

As I've grown older and have retired I find I have more time to reflect on my life. I've also had a lot of time to research my father's service during World War II. Reading and researching the history of those times makes me more regretful that I never expressed my appreciation to my father for his service more than I did. He knew I admired him for his service, but I never directly looked him in the eye and told him "thank you." On the other hand, he also never wanted to talk about it much, and never brought it up. So I was rather raised to not inquire too much from him about it. As I got older he told me more. He would answer questions if asked, but would never volunteer any information. In 1980, we both went to Harlingen, Texas to see a collection of WWII era airplanes in a large fly-in for the, then, Confederate Air Force (now Commemorative Air Force.) Dad and I spent about 5 days there seeing planes and dad would relate memories to me. In the evenings we'd go have a nice meal and he'd order a carafe of wine and open up more. Most of his first hand experiences that I learned are from those few days. The rest I have learned from constant research since his death in 2007, from many kind people providing me information and assistance along the way, and from the items, documents and souvenirs Dad left behind in a Red Cross parcel box he brought back from the war.

World War II service of Donald L Tracy

Donald Lester Tracy was born May 31st, 1921 in Conway, Missouri the third son of Lester Roy Tracy and Fannie Myrtle Cook Tracy, and lived near Plato, Missouri. When Don was four his mother took ill and died of complications from appendicitis. So Don was sent to live with his grandmother in Plato and was raised by her until her death in 1931. At that time Don's father had re-married and moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma so Don was sent to Tulsa to live with him and his step-mother. It wasn't a happy household, and when Don finally graduated from Central High school in 1939, he was searching for what to do with his life. He left his father's household and moved in with his brother Hubert and his wife for a while. Soon he took a job working for a neighbor who ran a concessions business and offered him room and board. Don worked and lived there until 1940, when he decided to join the Army. His goal: To get an education.... He was sent to Fort Sill Oklahoma and trained to be a Radio Sergeant.



UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITING STATION

Mr. Hubert Gerald Tracy
4607 E. 2d. Street
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Tulsa, Okla.....
Place

Dear Sir:

July 9, 1940....
Date

1. It gives me pleasure to advise you that ... Donald Lester Tracy.....
enlisted on July 9, 1940..... in the Regular Army of the United States for
Field Artillery..... Fort Sill, Okla., for a period of Three..... (3) years.
(Branch) (Station)

2. He gave his age as ... 19.... years and stated that he (~~was~~) (was not) married and that
no one was dependent upon him for support.

3. He gave as his nearest relative .. Hubert Gerald Tracy..... (Brother).....
(Name)

He designated the following person to be notified in case of emergency:

Hubert Gerald Tracy..... Brother..... 4607 E. 2d. St. Tulsa, Okla.....
(Name) (Relationship) (Address)

4. The consent to his enlistment was signed by Hubert Gerald Tracy.....
(Name)
..... 4607 E. 2d. St. Tulsa, Okla..... (Brother).....
(Address) (Relationship)

5. In the event he gave an incorrect age; falsified his marital status; has dependents, or sub-
mitted a false consent to enlistment, I am inclosing a self-addressed envelope (no stamp is necessary)
addressed to his first Commanding Officer which may be used if you desire to communicate with his
Commanding Officer regarding any misstatement of facts. This letter has been shown to the soldier
in order that he may reaffirm the answers he gave on his application for enlistment.

.....
Signature of Recruiting Officer

JOHN J. DUFFY

1st. Lt 18th F.A.

Recruiting Officer...

Rank

1 incl.

Envelope

F-12-RPB-11-1-39-20M

Then Pearl Harbor happened and America was at war, and in a couple of years the Army was needing airmen to fly combat duty to replace those lost on the front lines. So they posted openings for the Air Corp on the base's bulletin boards. Don and a few of his friends saw the openings and volunteered. They saw it as an increase in pay as well as prestige and adventure, and the girls liked the airmen! When the paperwork came down to Don's commanding officer at Fort Sill, he was called in and the Commander dressed him down good, saying "after all this time of me training you, and you go and do this to me?"

Regardless, Don soon shipped out to his pre-flight training at Ellington Field near Houston, Texas. Then he was sent to Big Springs, Texas for his advanced flight training. Upon successfully completing that he was sent to Wendover field in Utah for aerial gunnery training. He was assigned to be a bombardier on a B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber and was sent to Pyote, Texas at the famous "Rattlesnake" bomber base for his final bombardier training - flying simulated missions, bomb runs, etc.

During his training he learned all about the details of a B-17 airplane and the duties he would be responsible for as a bombardier. A B-17 had a maximum take-off weight of 65,000 pounds, with a maximum range of 2,000 miles. It had 4 Wright Cyclone 1820 radial engines producing 1200 HP each. It carried 13 Browning M2 .50 caliber machine guns and about 1.3 tons of .50 caliber ammunition when fully loaded. The B-17 could carry up to 8,000 pounds of bombs and around 11 tons of fuel. Of course the bomb load, ammo load and fuel were all adjusted depending on the range to the target and the desired results. Don was responsible for overseeing the loading and arming of his bombs and had extensive training in using, and guarding, the Norden bombsight which, at the time, was a highly guarded secret.



There was normally a 10 man crew. The pilot and co-pilot in the cockpit, the flight engineer/top turret gunner behind the cockpit, the bombardier in the nose who manned the bombsight and nose turret guns. The navigator in the nose who manned the two cheek guns. A radio operator in the mid section behind the bomb bay who also manned a top gun, the lower ball turret gunner, two waist gunners on each side manning the waist guns, and a tail gunner manning the tail gun turret. The M2 Browning would fire at rates up to 1000 rounds/minute. So despite all that ammunition each gun position typically had less than one minute's worth of continuous fire.

Once he successfully completed his training, Don was graduated from Bombardier School with the class of 43-7 at the Pyote Bomber Camp, and earned his bombardier wings.

*Pyote Bomber School
43-7 Class Book*



Then he was almost immediately deployed via Florida, down through the Caribbean islands to South America/Brazil before deploying over to West Africa and up to North Africa, where he was assigned to the 301st Bomb Group, 353rd Bomb Squadron of the 12th Air Force. He was stationed just outside of Tunis, Tunisia and began flying combat missions in August of 1943 striking enemy targets in North Africa and the Mediterranean region. Then the 15th Air Force was formed in November of 1943 and the 301st bomb group was transferred to the 15th Air Force and relocated to the Cerignola, Italy area. He continued to fly strategic bombing missions in Southern Europe and the Balkans area striking ball bearing factories, airports, submarine pens, refineries, fuel depots and other targets to hinder the enemy.

Don posing at his station. He's in a B-17 F-model here.



August 27

Dear folks,

If you aren't writing me fairly often I'm liable to get awfully sore when I get home. I have something to write about this time, more than just the scenery & climate.

Made my first mission and had quite a lot of excitement, more than I should have had if all these fellows have been telling the truth about their experiences.

To start off with we ran in to some flak when we first came over enemy land, three bursts went off right under us and put some small holes in our right wing & stabilizer. We had just barely cleared that area when about a dozen fighters (enemy) showed up, two of which attacked. Our

top turret gunner almost got one & would have but some of our pursuits showed up & took over the fight. But that time I was really scared and didn't stop shaking until it came time for me to do my job which I can say I did very well considering how scared I was. My bombs hit O.K., I couldn't see the results but I could see plenty of smoke where my bombs hit. We made it back without anything else happening.

Did you receive my suit - case O.K., there should be a pair of sunglasses in it if I didn't lose them in Miami - if so they're yours Herbert.

Well folks only 49 more missions until I'll be home. Keep writing! your bud
Don



Don's normal crew (Don kneeling, lower right with sunglasses)



A 301st Bomb Group B-17 drops its bombs

During his service, Don wrote letters back home relating his experiences – when it didn't violate wartime censorship rules. Here is a list of the a few of the countries he flew over:

Germany, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, Switzerland, Africa (North and West), Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Brazil, British Guiana, Puerto Rico, and of course the USA. In his words "as far as I can see, none of them compare to the US"

A letter he wrote home the night before his last mission. Of course he didn't know it would be his last.

Jan. 29, 1944

Hi guys,

It seems to be a custom now a-days for Tracy to be left out at mail call. As a result of that custom I decided to write & see if the situation could be improved. What a feeling to draw a blank after each flight.

One of our tent-mates left for home today after completing his required amount of missions. He sure was a happy man, his wife and three children will no doubt be very happy too.

I believe I told you that I'd keep you informed two weeks behind time as to where I've been. So, the place was an aerodrome at Mostar, Yugo. We did a good job too as we did yesterday and the day before. In fact we are considered a crack group when it comes to bombing. Tomorrow I'm in the lead of our

squadron for the first time. If I do a good job it may mean a good position soon. By the way my score now is twenty-seven & will soon be eight. At this rate it won't be long until you'll see my mug around.

Rec'd a letter from Mel yesterday. He said his mail service was pretty good there, that was on the 21st and also that he's making it fine. I'll probably see him for sure some time next month.

Nothing more to say for now except that I sure do like to hear from you.

Yours truly
Don

On January 30, 1944, at 9AM Don took off on his 28th and, what would be, last combat mission aboard a B-17G Serial Number 42-31424. The crew members were Pilot/commander Joseph Perkins, Co-pilot Gaylon Thigpen, Bombardier Donald Tracy, Navigator Theodore Reynolds, Flight Engineer John Oldroyd, Radio operator Roy Richardson, Ball turret gunner David Wood, Waist gunner William Gresham, Jr, Tail gunner John Browning, and Photographer Paul Murphy. It was Don's first time to fly lead bombardier for his squadron.

The target was an airfield near Villaorba, Udine, Italy. It was a fairly large bombing operation to hit numerous airfields in Northern Italy and take them out of service, and the 301st Bomb Group collectively dropped 150,000 pounds of bombs for the mission. The Allies were planning the Anzio invasion and didn't want the Axis to be able to use those airfields as bases for the enemy to counter-attack. The bombers were loaded with small 20 pound fragmentation bombs – designed to destroy any equipment/aircraft/vehicles, etc. The group took off, formed up and headed north up the middle of the

Adriatic Sea towards the target – flying over the ocean to avoid any enemy ground fire from still occupied enemy territory. Once land was encountered the group climbed to 24,000 feet and made their bomb run. Don was fixated on his Norden bombsite and adjusting course towards the target. When the time came he released his bombs which signaled his squadron to release theirs. However, they were trying a new bomb release shackle design on that mission, and reviewing the comments in the Missing Air Crew Report, other planes were having trouble with their shackles as well. The 20 pound bombs weren't heavy enough to reliably release from the new shackle design.

Don, assuming his payload was successfully dropped started closing the bomb bay doors. There was a photographer on board on that mission who was watching out the bomb bay. He saw bombs hung up and radioed "Bombardier, you still have bombs in your bomb bay!" According to other planes who saw the incident, the bomb bay doors reopened and a few more bombs dropped. Don likely tried to salvo any remaining bombs – which was standard procedure for such an event. It is then assumed a hung bomb finally released, but exploded.

It blew a large hole in the starboard waist, blew out the entire bomb racks themselves, blew out the life raft, and started a fire. The photographer was killed instantly and the co-pilot injured and, it is assumed, knocked unconscious. The plane lost control and started a steep dive away from the formation. The pilot finally managed to regain some control and level out the plane, at which point he deemed his crew's chances were better to bail out and be taken prisoner than try to stay with the plane. So he hit the bail-out bell. Seven of the surviving crew bailed out over the target near Villaorba, Italy on the captain's orders. The pilot and co-pilot stayed with the plane for another 60 miles or so, and the pilot bailed out. It is assumed the co-pilot regained consciousness shortly after because, according to witnesses on the ground, the co-pilot was seen to bail out at a very low altitude. Witnesses said his parachute only partially opened before he died upon impact with the ground. The pilot was rescued by friendlies and returned to his base. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for that mission.

The plane crashed in a field not far from Mira, Italy – about 10 miles west of Venice. According to the witnesses it was a large fire and most everything burned up. Very shortly after the crash the German military showed up and secured the area.

The Co-pilot's body, along with the remains of the photographer, were recovered by the locals and given a proper military style burial in a small town cemetery near the crash site, at Mira, Italy. After the war the US Army came and moved the remains to the American Military Cemetery just outside of Florence, Italy.

The remaining crewmen, Don included, were taken POW immediately upon hitting the ground, and were all taken to various POW camps in Germany. Don was met with an older farmer with some sort of long gun and an unsteady hand. Every time Don would reach up to try to unbuckle his parachute from his harness, the farmer would poke him in the stomach with his gun. Don was then marched to an interrogation center where he was questioned and held. He was sent, by rail, to Stalag Luft 1 near Barth, Germany on the northern coast right off the Baltic sea. Shortly thereafter, the Army promoted him to First Lieutenant.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
Office of the Commanding General
A. P. O. 520

A:NFT:sh

22 February 1944

Mr. H. G. Tracy
139 South Urbana
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Dear Mr. Tracy:

Your brother, Second Lieutenant Donald L. Tracy, O-681510, took part in a bombing mission on an enemy landing ground at Villaorba, Italy, on January 30, 1944, as a part of the crew of one of our B-17's. I regret to tell you his ship was lost over the target and Don has been carried as missing in action since that date.

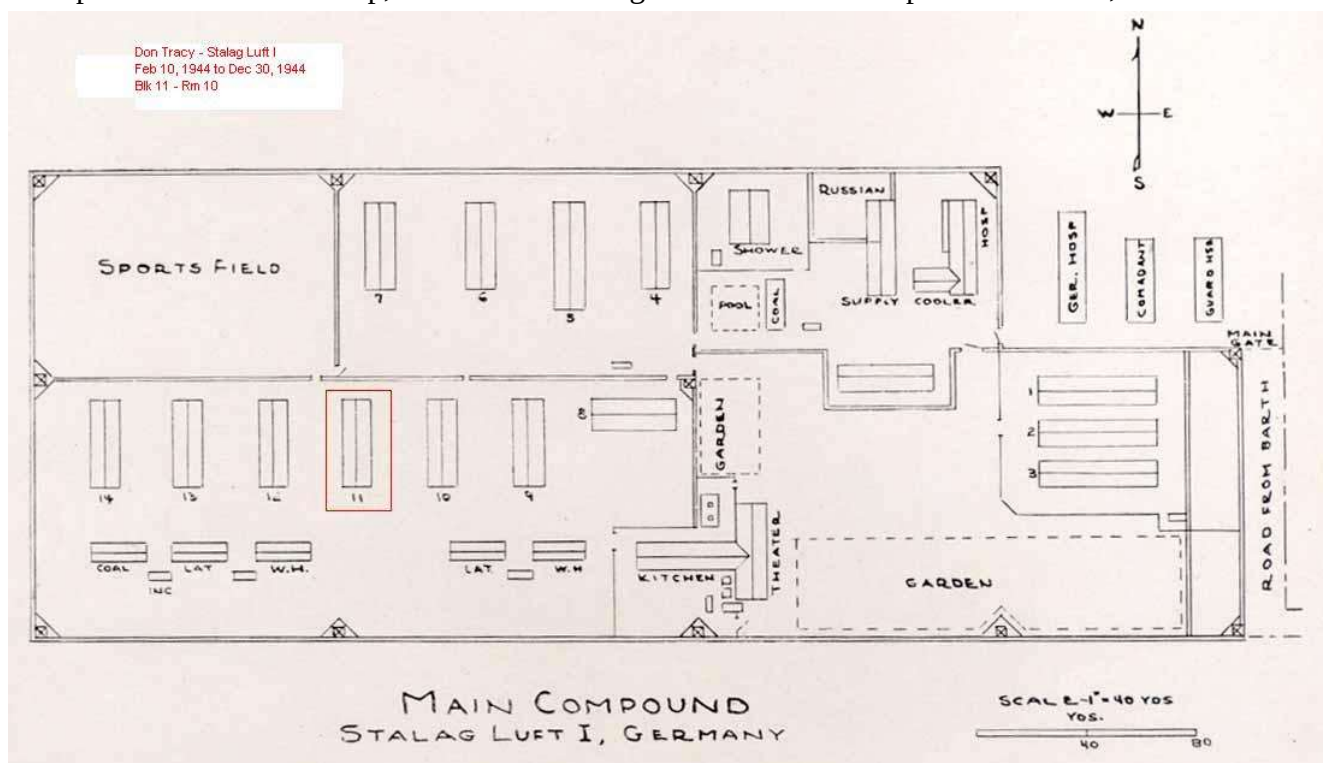
Our other crews report eight chutes were seen to leave the ship, but we have no confirmation as to whether the men reached earth safely or whether your brother was included among those who used parachutes. Many months may pass before we receive additional details. Under the circumstances, we can offer no assurance of Don's safety unless actual confirmation is at hand.

Your brother has served the Armed Forces since July 1940, and the record he has achieved is one that should be a source of much pride to his family. I sincerely hope in due course there may be news that he is safe.

Very sincerely,

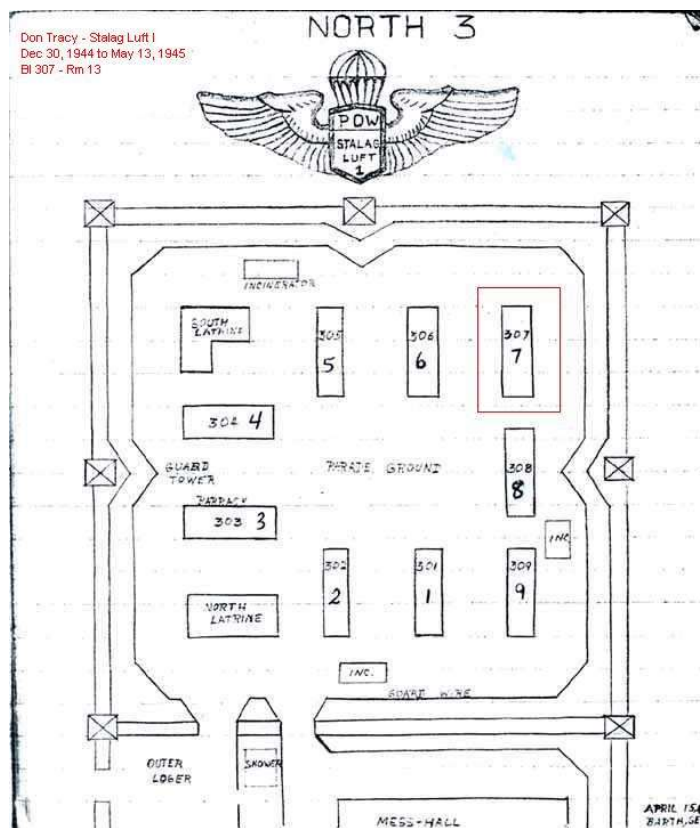
N. F. Twining
N. F. TWINING
Major General, USA
Commanding

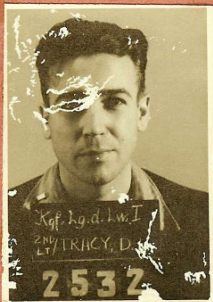
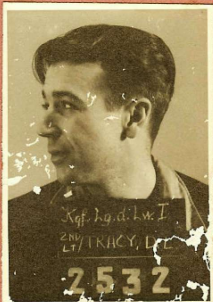

On February 10, 1944 Don arrived at Stalag Luft 1 near Barth, Germany on the Baltic sea coast and was processed into the camp, where he was assigned to the main compound Block 11, Room 10.



He was there until December 31, 1944 when he was marched further out north on the peninsula to the North 3 compound and assigned to Block 307, Room 13, where he was until liberation.

At its peak, Stalag Luft 1 held around 9,000 prisoners, so it was not a small camp. There were three separate compounds holding the prisoners. They rarely had electric lighting. The bunks were crude wooden slats with burlap bags filled with straw. Running water was sporadic. The winters were cold and the days were long. But boredom and uncertainty were their main enemies in the camp.

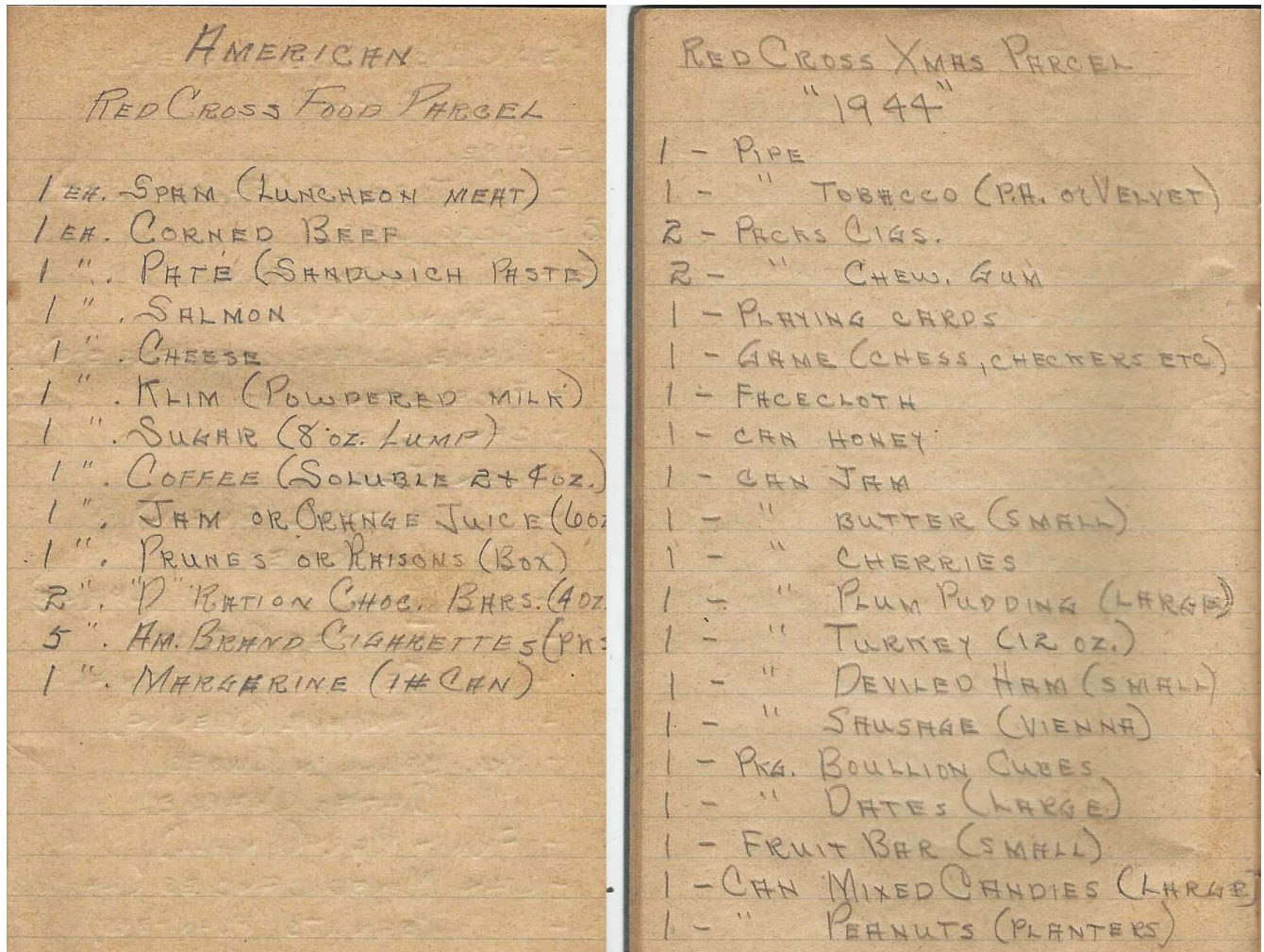


Dulag-Luft. Kriegsgefangenenkartei.		Gefangenen- Erkennungsmarke	Dulag-Luft Eingeliefert
		Nr. <u>2532 St.L.1</u>	am: <u>5.2.44</u>
NAME: T R A C Y Vornamen: <u>Donald Lester</u> Dienstgrad: <u>2.Lt</u> Funktion: <u>Bomb.</u> Matrikel-No.: <u>0 - 681 510</u> Geburtstag: <u>31.5.21</u> Geburtsort: <u>Conway, Miss. Mo.</u> Religion: <u>Prot.</u> Zivilberuf: <u>Student</u> <u>McNeider</u> Staatsangehörigkeit: <u>USA</u>		Vorname des Vaters: <u>Lester</u> Familiennamen der Mutter: <u>Fanny Cook</u> Verheiratet mit: <u>---</u> Anzahl der Kinder: <u>---</u> Heimatanschrift: <u>Mr. Hubert G. Tracy</u> <u>139 So. Urbana</u> <u>Tulsa, Okla.</u>	
Abschuß am: <u>30.1.44</u> bei: <u>Udine, Ital.</u> Flugzeugtyp: <u>B-7B 7317</u> Gefangennahme am: <u>wie oben</u> bei: <u>Fort Preuss</u>			
Nähere Personalbeschreibung			
Figur: <u>schlank</u> <u>SLIM</u> Größe: <u>5.10 1/2</u> Schädelform: <u>lang</u> <u>LONG HEAD</u> Haare: <u>braun</u> <u>BROWN HAIR</u> Gewicht: <u>68 kg</u> <u>WEIGHT 149.6 lb</u> Gesichtsform: <u>oval</u> <u>OVAL FACE</u> Gesichtsfarbe: <u>gesund</u> <u>COMPLEXION GOOD</u>		Augen: <u>braun</u> <u>BROWN EYES</u> Nase: <u>gekrümmt</u> <u>BENT</u> Bart: <u>---</u> <u>BEARD</u> Gebiß: <u>gut</u> <u>TEETH GOOD</u> Besondere Kennzeichen: <u>Wound on right thigh.</u> <u>Scar on right. Schenkel</u> <u>Wound on right thigh.</u>	
 <p>Front</p>		 <p>Profil</p>	
		Rechter Zeigefinger  <p>Fingerabdruck</p>	

German Stalag Luft 1 POW Induction document

From around February until May, 1945, the Germans began withholding the POW Red Cross parcels, which the POWs relied heavily on for food. The Germans were short of food and supplies as well, so they stockpiled the parcels for the Germans to use. So at that point the POWs began a slow starvation.

For Christmas 1944, Don wrote down the contents of their "special Christmas" Red Cross parcel in his little pocket diary, as well as the contents of a normal Red Cross parcel. They didn't know at the time that in another month, the Germans would stop giving the men the Red Cross parcels.



On April 29th, 1945 the German Commandant of the camp called the American commanding officer, Col Hubert Zemke, an Ace fighter pilot, to his office and informed him that Russian troops were approaching and he had orders to move the entire camp to another location to prevent it from falling in to Russian hands. Col Zemke promptly refused saying it would be a death march due to their depleted state of health and nourishment, and that his men would not move unless forced, which would result in a lot of bloodshed.

By that time in the war, the Germans all knew they'd lost and it was just a matter of time. So after negotiations the German Commandant agreed to move only his own men and leave the POW's behind. Col Zemke's actions that day saved countless Allied lives. So on the morning of May 1st, 1945, the POWs awoke to find empty guard towers and no Germans at all. They had all left during the night. Later that evening the Russian forces finally arrived, mostly on horseback with horse drawn wagons. Upon being liberated, the POWs began looting the German camp offices, with many getting their own records to bring back as a souvenir.



Don brought back several items including some German medals, documents and other items in one of the original Red Cross parcel boxes from the camp.



COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT
STANAG LUFT # 1

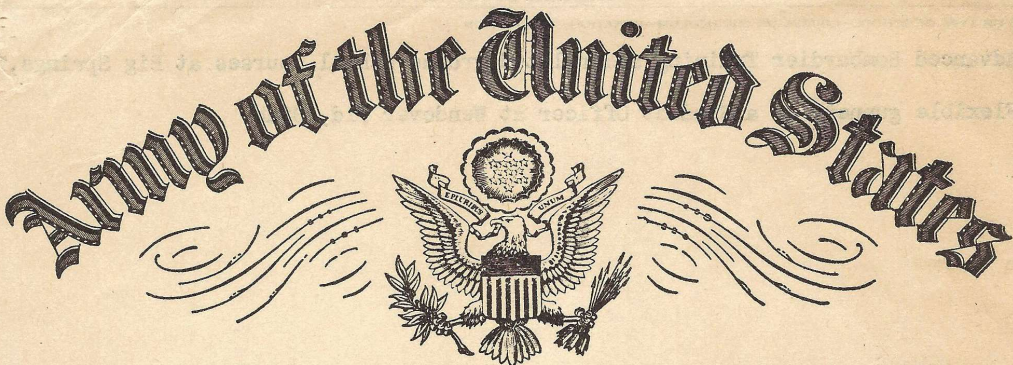
FRANCE
BELGIUM
NORWAY
ENGLAND
SCOTLAND
IRELAND
POLAND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
RHODESIA
CANADA
JAMAICA
SOUTH AFRICA
HAWAII
AUSTRALIA
EGYPT
MEXICO
NETHERLANDS
BRAZIL
NEW ZEALAND
RUSSIA (LABORERS)
POLAND (CIVILIANS)

The Russians proceeded to loot and rape the German townspeople in the nearby town of Barth. On May 10, 1945 the Russians brought in several cows and gave them to the POWs so the men had fresh beef, which was a treat they hadn't seen for months. On May 13th, Allied planes arrived to take the POWs back to a processing point before being repatriated back to their home country. Don left in a stripped down B-17 at 3:30PM and was flown to Laone, Netherlands, arriving at 7:10PM. They were then driven in trucks to Reims, France where they stayed overnight and got a shower. On May 14th they took off in C-47's at 1:30PM and arrived in LaHavre, France at 2:50PM – and then were driven in trucks to the processing camp at Fecamp, France. At that point Don quit recording his travels, but it is assumed he was taken to England before being sent back to the USA via ship.

Don arrived in the states in late June and went straight back to his relatives in Tulsa. He wasted no time in seeing his sweetheart, Bernadine, who lived in Claremore, Oklahoma and who had faithfully sent him letters during his time overseas. They were married on July 8th, 1945 and came to Tulsa where, in a few years, they started a family of their own.



In December of 1945, Don was called to San Antonio, Texas where he was promoted to the rank of Captain and discharged from the service at the same time. From my understanding, being promoted at the same time of discharge gave him extra back-pay money – which he used to build a house for him and his new wife.

			
SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD			
SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST			
<p>This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.</p>			
1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL		MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS	
TRACY Donald L		10. MONTHS	11. GRADE
		29	2d Lt
		12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY	
		Bombardier	
2. ARMY SERIAL No.	3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY No.	
0 681 510	1st Lt	Unknown	
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State)			
139 So Urbana Tulsa, Okla			
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION	8. DATE OF BIRTH	
13 May 1943	19 Jan 1946	31 May 1921	
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION			
SAD AAFFDC San Antonio Texas			
SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS			
13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION			
<p>Bombardier: Was Bombardier on B-17. Located, identified and accurately bombed assigned targets from a bombardment airplane. Inspected and tested bombsights and allied bombing equipment prior to mission. Adjusted bombsight for specific conditions such as ground speed, altitude and drift of airplane by transposing these values into bombsight in accordance with mathematical tables. Released bombs when objective appeared in markings of bombsight. Was proficient in aerial gunnery, map reading and day time navigation. Flew 28 combat missions over Germany. German POW for 15 months until being liberated.</p>			

HEADQUARTERS
SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT
ARMY AIR FORCES PERSONNEL DISTRIBUTION COMMAND

San Antonio, Texas
21 December 1945

SUBJECT: Promotion

TO: 1st LT. DONALD LESTER TRACY 0681510 AG AUS

1. By the direction of the President you were promoted this date to the grade Captain under the provision of Letter, Hqrs. AAF, Subj: Promotion, dtd 19 December 1945.
2. Although an oath of office is unnecessary your acceptance of this promotion must be acknowledged to be effective.
3. Two copies of this letter are attached as this promotion will not be announced in War Department Special Orders.

BY ORDER OF COLONEL DAVIS:

OFFICIAL:

LONDON A. FREEAR
Captain, Air Corps
Adjutant

LONDON A. FREEAR
Captain, Air Corps
Adjutant

1st Ind

Hqrs, SAD AAFPCD, Outgoing Records Branch, San Antonio, Texas

TO: Commanding Officer, 1045th AAFBU, SAD AAFPCD, San Antonio, Texas

I (do do not) Accept the promotion.

(Signature)

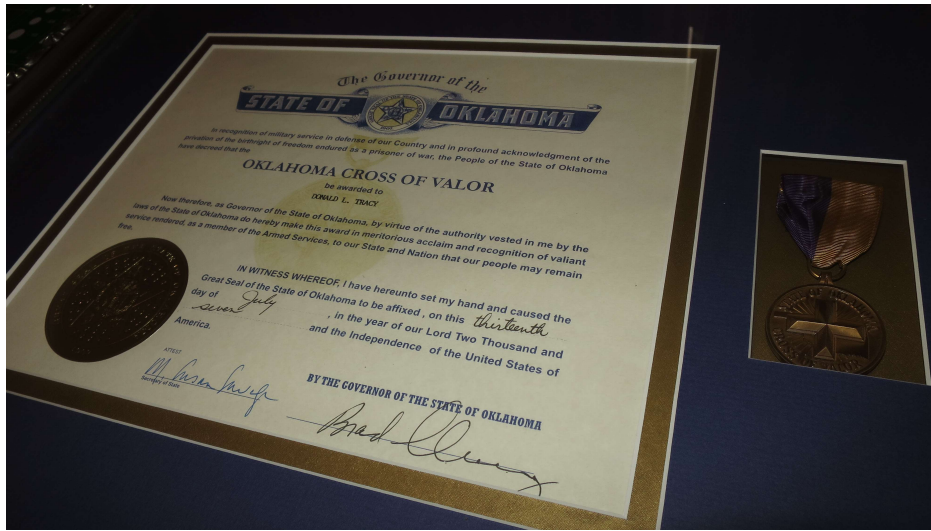
Don's brother, Hubert, managed to get him an apprenticeship with Jack Whitacre, who ran Whitacre Glass Company, and Don worked there for a number of years learning the skills of working with glass. In 1965, Don decided to go in to business for himself and established Don Tracy Glass Company in Tulsa which he ran until his retirement in 1983 when he sold the business. In 1974, Don built a nice home in the country which would eventually become his retirement home, and where he could enjoy his beloved gardening.



So he and his wife lived happily there until Bernadine's death in 2001. At that point Don pretty much lost all interest in life and just existed until his death in 2007.

After his death the Governor of the State of Oklahoma awarded him the Oklahoma Cross of Valor. My sister and I had his medals, Cross of Valor, POW papers and Captain's commission professionally mounted, and it was presented to us by U.S. Representative John Sullivan.





Oklahoma Cross of Valor

In the spring of 2020, I was contacted by a gentlemen in Italy who represented the group Aerei Perduti there that researches WWII crash sites in the area. After a fair amount of research, it was determined that a large bomber crash site they had located was, indeed, that of my father's B-17. It crashed near the small town of Mira, Italy, about 50-60 miles away from the target of Villaorba. The locals there had wondered about the identity of the famous "mystery bomber" that had crashed there on a winter day in January 1944. In fact one of the gentlemen that is still living on the property to this day witnessed the crash as a young boy, and was the first person to the crash site. The plane burned badly and ammunition was exploding so nobody could get close to it until the fire subsided. Inside they found the charred remains of photographer Paul Murphy – who died in the initial explosion. They located the body of the co-pilot, Gaylen Thigpen a short distance away. He was positively ID'ed from a name tag on his flight jacket. A few surviving items from the plane were obtained from the wreckage – including a piece of the armor back of a pilot's seat as well as a few oxygen bottles. The farmer cut one of the oxygen bottles in two and used it as a planter for a decoration in his yard. It still exists to this day. I believe the armor items are intended to be displayed in a small, local museum there.

The story of the "mystery bomber" had been a common one in the pubs of the area, and Aerei Perduti finally solved the decades-long mystery. They wrote an article published in the local newspapers finally revealing the identity and story behind the "mystery bomber."



Armor from pilots seat (Before and after restoration)



Oxygen tank used as planter



Items recovered from crash site – indicating a fiery demise.