was an experience in itself. We were bullied from pillar to post by a little s—t of a Warrant Officer and when we were properly dressed and thought to be fit enough to be allowed out — along with about 50 others I was sent down to Hornchurch for Air Crew aptitude tests. Once these were completed and I was allocated for Air Gunnery training we were sent back to Padgate. After a few days about 20 of us were sent way across country to Driffield which was a Transit Unit. We were at Driffield for about five days and then along with 11 others I was again sent on another marathon cross country journey to West Kirby on the Wirral for my basic training (square bashing). This lasted until early November by which time I was as fit as a fiddle and along with all the rest would have given the Guards a good run for their money in the Drill stakes.



After square bashing it was a period of leave and then another cross-country posting to the Central Gunnery School at Leconfield (about ten miles from Driffield). The gunnery course lasted for twelve weeks and covered subjects like sighting, escape & evasion, aircraft recognition, B17 Electric turret, Boulton Paul hydraulic turret, .5 machine gun and 20mm cannon. After qualifying in February 1952 I was posted to Waddington near Lincoln to join No 57 Squadron that operated the Washington. No 57 was the only squadron at Waddington to fly the

Washington — the others all operated Lincolns. I was allocated to the crew of Flt. Lt Hickmott — this consisted of Hickmott ~Capt.) ,Flt Lt. Wilcox (Co.Pilot) Sgt Wildig (Navigator), Flt Sgt Collins (Radar/Plotter), M/Sig Bottom (Signaler), Sgt Eartram (Engineer) F/Sgt Doherty (Chief Fire Controller) Sgt W. Norfolk (Gunner), Sgt Beauvoisin (Gunner), Sgt K. Tapley (Gunner). The last three mentioned were all National Servicemen.

With this crew I flew for the majority of my service with 57 Sqdn in Washington WF554 which we looked on as ours — at various times I flew with other Captains such as F/Lt Crosbie,F/Lt Shrivell, F/O Appleton, Sqd Ldr Holites, F/LT Scott as well as WF554, during my stint with 57 I also flew in WF557,WF563,WF550, WF550, and on one occasion I flew in Oxford 4099 with F/It Wilcox whilst he was keeping his twin engine time up to scratch.



WF544 at dispersal at Coningsby.
(*Gerry Beauvoisin*)

I joined 57 on 3rd March at Waddington and on 1st April 1952 the whole squadron was posted to Coningsby where we remained until March 1953. I flew as a full crewmember for 5 months before it was realised that I hadn't done a conversion course — at the beginning of August I was sent post haste to the Washington Conversion Unit at Marham for the two-month course and returned to 57 on 4th October as a fully operational Washington AG.

The flights and exercises flown with 57 were many and varied ranging from Air Tests to Fighter Affiliations, Squadron, Station and Command Exercises. On one exercise named Ardent in October 1952 57 was the only Squadron to get all aircraft airborne and which also completed the full exercise.

The Washington was a pleasure to fly in — pressurised and relatively comfortable, fairly easy to move around apart from crawling through the tunnel between the front and back compartments. The rear Gunner position was very seldom used —except for Air to Sea firing and on some exercises. It was a very difficult position to gain access to — the gunner had to crawl on his belly under the tail fin through a circular door - stand upright facing the tail guns — turn round squat down — close the door — stand up straight — turn round virtually on the spot pull down the seat and he was in position. It was quite a claustrophobic position to be in — especially as the escape hatch on the port side of the aircraft didn't seem to be large enough for a midget to get through never mind a full grown man.

Apart from our gunnery duties the gunners had a number of pre flight and post flight tasks to perform. Pre flight we had to climb onto the top of the fuselage walk along the top of the aluminium tube slide down onto the wings and check the oil and fuel levels on all engines as well as making sure that the dinghy stowages were secure. This was OK on a dry sunny day but at night or in the wet or under winter conditions it could be quite hairy. We also had to remove the down locks from the bombay doors and the undercarriage members — these prevented the doors closing whilst on the ground and the undercart collapsing. Once the flight had been completed we had to replace all the down locks before we could return to the crew room. The flight engineer was supposed to help with these tasks but never seemed to have the time - they probably thought that such mundane tasks were beneath their dignity. Before the engines were started one of the gunners had to start the petrol driven auxiliary unit, commonly known as the putput, which supplied back up power before the engines

provided all requirements. The putput was shut down once take off was OK and restarted at the skipper's request just before we rejoined the circuit and prepared for landing,

I had a great time with 57 both socially and service wise — an 18/19-year-old away from home with plenty of money in his pocket — what a life. I met some nice people and in fact still keep in touch with a family that I met in Lincoln way back in 1952. I didn't have any really dangerous moments with 57 apart from landing on 3 engines on a number of occasions — the Wright Cyclone engines were not the most reliable in the world. Whilst with 57 I tried to remuster as a pilot and was in fact interviewed by our Wingco Flying — the legendary Tirpitz Tait. I went back to Hornchurch in February 1953 but was unsuccessful - I could have signed on as a signaller but at that time it was Pilot or nothing for me. I sometimes regretted not taking the opportunity but one cannot live one's life full of regrets. If I had signed on I wouldn't have met the lovely girl who became my wife and I would have missed out on 35 years of happy married life.

At the end of February 1953 No 57 started to convert to Canberras and all Gunners, engineers and Signalers were posted out. All the gunners went to Marham and I joined No 90 Sqdn with FO Stafford as my crew Captain. The only crewmembers names that I can remember from this period are Sgt Keith Hollick, another National Serviceman Air Gunner and a Sgt Rivkin the Signaller - who was as mad as a hatter. With No 90 I flew mainly with F/c Stafford but also with FO Conley, WgCdr Wheeler and F/It Hughes. The aircraft I flew in were WF558, WF503, WF545, WF563, WF514, WF550, WF551, WF571, WF556.

As with No 57 sqdn I experienced a few landings on three engines but the most frightening episode happened on 16 March 1953 on Exercise Jungle King 1. We took off at 00.05 and flew out over the North Sea at 3000ft - after some twenty minutes there was a flash a couple of big bangs and we lost the two port engines in one go. The poor old engineer earned his coin that night — he must have had eight arms to do what he had to do so quickly. We lost about 1800 feet in about 30 seconds but somehow FO Stafford managed to keep the kite in the air and turn for home. We were all ordered to put our chutes on and our individual dinghies. We had a regular gunner flying with us who was to take the tail turret on this exercise — when he was told to put his chute and dinghy on he shot off towards the rear and looked as if he was all set to bale out. I was flying as right scanner and dashed after him and stopped him opening the rear door. He wouldn't have survived 10 minutes in the North Sea at that time of year. The skipper managed to maintain height and course for home and proposed to ditch on the Norfolk Coast — however as time went by he began to get more confident and decided to head for base. I offered to try and start the putput to provide some back up electric power (a lot was lost without the two port engines). After a struggle I managed to get it started manually and this helped quite a lot. We got clearance to land straight away without even joining the circuit — which we did - and it was just like in films — once we touched down we were chased down the runway by fire engines and ambulances. Fortunately neither were needed and we all got away without any harm being done to anyone — apart from shattered nerves. That episode took place on WF503. With the usual RAF attitude, we were sent on Jungle King 2 the next night just to make sure that no one had lost their nerve. We even flew again in WF503 on 21 March when both engines had been changed.

After this flying activities decreased quite a bit and the only other experiences of note were first of all my crew took part in an Air Display at RAF Acklington in Northumberland - this was great because I managed a quick and unexpected visit home. Part of the display was a fly past and a beat up of the drome which our skipper carried out to perfection — he flew across the drome at damn near zero feet, whipped the aluminium tube into a sharp left hand bank and I'm sure that the port wing tip passed between two hangars. As his piece de resistance, following his experience in March, he even feathered the two port engines on the last crossing of the base before setting off back to Marham. The second item of note at this time was preparation for the Coronation Review of the RAF at Odiham. The practice of formation flying at low altitude was quite wearing. The turbulence factor was incredible — on my crew there were two regular Air Gunners and two National Servicemen — it was the regulars (the so called experienced men) who were airsick. We took part in nine formation flying practice flights before taking part in the actual Coronation Review on 15 July 1953.

After this I only flew twice more before I was demobbed on 27 August 1953 — during my time with Bomber Command I amassed a total of 391 hrs 35 mins flying time. 108 hrs 9 mins of this was at night.

20th Air Force Stories

The story from Gerry Beauvoisin above reminded me of the following story from the 20th AF about a 2 engine landing and an even more remarkable event that happened at the same time at Iwo Jima on June 1, 1945:

On June 1, 1945 the 20th Air Force launched 509 B-29s of the 58th, 73rd, 313th and 314th Bomb Wings on a daylight incendiary raid against Osaka. This was mission 187 and 458 of the B-29s dropped 2,788 tons of incendiaries on the city burning out 3.4 square miles. 10 B-29s were lost while 81 landed at Iwo Jima. What follows is an account of two of the 81:

1LT Wesley Smith, A/C, flying K-56, had what he stated was a B-29 first on this mission. After bombs away, they lost #4 engine and #3 engine started to act up, so they headed straight for Iwo. Around Iwo this day the plane traffic was thick and the tower told all planes to keep circling as the crew of K-37 was bailing out. At this point, K-56 lost #3 engine so Smith decided to land at the fighter strip near Mt. Suribachi. As Smith approached the strip with flaps and wheels down, a B-29 landing directly ahead of them did not immediately exit the strip, so in order to avoid a crash, Smith pulled up the wheels and flaps and Lee Ashby (Pilot), applied full emergency power to the remaining two engines. Ahead was a small hill with tents, which Smith just managed to get the plane to clear. As the plane slowly gained altitude, Smith gave the ditching order since he did not believe he could bring the B-29 around for another landing attempt. However, Smith and Ashby managed to trim the plane and set it up for a second go. At this point the radio went dead so they shot off flares to indicate their dire straits. A P-51 fighter, seeing their predicament, assisted them by warding off any B-29s that might get in their landing pattern. As the plane came in on finals, to ensure that it would clear the end of the runway, Smith let the plane run fast (as seen in the photo below). They landed safely and as they exited to the left, Smith noticed a jeep running after two life rafts that had appeared on the runway. Richard Kurtz (CFC), and Harvey Landis (RO), experiencing the landing bump, released the life rafts since the ditching order was not rescinded! Kurtz, exiting the astrodome, stated, "Hell, we are on land". As the crew exited the plane, a Colonel met them who asked for the A/C. Smith stated that he was whereupon the Colonel stated, "You did a great job, but you sure scared the hell out of my men. I never saw them move so fast".



K-56 landing at Iwo Jima with two engines out on the same side. (7th Fighter Command Association)



Crew of K-56.

Standing L to R: 1LT Cletus (Chuck) Voiles (B), 2LT Leland (Lee) Ashby, Jr. (P), 2LT Wesley (Wes) Smith Sr. (A/C), 2LT Eugene (Gene) Junk (N), 1LT William (Bill) Tell (Rad Ob).

Kneeling L to R: SGT John Mordasky (TG), SSGT Harvey Landsman (RO), FO Norwood (Woody) Prillaman (FE), TSGT Richard (Dick) Kurtz (CFC), SSGT Henry (Hank) Poh (LG), SSGT Roy (Abner) Yocum (RG).



Crew of K-37 while training at Walker AAF, Kansas.

Standing L to R: SGT Jack Engel (RO), SGT James Cipolla (TG), MSGT Charles Whitehead (FE), SGT John Berguson (RG), SGT Joseph Celardo (LG), SGT Herbert Corbly (CFC)

Kneeling L to R: FO Wallace Mussallem (Rad Ob), 2LT Robert Fast (N), CAP Arthur Behrens (A/C), 1LT John Logerot (B), 1LT Merrill Addison (P) (he was replaced by Robert Woliver after photo was taken)

The plane whose crew was bailing out when K-56 wanted to land was K-37, also of the 330th Bomb Group and their story is perhaps even more remarkable. Just before bombs away over Osaka a large calibre flak shell hit them. This exploded in the cockpit, instantly killing the airplane commander, Captain Behrens, wounding the Co-pilot, Lt Woliver and destroying all flight and navigational instruments in the cockpit. The plane dropped out of formation and plummeted from 20,000ft to 1-2,000ft before Woliver could regain control. He then had to head for Iwo Jima or home with no useable instruments or navigational equipment. The only item of any use that worked in the cockpit was the IFF so the crew set this to the emergency setting and made their best course south for home.

The story is continued as recounted by Lt. Arvid "Al" L. Shulenger the radar operator of a P-61 Black Widow fighter on Iwo Jima (the article is reproduced from 'P-61 bags a Superfort' by the late Arvid Shulenger and first published in 'FlightJournal' (www.flightjournal.com)):

"You know me, Al; they kicked the game away behind me." Thus began Maj. Arthur C. Shepherd's letter—the first one he had sent in the 13 years since we were two-thirds of a night-fighter team off Iwo Jima and Ie Shima in '45. Shep was in Saigon to train the Vietnamese in fighter tactics. Thirteen years ago, my name was Al, and I was a lieutenant and a radar observer on a P-61 Black Widow.

Shep got hold of my address somewhere and wrote to me; it was a good letter. Its opening gag line was from the book that had been Shep's favourite on Iwo: Ring Lardner Sr.'s, "You Know Me Al." There was only one disturbing line of news in his letter: "There was a printed story, Al, about shooting down the B-29, in *True* magazine. All fouled up. They got the names wrong. Somebody sent in a correction, and they got the names wrong again." It was the first I had heard of the printed story.

Shep and I shot down that Superfortress—nobody else. I found it, and he shot it down. We got our names in the papers and on the air, and there was a syndicated feature story about the incident. It didn't mean a thing, but it was our only contact with public relations and fame during WW II. Besides, it was a funny thing; it's the only instance I know of in which a B-29 was shot down from the air by friendly fire.

I remember it as if it were yesterday. Yesterday was June 1, 1945. Our unit, the 548th Night Fighter Squadron, had been on Iwo Jima for about two months. Iwo Jima (translated, it means "sulphur island") is a wind-bitten, eight-square-mile stretch of rock and ashes 700 miles southeast of Tokyo. The beaches are black sand, and you couldn't stand too long in one spot because the fire underneath would burn your feet. Earlier that spring, one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific had been fought on Iwo Jima. During the battle, more than 23,000 of the 70,000 invading Marines had been killed or wounded, or suffered later battle fatigue. Some 20,000-plus Japanese defenders were also killed.

It was a beautiful day—blue sky, bright sun. The night before had been our night off-duty; we hadn't flown night patrol, so we were awake that day to enjoy the weather. At 3 a.m., we had heard the Superforts flying overhead, heading north for an Empire strike—target: Osaka. Hour after hour it seemed, the 29s droned overhead. Hundreds of them were coming from Guam, Saipan and Tinian. "Dreamboats," they were called in the fighter code. We knew that they were winning the War for us, as they came in endless echelons—not bunched and high—but in a steady stream at 10,000 feet (or "Angels Ten"). This was the way our new general, Curtis LeMay, was firing them at the Japanese.

Every afternoon, we night fighters checked our ships and radar with a short flight to ensure that everything was OK for the night operation. These daylight flights were called "squint hops." ("Squint" was any error in radar calibration; it could be corrected in daylight by a visual check on our readings.) During those flights, we would be put on air/sea rescue patrol. Sometimes, our squint hops turned into something bigger.

That's what happened on this day. The Dreamboats were now coming back by the hundreds—a steady stream overhead on their way back to Saipan, Guam and Tinian. A few were crippled, and a few were going down; some of them would have to stop on Iwo Jima, if they were lucky enough to get back that far. Some of them were shot up so badly that they couldn't land, and they would be abandoned close to Iwo after their crews bailed out. By mid-afternoon on this sunny spring day, there might be as many as 30 parachutes coming down around the island at once. They looked pretty against the blue sky, drifting like dandelion seeds down over the calm

ocean.

Shep and I were up in the air for a squint hop/air-sea rescue patrol. The airstrip was hot, and whenever we flew in the afternoon under that Pacific sun, the inside of the airplane was hotter. I was sweating in the radar cockpit. Once we were airborne, the intercom clicked: "Warm enough back there?" Shep asked.

"Hotter'n Dutch love," I said. The dialogue was standard operating procedure.

"OK," I said. "Generators off."

"Generators off," he echoed.

I switched on the radar. "Generators on," I said. The set warmed up; a dot appeared on the A 720 scope, which had ranges of two, 10 and 100 miles on it. I switched the nose spinner on, and the dot became a streak across the scope, then a dance of "snow" to be tuned down and tuned out so that targets would register.

"Weapon flashing?" Shep asked.

"Flashing," I said.

We were vectored out on a heading a little west of north—three-four-zero. At 150 miles out, we would pick up a destroyer that was on rescue patrol—a "Bird Dog"—and be directed by it for the remainder of our patrol. Meanwhile, we could check our radar set for squint using the Dreamboats flying overhead, going south. They were still at Angels Ten, while we patrolled at 6,000 feet—Angels Six.

Half an hour later and 100-odd miles out, we ran into a towering squall line and flew straight through it. That was a mistake. The rain streaked across the Plexiglas, and we were then nice and cool. It sprayed into the tiny air vent, and that reminded me to close it. At 15-miles range, a bright blip marking a Dreamboat moved cleanly across the darkened scope and registered cleanly a few degrees above us on the B, or elevation, scope. No squint, we guessed.

Then, suddenly, there was nothing but light on the scope. It was out. I knew why, but that didn't help the situation. Up ahead in the nose, the driving rain wetted the fibre-composition nose cone, and the spinner had shorted out.

"Hell, Shep," I said. "Weapon bent. It's out."

"Huh?" he said. "Bent? Hell. Wet."

"Yeah," I said.

No sound for a minute or two while we digested the bad news. Neither of us wanted to abort a squint hop, but there was nothing else to do.

"We're out of the squall," Shep said then. "Think it's worthwhile to wait a bit to see if it dries out?" "I doubt it, but we can see." I glanced down from the scope. "Wait a minute ..."

"Yeah?" he said hopefully.

"The IFF. It's working like a charm." It was. The little, old-fashioned green scope—nothing but the round end of a cathode-ray tube with a green light dancing on it as if it were a Christmas tree—was registering the B-29 at a distance of 10 miles. A clean signal, code four: two small blips then a big one—dit-dit-dah—on the starboard side of the scope.

"You know," I said, thinking fast for an excuse to avoid aborting the flight and having to do another, "We might hunt for Dreamboats with the IFF. I can get a range and azimuth reading, and if they're in trouble, they ought to

be flashing their emergency signal. We could report any ships in trouble."

Shep asked, "Would that work?"

"Never heard of it being tried," I said.

Shep did not want to give up the flight and do another, either. "I'll call Bird Dog," he said. "See what you can find."

Bird Dog was ahead and off to port some 30 miles, and it was coming in loud and clear on the radio while I switched the IFF to the 100-mile range and checked it. The little scope was never meant to do this job—only what its name indicated: identification of friend or foe.

Shep spoke again. "I didn't tell 'em the set was out.

I'll keep an eye peeled. It's CAVU [ceiling and visibility unlimited]."

"What they don't know ..." I began. "Hey, wait a minute."

Shep clicked his button to show that he heard me but said nothing

"I got one," I said. A big blip opened out over the scope face. "It's an emergency all right," I said.

"Where?"

"Sixty miles, I think." The calibration on an IFF scope was pretty uncertain.

"Where? Where?"

"Well, it ought to be over on the starboard side ahead, or over on the port side behind." It was a trick of such primitive scopes that a target could give the same signal from opposite directions. I was about to explain this to Shep, in case he had forgotten, when he spoke again—this time, with heavy irony.

"You want me to fly both directions at once?"

"Turn starboard," I said. "Climb gently."

Our two engines took on a deeper roar as the Widow dragged its great acreage of smoky black wing upward toward Angels Ten. It was a great, powerful airplane, with more wingspan than any comparably powered ship in the service, and it had more guns and horsepower than any other fighter did.

The guess turned out to be good. The emergency blip got wider, then stronger, then closer. It moved into the centre of the scope. "Level out of your turn," I said.

We were approaching the signal almost head-on, and the blip moved down the scope. For some minutes, we flew toward it. We were making history, perhaps. I had never heard of intercepting a target on IFF. "Angels?" I asked.

"Eight."

"Climb. Range ten. Starboard again. Turn starboard."

"There's a Dreamboat over there," Shep said. "I see it."

We climbed again in a gentle turn, holding the target at scope centre for a head-on interception that should have brought us onto its tail. Shep called, "You sure it reads emergency? That ship ain't in trouble. Still above us,

going like a bat out of hell."

"Yes, dammit," I said.

"I'll swing up on it," he said. On the scope, the target was moving starboard at three miles now, though our turn had steepened.

"Climb," I said. "Steepen your turn. Firewall your throttle."

"You said it." He didn't need me to tell him. The Widow roared, shook and climbed.

The target swung to port at a mile. "Look out there," said Shep. "That son of a gun doesn't need help. He's indicating two hundred twenty knots at ten thousand." Two-twenty was fast; it was close to 300 knots true airspeed. I looked out as we swung closer and higher. It was a Dreamboat—big and shiny in the sunlight, and flying high-tailed and steady; all its props were going and not a mark on it.

"Hell," I said as I looked back at the scope. The emergency blip was so big that it almost filled the scope when it flashed.

Shep tried calling the B-29: "Dreamboat, this is ..." No answer. We moved in closer. "I can't get him," Shep said.

I was looking at my compass. "On this heading, he'll miss Iwo by a hundred miles." Shep: "I'll swing under him." The Dreamboat moved over us to our starboard side. We came up close, almost in formation off its wing. "Ho-ly cow!" said Shep.

Half of the big plane's nose had been shot away. From the other side, we had not even seen the damage. Framed in the gaping wreckage, a man sat waving at us. The pilot? No. There was no pilot. It was the co-pilot. The pilot's half of the cockpit was gone. The pilot was gone. The co-pilot sat there with what looked like half of the instrument panel before him, the air blasting past his left side and whipping his sleeve. A direct hit had blown the entire port half of the nose away, not neatly but effectively, leaving a ragged, twisted-metal hole that was too big to be called a hole—almost a decapitation of the airplane.

"We'll give him a steer," Shep said. "Wave and point." We waved, close enough to see the co-pilot's teeth. The Dreamboat kept beside us as we corrected our heading for Iwo. He had been heading out over the ocean, beautifully flying blind.

He stayed beside us now—or we beside him, for the 29 flew fast and clean, at a true airspeed a good deal faster than normal cruise. We later learned that there hadn't been any gauges left in his ship, and the co-pilot couldn't know his speed, heading, or altitude.

In half an hour, we were over Iwo, calling in to tell what needed to be told: the Dreamboat couldn't land because its nose wheel had been blown away. We crossed the island, turned gently in formation and came back.

The Dreamboat's crew bailed out. Just off our wing, we watched them fly out on one another's heels. The air blast caught them by turn, whipping and tumbling them like dolls thrown into a hurricane. The expressions on their faces remain in my memory. Their chutes popped open and then swung below, coming down over the island. Then the co-pilot jumped.

The crippled 29 was now headed northwest, still flying. It was flying straight and level toward Japan. "Stay with it," was the word from Control. We flew formation on the derelict.

"Splash it," said Control. The order startled us, but it was logical enough. The Dreamboat appeared to be on its way to Japan, if not to Siberia.

We pulled up, and Shep made a pass, taking his time but giving it the works in a long burst. Four .50-calibers

and four 20mm firing at once were enough to set the Widow back on its heels momentarily. Our plane filled with powder-smoke and stink. We pulled out of the pass.

"Hell's bells," said Shep. Looking out, we saw the 29 flying as straight and level as ever, apparently untouched.

"You didn't miss," I said. "There were chunks as big as dishpans flying past."

Shep clicked his button and snorted.

Another pass, and a longer burst. Another look at the 29 revealed it was still flying on its own toward Japan. This time, there was a lace of yellow fire down its port wing. Nothing else! It was a ghost ship, a Flying Dutchman; it couldn't be shot down. It was on its own and going places.

Two more passes placed rounds in the wings and engines. We recklessly sprayed the bomb bay, not knowing whether it was still loaded. All that happened was that the 29 swung into a gentle turn, dragging its fire-laced wing a little, back toward Iwo. We began to feel desperate. Pieces flew off it; a propeller windmilled; it flew on.

We had 450 rounds of ammunition and used them all. By the time the gleaming bomber had steepened its turn and started to spiral toward the ocean, we were on the edge of defeat, whipped and disgraced. In full view of 10,000 men on Iwo, an empty ship had all but beaten us. We had never heard of an aircraft absorbing such punishment.

Out of ammo, we circled above the 29. It flew disdainfully and grandly, steepening its spiral; its great wings gleamed in the sunlight and streamed flame. The spiral became a dive. In the sunshine, the sea below was like a flexing mirror. The 29 was not shot down, but it flew into the sea as if into a mirror. As it touched, the napalm bombs and gasoline aboard produced a roar and a great plume of smoke; the explosion rocked the air around us.

We turned steeply, looking down. Shep called in, with more relief than happiness in his voice, "Splash one Dreamboat."



Above. A P-61 Black Widow flies over the Pacific. (*US National Archives via 7th Fighter Command Association*)

Left. Left to right: Lt. Arthur C. Shepherd (pilot), Lt. Arvid "Al" L. Shulenberger (radar officer), M/Sgt. Donald E. Meech (gunner). The terrier is "Rags"—the P-61's good-luck mascot. Rags flew combat at Arvid's feet or in his lap, wrapped in his own sleeping bag and with his own oxygen mask (*Eric Shulenberger*).

Photo Page – WW354



Above. Two photos of Washington WW354 at Hurn on 20th October 1952, presumably while being modified by Vickers in preparation to moving to ARDU at Woomera in Australia. Note lack of gun turrets and radome where the lower rear gun should be. Also, the large angular 'box' in the bomb bay. If anyone has any idea of what these are I would be most interested in hearing!
(Andrew Dayer)

Left. WW354 landing at Edinburgh after participating in the 1956 Malaya air show. See Ray Jackson's letter on page 6.
(Ray Jackson)

WF495 (44-62128)

B-29A 44-62128 was built by Boeing at their Renton plant (as were all B-29As). She was accepted by the USAAF on 11 August 1945 before flying to the Birmingham modification centre. She remained there for just over one month having the latest modifications included before moving to storage first at Tinker AFB and then Victorville. Her operational service did not start until January 1946 when she was transferred to the 59th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron based at Roswell, New Mexico. While serving here she was assigned as one of the 3 weather reconnaissance B-29s to Operation Crossroads, the first Post War Atom bomb tests, carried out at Bikini Atoll. Here, 44-62128, now named 'Warm Front', flew weather reconnaissance missions, including an eleven hour flight immediately before the test, from its base at Kwajalein Atoll (see photo on front cover).

After serving as a weather aircraft during Operation Crossroads, 44-62128 once more found herself in storage, this time at Robins AFB, before being assigned to the RAF on 27 November 1950.

On 6 December 1950 she was assigned to 149 Squadron before transferring to 115 Squadron on 11 March 1953. Tragically, after completing her service with 115 Squadron, when WF495 was being returned to the USA as part of Operation Home Run she experienced uncontrollable icing and crashed into the Irish Sea. Despite an extensive search by six lifeboats none of the crewmen were found.

The following article was published in the RNLi's magazine 'Lifeboat' shortly after and related to the actions carried out during the search:

FLEETWOOD, LYTHAM-ST. ANNES, BLACKPOOL, BARROW, LANCASHIRE, PORT ST. MARY, DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.

At twenty-five minutes past midnight on the 26th of January, a Washington aircraft of RAF Bomber Command, bound for the Azores, wirelessed that she was in difficulties through icing and that her crew of seven were baling out. The position of the aircraft when this message was sent was about five miles south of Barrow.

The sea was rough; there was a fresh south-easterly breeze blowing; and there were squalls of snow. The search for the aircraft was carried out by six lifeboats and continued in bitter weather until nine o'clock the next evening. It was unsuccessful and no trace of the aircraft was found, although later an airman's body was found by a trawler and wreckage was washed ashore.

The total number of hours spent at sea by the life-boats was sixty-six, and the following table gives an impression of the work they did and the rewards paid by the Institution:

	<i>Hours at sea</i>	<i>Rewards paid by Institution</i>		
		£	s.	d.
Fleetwood	17	44	4	0
Port St. Mary	14	34	2	0
Barrow	14	29	10	0
Douglas	11	54	0	0
Lytham	3	11	15	0
Blackpool	7	19	17	0
Total	66	193	8	0

The Commanding Officer of the R.A.F. station at Marham, Norfolk, to which the aircraft belonged, wrote to express "the heartfelt thanks of the relatives and the appreciation of the R.A.F. Station."

S	4	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	O	O	A	F	A	C	R	E	A	E	B	M	F	F	R	A	H	M	O	T	A	O	L	C	S	T	S	C	R	S	X	P	S	E	A	T	R	T	A	R	E	I	N	E	R	S	A
DATE	26 1 54		A/C TYPE	WASHINGTON		MK	WF 495		PARENT UNIT	35 SQDN		GROUP	3		COMMAND	BOMBER		DES																																														
UNIT OF CREW	MARHAM		BASE A/F	16 MWS WO LANCASTER		OFF A/F	IRISH SEA																																																									
OTHER A/C			A/C TYPE			MK			PARENT UNIT			GROUP			COMMAND																																																	
TIME OF ACC	0026 APPROX 14 mins.		DURATION OF FLIGHT	FERRY		PURPOSE OF FLIGHT	PRESTWICK		AIRFIELD OF LAST T/O			VER IFR AUTH	YFR IFR ACT		LIGHT CONDITIONS	DARK																																																
PILOT	NAME INITIALS		RANK		AGE	INST. RATING		HOURS		DAY & NIGHT		NIGHT		INST.		LINK																																																
	NATIONALITY & SERVICE		NO.		INSTR CAT	ASSESSMENT		TOTAL		TYPE		TYPE		ACT		SIM																																																
WINGS	WILLIAMS. R.N.		F/LT		35	GREEN ABOVE AVERAGE		593		44		324		43		439		72																																														
EXPERIENCE	189113							272		75		75		30		72																																																
DUPLICATE	PASSMORE A.K.		W/CDR					20		1893		20																																																				
2ND PILOT								20		37																																																						
REF NO	F 765-1		F 166-1		F 412		FR		DETAILS OF CASUALTIES						CASUALTIES		THIS AIRCRAFT																																															
1180	RB/FA/H14		✓						NAV. F/LT. KIRKLAND - K						IN CREW		7-K																																															
KARDEX	10-2		2-3		2-3		16-7		SGT. KENNEL - K						A/C OTHER																																																	
CHECKED BY									SIG. F/SGT. CLAMP - K						OUT CREW																																																	
KARDEX REF									ENG. F/SGT. NOBLE - K						A/C OTHER																																																	
									GUN. SGT. JOHNSTON - K						TOTAL		7-K																																															

OIL																					STAGE																					CAUSES																																							
OC/S	<p>The aircraft proceeding from Prestwick to the Azores climbed to 12,000 ft. and pilot reported was in I.F.R. conditions over Isle of Man. A further call was received stating that severe vibrations were experienced and icing was suspected. A few minutes later the pilot stated he was going down and reducing height to 8,000 ft owing to heavy icing. This was followed by a radio message and no further contact was made with aircraft. Parts of wreckage found established that aircraft crashed into the sea.</p> <p>It is considered that icing was the cause of the accident, and that the following factors affected the issue:- (A) The icing conditions encountered on the route were worse than expected. (B) The descent of the aircraft from 12,000 - 8,000 ft. at the onset of vibration took it into more severe icing conditions. The loss of the complete crew is attributed to inability to abandon aircraft in time available having regard to the probable attitude of aircraft.</p>																																																												WIC																				
RECORD	LIM - I.F.R. (B)																				UIC																																																												
ACTION	<p>The C in C considered that a closer link was needed between Air Ministry Meteorological and the Military Air Transport Service Weather Office at Prestwick, as he was certain that the crew would not have taken off had he seen the icing warning which was issued. This has been noted.</p>																																																																																
TYPES	ART HZN MK															COMPASS MK															STANDBY MK															CONTROL I/W																																			



Two photos of B-29s undergoing servicing / modification at Tinker AFB. Although none of the aircraft shown are identifiable as Washingtons, most, if not all the Washingtons passed through Tinker prior to delivery to the RAF. (*Tinker AFB Historian*)

Rosters

149 Squadron Roster 30 April 1951

Sqd Cdr	Sqd Ldr N. E. Canton M.B.E. D.F.C.	Pilot
Training Officer	Flt Lt John Care D.F.C.	Pilot
Flt Cdr Flying	Flt Lt E. S. Smith	Pilot
Flt Cdr Flying	Flt Lt G. M. Braid	Nav
Eng Ground	Flt Lt S. F. Leaman	Tech/Eng
Flying	Flt Lt R. C. Penning	Pilot
Flying	Flt Lt O. S. Collins	Pilot
	Flt Lt C. R. Corney	Pilot
	Flt Lt P. J. Edwards	Pilot
	Fg Off A. Garretts	Pilot
	Fg Off F. Freun	Pilot
	Plt Off K. M. Williamson	Pilot
	Flt Sgt E. R. Carlick	Pilot
	Sgt F. M. Wood	Pilot
	Sgt W. H. Cowey	Pilot
	Sgt J. E. Sowerby	Pilot
	Sgt J. A. Wright	Pilot
	Flt Sgt N.Parr	Pilot
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
Nav (sn)	Flt Lt J. D. Benca	Navigator
	Flt Lt J. A. Wainwright D.S.O.	
	Flt Lt P. B. Osborne	
	Flt Lt A. P. Zeleny	
	Flt Lt D. W. Lowes	
	Flt Lt B. O. Sibree	
	Flt Lt M. D. Middlemist	
	F/Sgt P. M. Edge	
	F/Sgt H. M. K. Algar	
	F/Sgt G. A. Davies	
	F/Sgt B. A. Gilbert	
	Sgt J. W. Lashbrook	
	Sgt R. Hanslip	
	Sgt B. Channing	
Engineers	Flt Lt W. J. J. Hudson	
	F/Sgt C. C. Rowlinson	
	F/Sgt D. G. Hall	
	Sgt C. F. Curran	
	Sgt P. H. M. Smith	
	Sgt W. L. Rawlinson	
	Sgt W. R. Ross	
	Sgt W. A. Lindsay	
Gunners	Flt Lt A. F. Peters	
	Flt Lt D. E. Hewlings	
	Flt Lt M. Danaher	
	F/Sgt N. P. Brint	
	F/Sgt L. A. Fowle	
	F/Sgt W. Macklin	
	F/Sgt R. J. Nicholls	
	F/Sgt P. E. G. Green	
	Sgt J. L. Heron	
	Sgt J. Brown	
	Sgt J. C. Holland	
	Sgt R. T. Balsdon	

	Sgt S. Farrell	
	Sgt C. W. Smith	
	Sgt A. Newman	
	Sgt B. J. Davies	
	Sgt J. R. Hobbs	
	Sgt B. Lindsay	
	Sgt D. Bedford	
	Sgt P. Owen	
	Sgt L. F. Feakes	
	Sgt M. R. V. Keen	
	Sgt A. R. Thick	
	Sgt J. E. Bryant	
	Sgt F. J. A. Howell	
	Sgt J. T. Eagleston	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
	Vacant	
Signallers	Flt Lt R. A. Douglas D.F.C.	
	Flt Lt F. F. Boler	
	M/Sig A. Stuart	
	F/Sgt D. H. Smith	
	F/Sgt H. Fuller	
	F/Sgt J. F. Hall	
	F/Sgt H. G. Bright	
	Sgt D. B. Cassellis	



John Care's 149 Squadron B-29 crew. Flt Lt. John Care is on the extreme left. None of the other crewmembers are known – can anyone help? (*John Care*)

B 29, CREW, CONINGSBY 1951.

Contacts

A list of those people who have made contact with me – if you wish to contact any of them, let me know and I will pass on your request:

David Roy	Alexander Arnold	ASF Marham 44 Squadron Air Gunner
Phil Gerry Ray Joe Jeff William	Batty Beauvoisin Belsham Bridge Brown Butt	44 Squadron Signaller 57 Squadron Air Gunner ASF Engine Fitter Marham Webmaster, RAF Marham Website 149 Squadron Air Gunner 115 Squadron Crew Chief
John Katie Pat Brian Bob Terry Doug John (Buster) Don	Care Chandler Chandler Channing Cole Collins Cook OBE Crabbe Crossley	149 Squadron Pilot Widow of Vern Chandler, A/C 44-69680 (WF437) Daughter of Vern Chandler, A/C 44-69680 (WF437) 149 Squadron Navigator 149 Squadron Electrical Fitter (WF498) XV Squadron Engine Fitter 44 Squadron Co-Pilot (WF508) 207 Squadron Crew Chief 90 Squadron Signaller
Bernard Mike Keith	Davenport Davies Dutton	90 Squadron Air Gunner 90 Squadron Air Gunner 90 Squadron Air Gunner
Ken Charles Dave John John Ray	Firth Fox Forster Forster Francis Francis	44 Squadron Air Gunner Bombardier 42-94052 (WF444) Researching RAF ELINT Squadrons 207 Squadron / WCU Air Gunner 192 Squadron Engine Fitter 57 Squadron Association
Gordon Norman Alan Brian Bob Tony	Galletly Galvin Gamble Gennings Goater Goodsall	44 Squadron Navigator / Bombardier XV Squadron Engine Fitter 90 Squadron Radio Operator Ground Maintenance Hanger XV Squadron Instrument NCO 90 Squadron Air Gunner
Ken Roy Tony Julian Henry Brian John Ernest Paul	Harding Hild Hill Horn Horscroft Howes Howett Howlett Hunt	44 Squadron Signaller Pilot 42-94052 (WF444) Archivist P&EEE Shoeburyness RAF Watton Website 44 Squadron Association 115 Squadron A/C 44-61688 (WF498) 44 Squadron Engine Fitter (WF512) Flight Engineer 42-65274 with 40 th BG (WF442)
Jimmy	James	Engine Fitter
David	Karr	Nephew of William Karr, XV Squadron Air Gunner

J. Andrew John	Kendal (Ken) Kerzner King	90 Squadron ?? Tail Gunner 44-69680 (WF437) 44 Squadron Flight Engineer
John George Peter Pete	Laing Lane Large Lewis	207 Squadron Air Gunner Navigator 44-69680 (WF437) Brother of Edward Large, Pilot 44 Squadron 149 Squadron Engine Fitter
Gerry Patrick P. Peter Mo	Maloney McGrath McLaughlin Morrey Mowbrey	44 Squadron Navigator/Bomb Aimer (WF508) 115 Squadron Pilot Engineering Officer, Pyote Texas 57 / 115 Squadron Air Gunner 57 Squadron Air Gunner
Ralph Tom	Painting Pawson	57 / 192 Squadron Flight Engineer 35 Squadron Signaller
Harry Harold	Rickwood Roberts	149 Squadron Electrical Fitter Witness to crash of WF502
Ivor William Steve Joe Derek Jim Bill	Samuel Santavicca Smisek Somerville Stanley Stanley Stevenson	207 Squadron Air Gunner Gunner 'Look Homeward Angel', 6 th Bomb Group Association Son of A/C of City of San Francisco (K-29, 330 th Bomb Group) Engine Fitter Marham 57 Squadron radio Engineer 35 / 635 Squadron Association
Albert	Urquhart	Left Gunner K-39, 330 th Bomb Group
Colin Robert Charlie	Williams Willman Woolford	XV Squadron Navigator / Bombardier A/C 42-93976 (WF440) 90 Squadron



Not B-29s but related by virtue that this photo comes from John Care's collection and shows Bristol Beaufighters of his squadron (No 254) attacking shipping off Holland on September 25, 1943. The arrow (centre left) points to a burning escort vessel while the three feathers of foam (centre bottom) are minesweeping paravanes towed by the trawler at the extreme bottom left. Note the cannon fire around the stern from the attacking planes. John Care went on the fly Washingtons with 149 squadron but sadly passed away earlier this year. His son, also called John, has put together a web site in dedication to his father at:
<http://johncare.cjb.net/>
(John Care)