

Dry Gulcher Revisited

August 4, 1944, Mission 166 to Peenemunde, Germany began like most other mission. Thirty minutes after take off just as planes were forming at 5000', circling twice on the wing lead ship, 10 miles east of Station 167 fire was discovered in the forward section of the "Dry Gulcher". Co Pilot, Captain Irving Moore was at the controls at the time the fire ensued on board behind him. He remained at the controls trying to keep the plane level and gave orders for everyone to bail out. All this while exploding 50 calibers and oxygen bottles were exploding around him.

The Pilot, Lt. Hanley Cupernall said that "Capt. Moore yelled at me to bail out and I didn't argue. I grabbed my chute from under the seat, buckled it on, and dropped down to the cat-walk. The engineer, S/Sgt. Carl T. Yankton, pulled the release handle and I kicked the escape door with my right foot and then the engineer bailed out. Then I hollered to the nose, and the navigator, 1st Lt. James W. Sneed bailed out next. The bombardier, 1st Lt. Charles Young wasn't ready to go, so I was third man to bail out." Capt. Moore said " I heard a sizzle, a rushing of air, and looking around saw a burst of flame in front of #4 bulkhead. The cockpit filled with smoke and due to the intense head, I yelled for Lt. Cupernall to bail out. I leaned over, rang the bail-out bell and called over the interphone as the ship started into a dive. I leveled the ship out, hooked on my parachute, opened the side window and stuck my head out so I could breathe. Opening the window made the flames burn all the more. By this time the



entire cockpit was ablaze. I tried to pull the ship out of another dive, but realized that the cables were broken. I started to bail out but saw the bombarier fastening his chute. I yelled and motioned to him, he nodded, I grabbed his foot to be sure he was coming as I tumbled out of the escape hatch not realizing that the tail gunner, S/Sgt. Harold T. Norris was trapped in the plane by the cables."

Dry Gulcher went down on Valley Farm, Rotten End near Wethersfield, Essex. Local farmer, A.W. Tarbin was first on the scene and tried at great risk to himself to enter the burning Fortress to save the life of the tail gunner to no avail. He was issued a citation from the Dunmov Sector Essex Home Guard for his heroic efforts.

Fifty six years later, I began my search for answers as to what had happened that fateful day. With the help of people like Dave Osbourne, Ron MacKay and especially Graham Thrussell I am now able to fill in the blanks. They went out of their way to help a total stranger thousands of miles away find answers.

My father is gone now, but out of my search new friendships were born that will last a lifetime. Thank you to the people of Essex and the 381st.

Kimberlee A. Moore, Daughter of Captain of Irving J. Moore