

DEAR ROSS

3/22/99

ENCLOSED IS A CHECK FOR \$55.00
PLEASE SEND ME TWO BOOKS.
FIRST OVER GERMANY \$35 + \$3
368TH COMBAT DIARY \$17

Thanks,

Walt

Mr. Walter Keilt
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①
BOIKE'S INITIATION

10-12-89

Who was Boike? Boike was a dog. He was, ^{also} the crew mascot of Kelt's crew which flew in "Weary Bones", ship number XXXX 943 of ~~356th Squadron~~, ^{the} 368th Eager Beaver.

Boike first made his appearance one October 1943 evening in the BOQ at Grand Island Yehuda. He was accompanied by six assorted crew member ~~sergeants~~ ^{sergeants} and a mysterious looking flight bag.

"Lieutenant, this is Boike our new mascot." He didn't look like much, being of doubtful lineage. He was all black except for a small white patch on his chest and ~~the~~ white paws. He weighed all of five pounds. Somewhere in his background was scotch terrier blood.

"Are we correct in assuming he is flying to the U.K. with us?" we queried. "Oh yes, he is definitely flying over with us and will be a full fledged member of the crew."

"What happens to Boike when we have to go to altitude and have to put on oxygen masks?" we asked. "No problem sir we have that all taken care of", whereupon the mysterious flight bag was opened and eager hands produced a standard oxygen mask which had been

(2)

obviously modified by an additional strap. "But does it fit?" "Oh yes, as you now can see it fits securely over his ~~snout~~ snoot." And indeed it did with no apparent leaks. "Ah yes, but what happens if we have to jump out and hit the silk?" Back to the bag again and out ~~came~~ ^{came} a small parachute and special "dog" harness made by some sympathizing parachute packer. It was very tiny but fit snugly around his chest, stomach and front legs. The chute diameter was alleged to be about six feet. And so it was agreed that Boike was indeed an official crew member and was going to war with us.

Several months elapsed during which we flew the Atlantic, went through the details of assignment as a ~~re~~ replacement crew and commenced our tour of duty ^{at Edinburgh.} Boike survived all this and before very long found the rear door of one of the mess halls. There he was given all he could eat and in due time ^{had} grown into a twenty pound "chow hound".

(3)

One afternoon during a "stand down", into the ~~the~~ officers quarters came the enlisted crew with determined looks on their faces. "Lieutenant, someone said, we have decided that Boike is not a real member of our crew as he has not even flown a single mission. All he does is eat and get fat." "So what?" we asked, "What can you expect of a mere dog?" "We have a mission planned for him" was the answer. "He is going to make a parachute jump and then he will be a real crew member." "And how is he going to make this jump?" we asked. "Very simple sir. In two days as you know we are scheduled to slow time a new engine on Weary Bones. We, including Boike ~~and~~ will be on board and you will fly over Thurleigh with flap down as slow as you can fly and we will drop Boike out of the tail gunner's hatch." "You have to be kidding" we replied, "If the chute doesn't ~~open~~ open we will all be ~~dog~~ "murderers" and I could be court martialed for dog murder." "But sir we have ~~everything~~ done everything to make this a no fail mission. We have enlarged the harness, installed a static line on the chute and tested the whole thing by dropping

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pg 4

"and besides we will have a photographer on the ground to take pictures. We will take him just before he hits the ground and ^{pictures of} some others. We'll send the pictures to the "Stars and Stripes" newspaper and we'll all be famous!"

(4)

March 10 - noon

it from the control tower. We can't fail and Boike will be as safe as it is possible to be." → Insert here ←

No amount of protesting from us could deter the crew from going through with this doubtful event. And so, on Jan 5, 1944, 10 AM, Heavy Bombs was seen to be flying ^{1000 feet} over Thurleigh ~~with~~ with half flaps at 120 mph aboard were the entire crew with the exception of the ~~the~~ bombardier who was in a jeep on the ground with the base photographer. Boike was all harnessed up ^{with} ~~and~~ static line ~~attached~~ attached ready to go.

After the third pass the fateful deed was done! Out came Boike, the static line did its job and down came Boike, the chute blossoming over his head. Upon reaching the ship over on its left wing we could all see Boike, ^{rapidly} speeding to the ground with hand feet dangling, suspended by a chute that looked too small. Down, down he went and after some thirty seconds hit the ground hand feet first. He let out a yip and at full speed headed for the nearest patch of trees some ¹⁰⁰⁰ ~~1500~~ feet west. The jeep with photographer were unfortunately on the wrong side of the field but, ^{saw} ~~saw~~ him _{someone}

run into the woods and
left his leg on the first tree he came to.

In the meantime, up in the air, over the radio
~~came~~ the question "ship flying over Thurleigh
what are you doing throwing a dog out
of your aircraft?" "Oh, Thurleigh ~~we~~ this
is Weary Bones 943 - we are just testing a
parachute" "Roger 943 Thurleigh tower out."

Colonel Williams who just happened to be
in the tower at the time grabbed a telephone
and called 368 squadron operations. ~~The~~
The duty sergeant took the call. "What are
you crazy guys doing throwing ^a poor defenceless
~~the~~ dog out of an airplane?"

"Oh, its OK colonel Williams that was Baikes
seventeenth jump." "OK, 368th we were just
wondering what was ~~happening~~ ^{going on.}" And so that
was the end of Baikes famous jump and he
was now an ~~an~~ official member of Kerlt's crew.

While no photographs were taken of the decent
Baik was picked up by the jeep and driven to
368th headquarters ^{where} the accompanying picture was
taken of him before ~~at~~ his parachute was removed.

Baikes continued to live near the mess hall
and reached a weight of 30 pounds and as far
as anyone knows remained at Thurleigh long

after his crew went home.

1st Lt
Walter H Heit
First Pilot
0677767

P.S.

We did not get written up in Stars and Stripes and did not become famous. All that remains is a photo of Boike with his chute on after his death defying jump.

Upon looking back on this event we all now realize it was a foolish thing to do. Lt, however, turned out OIC and we now ~~remember~~ remember it as a cheerful highlight of a time that was not always happy.

Note to rest of crew:

1. am not sure of the date
2. am not sure of the ship we were flying

Over 75

Walt

Oct 12/1989

11 January 1990

To: Walter Keilt
Skip Knight

I am sending to each of you a typed copy of the version of the Boike story that will appear in the January issue of Echoes, which will probably be off the press next week.

At that time I will send each of you several copies of the story for whatever uses you may have. Remember, other members of the crew who are on our mailing list will also be receiving copies in the next couple of weeks.

I enjoyed the story, and I am sure that others will, as well. Also, it was a bit of a change of pace from the things we normally run about about combat crews and aircraft.

Thanks for putting the whole thing together, and I look forward to your next contribution

By Walter H. Keilt, 368th

— 8pt 6f

Who was Boike?

Boike was a dog. He was also the crew mascot for my gang, which flew "Weary Bones" 42-37943 (368th G model, tail letter L).

Boike first made his appearance one October 1943 evening in the BOQ at Grand Island, NE. He was accompanied by six assorted crew member sergeants, and a mysterious looking flight bag.

"Lieutenant, this is Boike, our new mascot."

FIVE-POUND WONDER — 8pt 6f

He didn't look like much, being of doubtful lineage. He was all black except for a small white patch on his chest and white paws. He weighed all of five pounds. Somewhere in his background was Scotch terrier blood.

"Are we correct in assuming he is flying to the U.K. with us?" the four officers questioned.

"Oh, yes. He is definitely flying over with us and will be a full fledged member of the crew."

"What happens to Boike when we have to go to altitude and have to put on oxygen masks?"

"No problem, sir. We have all that taken care of," whereupon the mysterious flight bag was opened and eager hands produced a standard oxygen mask which had obviously been modified by an additional strap.

"But, does it fit?"

"Oh, yes. As you now can see it fits securely over his snout." And, indeed it did, with no apparent leaks.

WHL

"Ah, yes, but what happens if we have to jump out and hit the silk?"

Boike's OWN PARACHUTE — SPT 6F

Back to the bag again and out came a small parachute and special "dog" harness made by some sympathizing parachute packer. It was very tiny, but fit snugly around his chest, stomach and front legs. The chute diameter was alleged to be about six feet. And, so it was agreed that Boike was indeed an official crew member and was going to war with us.

Months later,
One afternoon during a "stand down", into the officers' quarters came the enlisted crew with determined looks on their faces.

"Lieutenant," someone said, "we have decided that Boike is not a real member of our crew as he has not even flown a single mission. All he does is eat and get fat."

"So what?" we asked. "What can you expect of a mere dog?"

"We have a mission planned for him," was the answer. "He is going to make a parachute jump and then he will be a real crew member."

"And how is he going to make this jump?" we asked.

"Very simple, sir. In two days, as you know, we are scheduled to slow time a new engine on 'Weary Bones'. We, including Boike, will be on board and you will fly over Thurleigh with flaps down, as slow as you can fly, and we will drop Boike out of the tail gunner's hatch."

"You have to be kidding," was our incredulous answer. "If the chute doesn't open we will all be murderers and I could be court martialed for 'dog murder'."

CAN'T FAIL, SAYS CREW — SPT 6F

"But sir, we have done everything to make this a no-fail mission. We have enlarged the harness, installed a static line on the chute and tested the whole thing by dropping it attached to a rock from the control tower. We can't fail and Boike will be as safe as it is possible to be.

"Besides," they continued, "we will have a photographer on the ground taking pictures. We will take pictures of him just before he hits the ground. We'll send the pictures to Stars and Stripes and we'll all be famous."

me

No amount of protesting from us could deter the crew from going through with this doubtful event. And so, on 5 June 1944 at 1000 hours "Weary Bones" was seen flying at 1,000 feet over Thurleigh with half flaps at 120 mph. Aboard was the entire crew, with the exception of the bombardier, who was on the ground traveling with a base photographer in a jeep.

Boike was all harnessed up with his static line attached and ready to go! *Out came Boike! — 8pt bf*
After the third pass the fateful deed was done! Out came Boike. The static line did its job and down came Boike, the chute blossoming over his head. Upon wracking the ship over on its left wing, we could all see Boike rapidly speeding to the ground with hind feet dangling, suspended by a chute that seemed too small.

Down, down he went and after some thirty seconds Boike hit the ground, hind feet first. He let out a yip and at full speed headed for the nearest patch of trees some thousand feet west. The jeep was unfortunately on the wrong side of the field, but someone took note that Boike ran to the woods and lifted his leg on the first tree he came to.

In the meantime, up in the air, over the radio came the question: "Ship flying over Thurleigh, what are you doing, throwing a dog out of your aircraft?"

"Thurleigh, this is 'Weary Bones', 943, we are just testing a ²prachute."

"Roger, 943, Thurleigh tower out."

*8/0
1/0f*

Editor's note: Unfortunately, the flying control log for 5 June 45 makes no mention of a dog parachuting out of a B-17.

Col. Williams (~~LTC~~ Robert C.), who just happened to be in the tower at the time, grabbed a telephone and called 368th squadron operations:

"What are you crazy guys doing, throwing a poor, defenseless dog out of an airplane?"

"Its o.k., Colonel, that was Boike's seventeenth jump!"

"O.K., 368th, we were just wondering what was going on."

And so that was the end of Boike's famous jump and he was now an official

mine

member of Keilt's crew.

While no photographs were taken of the descent, Boike was picked up by the jeep and driven to 368th headquarters where the accompanying picture of him was taken before his parachute was removed.

Boike continued to live near the mess hall and reached a weight of thirty pounds. As far as anyone of the crew knows, Boike remained at Thurleigh long after my crew went home.

~~#~~

Name:

Cadet class: 43 D

Place of graduation: ELLINGTON

Number of combat missions: 28

Wife's first name: SINGLE 17

Other 306th men whom I know graduated with me:

NONE



WALTER KEILT
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