

## Timeline of Service

Captain Robert B Hermann  
8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Corp, 306<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 367<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron  
Navigator Boeing B-17F-30-BO, #42-5130, **Sweet Pea**, Pilot, Capt. John L  
Ryan

From: 289 North High Street, Chillicothe, Ohio  
Born: 25 Dec 1918  
Died: 22 July 1990 Elgin, IL  
Buried: Arlington National Cemetery, Washing DC, Section 70 Grave  
#1821

### Serial Number: 0-660491

- 6 Dec 1941, Enlisted as Aviation Cadet Fort Hayes Columbus Ohio
- 11 Dec 1941, Basic training at Ellington Field Texas
- 7 Feb 1942, Navigation School, Kelly Field Teas
- 23 May 1943, Commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt
- 9 June 1942, Assigned to 306<sup>th</sup> Bomb group at Wendover Air Field Utah
- 6 Aug 1942, Transferred to Westover Air Field MA
- 5 Sept 1942 – 8 Sept 1942, Flew overseas to Thurleigh England,
- 31 Dec 1942, Promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt
- 6 Mar 1943, Shot down on mission to Lorient France, MACR- 15568
- 8 Mar to 17 Mar 1943, Sent to Dulag III Frankfort Germany for interrogation
- 20 Mar to 8 Apr 1943, Sent to Oflag 21B
- Apr 1943 to Jan 1945, POW Stalag Luft III, Sagan Germany (now Zagan Poland)
- Jan 1945, Marched to Stalag VII A, Mossburg Germany
- 29 Apr 1945, Liberated
- 16 July 1945, Returned to USA
- 8 Oct 1945, Promoted to Captain
- 20 Dec 1945, Discharged Danville Ky.

### Missions List:

9 Oct 1942, Lille France (Pilot Capt. John Ryan)

7 Nov 1942, Brest France

8 Nov 1942, Lille France (Pilot Capt. Lambert)

9 Nov 1942, St. Nazaire France

14 Nov 1942, St. Nazaire France

18 Nov 1942, La Pallice France

22 Nov 1942, Lorient France



## Timeline of Service

12 Dec 1942, Rouen France

20 Dec 1942, Romilly-sur-Seine France

### **Missions List: (Cont.)**

27 Jan 1943, **Wilhelmshaven Germany (First Over Germany)**

2 Feb 1943, Hamm Luxembourg

27 Feb 1943, Brest France

6 Mar 1943, Lorient France (Shot Down)

**Note:** Claimed shooting down 3 enemy aircraft

### **Medals/Awards:**

- Distinguished Flying Cross (for action on 12 DEC 42 mission)
- Air Metal with 2 Oak leaf Clusters, 1 Feb 1943, 17 Apr 1943, 13 Mar 1943
- Purple Heart with one with Oak Leaf Cluster, 20 Dec 1942 & 6 Mar 1943,
- American Campaign with one Bronze Service Star
- European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign with one Bronze Service Star
- American Defense
- World War II Victory
- Prisoner of War, Stalag Luft III Mar 1943 to Apr 1945

THERE I WAS

Missions on which I flew in order -

10-9-42 Lille  
11-7-42 Brest  
11-8-42 Lille  
11-9-42 St. Nazaire  
11-14-42 St. Nazaire  
11-18-42 LaPallice  
11-22-42 Lorient  
12-10-42 Rouen  
12-24-42 Romilly-sur-seine  
1-27-43 Wilhelmshaven  
2-2-43 Hamm  
2-27-43 Brest  
3-6-43 Lorient

12-1/2 missions

End of Line

GROUP AND SQUADRON

306th Bomb Group      367th Bomb Squadron  
Stationed: Thurleigh, England - Station 114  
Aircraft  
    type:      B-17  
Crew  
Position:      Navigator  
Combat  
Missions:      12-1/2  
Targets:      See above

We were coming off the bomb run when we were hit by A.A. fire and the number three engine was set on fire. We were leading the 306th Bomb Group - about 40 miles out to sea the extinguishers would not kill the fire - our *Cowling* was falling off and the hub was white hot. We made a turn to return to France - some of our planes continued to fly with us until they saw that we were not going to return to England on that day. I had to knock out the lower escape door - I waited until I saw land below us and out I went in a tuck position - after I jumped all the rest of the crew followed. The Germans were shooting at us from the ground as we were probably only at 3,000 feet of altitude when I left the plane. No one was hit by the rifle fire, but it was some new experience to hear the bullets whizing by.

When I hit the ground I did a football roll block and let the parachute blow away. I had an English chute that day which gave you an immediate release after you turned the release and hit it with your fist.

I was on my feet very quickly and started looking for the best way to go. There was a very young German soldier pointing his rifle at me. Up went my hands - for me the war was OVER!

Eventually seven of us were taken to a nearby fighter aircraft field by a school bus. The French people looked so sad as they watched us leave - I was pretty happy myself.

The German officer at the air base told me in halting English "You no try to escape - we shoot you". He then apologized for his poor English - I said "You speak very good English to me - I understand every word you said.

On the train to Paris the next day - Jim Laine and myself were in a compartment with two German guards when a German Oberleutenant(1st Lt) from a fighter group gave us a bottle of water from Germany and told us not to drink any water in France but this bottled water. From this German pilot I learned that Gerald Simmons, our co-pilot had been killed. He told us that they had yelled at him to halt (not his group) but from the infantry division, but he kept running away - he was killed by a rifle bullet to the back of his head.

The capture was really non-eventful - it seems that I had been prepared for this since my early youth. Maybe because of all my previous military training - two years R.O.T.C. and one year C.M.T.C., I knew that some day this could happen.

The real shocker was solitary confinement at Dulag Luft III - interrogation center - north of Frankfurt. No cigareets - limited amount of food - so that the interrogation officer would have it easier to get whatever information we had.

I defintely remember when the interrogation officer took me to the main office and showed me an organization chart of the whole Eighth Air Force. He wanted to know if any of the names they had were incorrect. This question was easy - I told him I didn't know a single person on that chart and I could stay in solitary until the end of the war because I did not know any name on that chart. I am sure that he knew I was just a dumb 1st Lt. and he took me back to my cell and said a group of us would be leaving in a day or two - He was correct!

**Tufts E-News****<http://enews.tufts.edu/>**[print](#)**The Day The War Ended*****Lieutenant Joe Consolmagno (A'39) shares the story of his liberation from a Nazi POW camp exactly 65 years ago to the day.***

**Medford/Somerville, Mass.** [04.29.10] Though it has been 65 years, Lieutenant Joe Consolmagno(A'39) remembers April 29, 1945 like it was yesterday. It was on that day that Consolmango was liberated from a Nazi POW camp.

Recently the subject of a [Winter 2009 piece in Tufts Magazine](#) detailing his wartime experience, Consolmagno decided today it would be only fitting to take a look back at the day the war ended.

**The Day the War Ended**  
***By Joe Consolmagno***

April 29, 1945, was a red letter day in history.

On that day Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

The corpse of Benito Mussolini was strung up by the feet in a public square in Milan.

Stalag VIIA was liberated by the 14th Armored Division of the Third Army.

And Bob Hermann and I had eggs for breakfast.

The last item was the most important for us at the onset.

The eggs were the first we had seen in the shell since leaving the States three years earlier.

As the month of April crept on, we knew the war was drawing to a close. We could hear the distant artillery pieces, and each day they drew closer. We saw American aircraft fly daily unchallenged overhead and felt RAF bombs rumble the ground beneath us at night. One day we witnessed endless formations of B-17 and B-24s sweep in over Munich, 25 miles to the south of us, and pour out their bombs at the trailing edge of a smoke waterfall laid out by the lead planes into the hapless city. (Kurt Vonnegut, a 19 year-old POW at the time, witnessed the horror from the ground within a city under bombs, and later recorded the details in *Slaughterhouse Five*. You can read the trauma of that day in every book he ever wrote.)

But we, of course, could not see the tragedies in the city from our grandstand view at Stalag VIIA. We saw only the invincible might of our side, its ownership of the skies all over the enemy's land, and our imminent return to freedom. So we cheered.

The barbed wire enclosing our compound of Stalag VIIA had become more of a barrier to the approaching war than a prevention of escape. With little daring, German-speaking prisoners like Bob could come and go through the wire almost at will, trading and foraging the countryside for farm produce with items from our Red Cross parcels and personal troves. The night of April 28-29 Bob had made a brilliant trade of a few cigarettes for a couple of eggs.

The morning of the 29th, we squatted at the edge of a slit trench frying our eggs over our kriegie burner, a device made of tin cans that could concentrate heat to cooking temperature from scraps of twigs, paper, dried grass, and wood shavings. It was a slow process, and suddenly we were distracted by a pair of American P-51s streaking over the camp, grandstanding with a show of flight-school aerobatics.

After several passes, they broke off the show and dived to buzzing-level, loosing machine gun fire at a target beyond the wire. They did not fire at our guards in their watchtowers, nor did the guards fire on them.

***Consolmagno is second from the left; Hermann is third from the right.***

Toward the center of the camp Gene Daniel, the Protestant chaplain, was setting up a table in front of a small building for open air Sunday services, and his flock had begun gathering. Inside a room set aside as his clinic, Doc Cox, a navigator turned medic, was setting out his instruments for morning sick call. Outside the main gate, kriegies Dick Schrupp and John Bennett waited, clutching cameras that had been smuggled into the camp. Colonel Bub Clark had sent them out to record the historic event. He knew what was going to happen.

Shortly after they arrived outside the gate, Schrupp and Bennett were surprised to see two cars marked with red crosses drive up. Out stepped American Colonel Goode and RAF Group Captain Kellett, the camp's ranking POWs. The advancing American army had refused a German offer of a cease-fire around the camp. They were intermediaries.

"You guys better hunt a hole, because the war is going to start," Goode told them.

As Bob and I began to savor the smell of our frying eggs, we heard the unmistakable sound of bullets zinging close overhead. We immediately tumbled into the trench. I held on to my tin can frying pan and, clinging to the side of the trench with arm outstretched above me, I held the pan over the fire. Crouched at the bottom of our trench while bullets whizzed by above us, we gulped down our eggs. When the firing let up, we ran for the nearest barracks, bent low to the ground, to find safety within the masonry walls of the wash room.

At the aborted church services Chaplain Daniel's flock scattered for shelter, but not before several were hit. Machine gun bullets ripped through Doc Cox's clinic room, drawing a neat line of holes on the inside walls. Doc dove out the window and ducked into a nearby slit trench.

Eventually the firing died down around the camp and moved on to Moosburg. We came out of the buildings and looked toward the city. All eyes were drawn to a church

steeple on a hill in town. A swastika flag was flying from a pole next to it, and heavy gunfire was coming from an opening in the steeple.

Suddenly there was an explosion and black cloud at the opening, and the firing ceased. Almost immediately the swastika flag came down. Rapidly and majestically the Stars and Stripes went up.

"Sonovabitch!" Bob half-whispered, over and over. But he was not swearing. Tears were flowing down his cheeks. My sleeves were soaked as I wiped my own face.

At that instant, the war in Europe was over for us.

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