

From John Rhodes:

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your E mail about "Happy". Yes I knew him and like to consider him a friend. We are going back 64 years and old men's memories – I am now 87 - are notoriously poor so I shall try to dig out the war service parts of my written family history memoirs, of our service together starting with our first meeting at No 1 Night Intruder Course at Greenwood Nova Scotia. I did not know he was "Glen" everyone knew him as "Happy" and I thought he was an American citizen who crossed the border to join the RCAF. Before transferring to Mosquitos I was a flying Instructor at Medicine Hat Alberta and married an American lady there and still have a friend from that era living on Vancouver Island. I later flew Canadian built Mosquitos from London Ontario via Labrador Greenland and Iceland To Scotland so I do know a little about Canada!. Sincerely John Rhodes

Dear Mark Here is the **first** excerpt about the Mosquito course where I met with Happy. I shall try to send anything about operations on 605 later when I find/ if it Sincerely John

I arrived at Greenwood aerodrome to join No 36 Operational Training Unit to join No 1 Course on June 30th and was taken up in a "Mossy" for familiarisation on July 1st. I was very impressed because it was larger, more powerful, faster and more exciting than anything else I had flown in to date.

The Station Commander was a supercilious Englishman of the old school .He always carried a swagger stick and I am not even sure that he did not wear either the old cavalry boots worn in the old RFC during and after World War I, or leather leggings. There was something strange and not very pleasant about him, but I cannot recall exactly what at this length of time.

The first thing all he married officers did was to find a place for their wives to stay and we used to go to see them when flying was finished for the day. As soon as the Station Commander found out he was furious and ordered us to live in the Mess and not go back to see our wives. We naturally were very displeased and decided to send a deputation to protest about this!

We appointed Happy to act for us, after an infuriated group of mutinous dogs congregated in the bar to air our grievances and he "volunteered" to go and see the C.O.alone .

"Happy" was an American from Chicago who crossed the border and joined the RCAF at the outbreak of war. He was in his early twenties with dark thinning hair and a black drooping walrus moustache which gave him a lugubrious expression.

When the U.S. declared war they tried to get all their citizens to return and join the U.S. services because, like us in Britain when war came, they were badly in need of experienced personnel. They offered higher ranks and higher pay as an inducement, but "Happy" told them "Nix. I joined the RCAF, and in the RCAF I will stay as long as they want me."

Being American and also in the RCAF, the R.A.F C.O. was in a very difficult position. If he laid down the law heavily over such a trivial matter he risked offending two friendly countries, so he gave in, and called us all back.

He was still furious and said "Holland has put your points of view. I expect you will all be dead within six months anyway so you might as well live out with your wives whilst you can!"

That is probably why I took a dislike to the Station Commander.

Second instalment

This is a quick explanation of what "Happy" and 605 squadron were doing as Night Intruding. I will probably send a third part if and when I can find anything relevant:- Perhaps here I should explain Night Intruding.

It was really a "lets go and annoy the Germans " effort which was in fact a German idea which they used early in the war.

They were totally unaware how successful it was and had no idea what chaos they caused especially to our pupil pilot training programme and they were directly instrumental in our closing pupil training in this country and moving the flying schools out to Canada, the US and South Africa.

The Luftwaffe used single engine fighters but because they did not know how many pupils got lost or crashed when the lights were put out on the ground in the blackout they abandon the practice.

So, building on the German successes, three Night Intruder Mosquito squadrons were formed and we had three functions.

The first was night standby, and during this when the Luftwaffe were bombing Britain, the radio monitoring intelligence services listened in to their bomber instructions and found where they were told to land after the raid. We then took off and tried to get their first and patrolled that airfield to wait for their return.

We learned later that it had an effect on their crew morale to return to base after a long tiring trip only to be told that they couldn't land because there was an Intruder on their circuit; be redirected elsewhere only to find another Intruder patrolling that circuit. If they were told to land anyway then the airfield landing lights had to be lit up and we might be able to have a shot at one either in the air or on the ground landing or taxiing and if neither we could drop a 250 or 500 lb bomb onto the airfield.

There were many Marks of Mosquitos. Fighter versions, bomber versions high altitude stripped down versions for photographic reconnaissance and so on and our version was the Mosquito Mk 2 with Rolls Royce Merlin 21 engines for low altitude operations.

We could either carry 500 extra gallons of fuel in the bomb bay and two 250 gallon drop tanks on the wings which gave us about 8 hours flying, or we could carry no extra fuel but two 500 lb bombs in the bomb bay and two 250 lb bombs on the wings which gave us about 4 1/2 hrs flying A short distance with bombs and guns or a long distance with cannons and machine guns and so on.

Our second job was in support of our own Bomber Command when they were going somewhere.

We used to be briefed as to how many bombers were going; where they were going; the route they were taking there, and the route they were taking back; where the German night fighter squadron airfields were; when they were likely to scramble; when and where they might run out of ammo and fuel and as a result, where they were likely to land to fill up again.

Our job was to patrol these airfields and cause as much nuisance as we could. It was no use for us to accompany the Bombers at night because we had no airborne radar. This was forbidden in case we were shot down and so give the radar secrets to the Germans.

During all these sorties we used to see activities at other airfields which were not classed in our lists as either bomber or fighter airfields and Johnny, my navigator, used to make a note of anything interesting; which brings us to the third category.

During bright moonlight nights neither our Bomber Command nor the Luftwaffe used to operate and on these conditions we were allowed a free rein to go, with permission, to look at these places to see what, if anything was going on, and that of course was most interesting.

Later, of course, we had a fourth job, that of chasing the V1 flying bombs at night whilst patrolling off and over the French coast.

Third installment

Mark. Here is the last and third part for me to send. I have taken it straight out of my memoirs written whilst I still had many details fresh in my mind about the war time service. It was not written for publication. It was written for my children and for my own interest in setting down facts whilst they were clear in my mind. If they are of any help to you to understand what Happy was doing on 605 that will be sufficient for me.. Best wishes John

On April 3rd 1944 Happy Holland, who had joined the squadron, asked me to fly him to Nottingham. (Happy was a Flight Lieutenant) To see a friend of his for a weekend leave.

We always had to do an aircraft serviceability flying test during the day before any night operations and whilst I could wander home to Sussex to see the family without question, it was always normal procedure to be given permission to combine a flying check with ferrying someone somewhere provided that it did not take too long within a reasonable distance. This was a two hour flight each way.

We took off with Johnny my navigator navigating and Happy sitting on the floor at Johnny's feet. No seat and no safety straps!!

The weather began to deteriorate and by the time we got to Nottingham I was flying at 500 ft to avoid flying in low cloud and so that Johnny could keep his landmarks.

Suddenly I smelled smoke. My god, I thought, bad weather, 500ft and we're on fire. That's all I need, looking at each engine in turn which appeared to be running smoothly.

The smoke I could then see was coming from the floor. God. An electrical fire in the bomb bay and 500 gallons of aviation fuel down there in the spare tank.

Then I saw the problem. Under Happy's smiling face and walrus moustache was an enormous American cigar burning furiously. I nearly had kittens.

"Happy" I shouted. "Put that bloody cigar OUT!!!"

"I don't know what is wrong with you Limeys" grumbled Happy " We always smoke in American planes!!!"

He stubbed out the cigar very reluctantly and we landed safely a few minutes later at Hucknall near Nottingham.

Sorry Mark. I was not fully awake. My brother in law was killed on his first operation to Holland. My sister got his log book but obviously if he

did not return he was unable to enter up his log book details of his last trip. Silly me. All can say is that we did routine operations over France every night- the squadron did -not every pilot every night and I have no doubt that Happy was on a routine night Intruder operation when he was killed. Could have been a German Night fighter or Ground anti aircraft fire or being forced to fly low in bad weather in a mountainous area. Sincerely. John