

"Mission Belle" Veteran Back After Exciting Seven Months

Tired but happy an every inch a soldier, Staff Sergeant Walter Zabower, son of Mrs. Frances Zabower of 808 Hayes Street, is back home for a well deserved respite after spending seven thrill-packed months in Europe.

During the latter half of 1943, as a member of the crew of a Flying Fortress, he participated in 25 bombing missions, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

Modest and unassuming, the young Bethlehemite was more or less reluctant today to exploit his feats while in his country's service. He was inducted into the armed forces July 28, 1942, and received his basic training at St. Petersburg, Florida.

Upon completion of the training he enrolled in the gunnery school at Fort Myers, Fla., and following his graduation applied for admission to the Air Corps radio school at Salt Lake City. Completing the latter course, he was assigned to a Flying Fortress.

In June of last year he arrived in England and on July 17, as a member of the crew of the "Mission Belle," he made his first bombing mission. "Every member of that crew is still going strong, and none has been injured", Sergeant Zabower declared.

Asked about the bombing missions, he said: "We made 16 over Germany; six over France; two over Norway and one over Holland.

"One of these missions was a shuttle trip," he said. "We loaded the 'Mission Belle' with bombs in England, dropped them over Regensburg, Germany, and then continued to Africa. There we remained long enough to refuel and reload with bombs and on our way back to England we dropped them over Bordeaux, France.

"While the 'Mission Belle' and all of its crew members are still giving the Axis everything they have, the good old ship had one or more close calls, and as Sergeant Zabower put it, "We come in on a wing and a prayer."

Referring to some of the missions,



SGT. WALTER ZABOWER

Sergeant Zabower stated that on one occasion one of the engines of the big bomber was knocked out. At another time, he said, there was a hole in one of the wings large enough to crawl through.

Returning from one of the trips, Sergeant Zabower said that a dozen 20 mm. shots exploded in the plane, and the members of the crew escaped injury.

"This happened after we left our target and became engaged in a dog fight. The plane that was causing us some trouble made its last trip. The ball turret gunner got it. We reached our base on a wing and a prayer."

When asked as to how he fared on these trips he remarked "I had a close call. A 20 mm exploded in my ammunition box, the force knocking me down. I returned to my post and was in there giving them everything for the rest of the engagement."

In a citation dated November 28, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement as a waist gunner. He did not comment on this award, but according to a story sent from the Eighth AAF Bomber Command Station, Sergeant Zabower and the members of the Mission Belle, were over Schweinfurt, Germany, blasting the vitals of the Fuehrer's war industry, the young Bethlehemite, in one of the fiercest clashes with the Luftwaffe, kept his gun hot and blasted a Messerschmitt 110 out of the skies. He said it "was a twin-engine fighter."

The Oak Leaf Clusters were also awarded for extraordinary achievement, according to the citations.

When asked about the Germans as fighters, Sergeant Zabower said they were tough, but the Americans are just so much tougher."

Following a 20-day furlough he will report to the Atlantic City headquarters of the Air Corps. He stated today that he is anxious to get into another theatre of war, and expressed the hope that he will be assigned to the South Pacific area.

He attended Bethlehem Technical High School and before being inducted into the armed forces was employed in the heat treating department of the Bethlehem Steel Company.

Zabower,
Walter

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