

Joseph Christopher McConnell – (02074493) – Navigator

The story we are going to share with you here is about a 10-year-old boy who wanted nothing more than to be a pilot when he grew up. This boy would face a lot of obstacles and disappointments, but because he would never give up on his dream, he finally became a pilot and America's first Triple Ace Pilot.



Joseph Christopher McConnell Jr. was born 30th January 1922 in Dover, New Hampshire to Joseph Christopher (b1892), and Phyllis Winifred Brooks (b1900) McConnell. His father, Joseph, was born 21st September 1892 and worked as a barber. He married Phyllis on 4th March 1919 in Dover, New Hampshire. They had a daughter Winifred Patricia (b1920) followed by Joseph Jr.

In 1930, the family was living in Dover, Strafford, New Hampshire. Joseph Senior's brother John was living with the family as he was divorced. In 1931, following a short illness Phyllis sadly passed away. Joseph was only 9 years old. It was around this time that Joseph started building model planes and his dream of becoming a pilot became apparent. On 10th June 1938 Joseph's sister, Winifred, married Walter A Nash in Hampton Beach.



Joseph attended Dover High School but dropped out to enlist in the Army 15th October 1940, at Concord, New Hampshire and was given the service number 11015265. He was too young to join the Aviation Cadet Program, which he really wanted to do, but was instead assigned to the Medical Department and sent to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, for training.

On 2nd August 1941, Joseph married Pearl Edna Brown at Fitchburg, Massachusetts. They went on to have three children, Patricia Ann, Kathleen Frances, and Joseph Christopher McConnell III.

In October 1943, Joseph, who was now a Sergeant, was stationed at Washington State College for a course of instruction as he had been selected for the Aviation Cadet Program. He was hoping to qualify as a Pilot but was forced to become a Navigator instead. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and gained his Navigator wings, on 18th September 1944.

He was crewed up and deployed to Station 146 Seething, Norfolk, England. The members of his crew were:

2nd Lt. Harry S. Constable - (0806223) - Pilot
2nd Lt. Clayton H. Johnson – (02061962) - Co-Pilot
2nd Lt. Joseph C. McConnell, Jr – (02074493) - Navigator
F/O John J. Northrup – (T-5773) - Bombardier
Cpl. Calvin J. Barnett – (16130439)
Cpl. William J. Davis, Jr. – (37722410)
Cpl. Byron A. Thomas – (39925056)
Cpl. Milton Ulanoff – (12129063)
Cpl. Bernard J. Varney, Jr. – (31339387)
Cpl. Thomas G. Treadwell – (14140979)





2nd Lt. Harry Stefan Constable - (0806223) – Was born 1st September 1915, in Douglas, Cochise, Arizona to Thomas James Henry (b.1886) and Meta Anna Gauss (b.1892) Constable. Harry's father, Thomas, was born 5th April 1886 in Medway, Kent, England and emigrated to the U.S in 1907. Harry's mother, Meta, was born 26th April 1892 in Chicago, Illinois. They married 25th June 1912 in Chicago, Cook, Illinois and had a son, James Harry (b.1913) followed by Harry and then a daughter Edith Lilly (b.1917).

In the 1920 census Harry's family was living in Cochise, Arizona. Thomas was working as a brick layer. However, by 1930 the family had moved to Evanston, Cook, Illinois but Thomas was still working as a brick layer.

In 1935 Harry moved to Wisconsin to study at Carroll College. He graduated in 1937 and started working as a Business Studies teacher at Willard D Purdy School in 1939. In 1940 Harry was renting a room from Lawrence Schultz and his family, in Waukesha, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was still working as a teacher in Willard D Purdy School. Harry's parents, meanwhile, had moved back to Douglas, Arizona.

[James Harry Constable was born on 29th April 1913 in Douglas, Arizona. He married Marcella Williams (b.1915) and they had two children, Susan and James. James passed away on 17th August 1979]

[Edith Lilly Constable was born on 14th October 1917. She married Mark Hannon. They had two sons, James H. and Michael Hannon. Edith worked as a Secretary until she retired in 1975. Mark passed away in January 1970, Edith passed away on 20th July 1979]

Harry met Melba L Bowen; as she too was a teacher; and they married on 16th June 1940 in Milwaukee. They had two sons, Thomas, and Steve.



(Harry Constable)

On 16th October 1940 Harry was drafted and on 5th June 1942 Harry enlisted at Peoria, Illinois. It was noted that his occupation was a teacher and that he was married. He was given the service number 16061232. In July 1943 Harry was a Second Lieutenant and was at Douglas having transferred from the twin-engine flying school at Columbus, Missouri.

In April 1946, Harry arrived back home. Harry was a keen bowler so after the war Harry and Melba ran Paladium Lanes in Douglas then in 1954 they brought Pla-mor Bowling Alley and Tap Room but sold it in November 1957. Harry then worked as a garbage man.

Melba passed away in 1977. Harry passed away on 14th January 2002 in Glendale, Maricopa, Arizona.

2nd Lt. Clayton H. Johnson – (02061962) – At this time it has not been possible to identify exactly who Lt. Johnson is, but two possible leads are Clayton Hilmer Johnson who was born on 15th September 1916 in Minneapolis, Hennepin Country, Minnesota and passed away on the 16th February 2012. Also, Clayton Houston Johnson who was born on 4th August 1920 in Kentucky and passed away on the 29th April 1993.

F/O John Joseph Northrup – (T-5773) – Was born 18th December 1919 in Amsterdam, New York to John F. (b.1888) and Rose Moran (b.1886) Northrup. Both John F. and Rose were born in New York. They married in 1908 and had two sons George (b.1909) and Charles (b.1910), followed by a daughter, Violet (b.1913) and then John.

In 1920 the family was living in Amsterdam, Montgomery, New York with Rose's mother Anna Moran. John Sr. was not working but by 1930, John was a road constructor and George was working as a manager. Charles, who would have been 20 years old, was missing from the 1930 census.

In 1938 John graduated from St Mary's Institute and then attended Siena College.

In 1940, with the family still living in Amsterdam, Violet was working as a stenographer and John was just starting out as a "new worker".

On 9th July 1941 John was drafted. At the time he was a cost clerk for Bigelow Sanford Corper Mill in New York.

After the war, John married Clara R (b.1919) on 15th May 1946 and they had a son, Bruce.

In 1948 John worked for the Postal Service and retired in 1972 as assistant postmaster. He was then employed as a senior audit clerk for the New York State Department of Education in the Education finance division. Clara was a teacher for more than 25 years.

Clara passed away on 21st January 2000 and John passed away on 21st May 2011 in Amsterdam, New York.

Cpl. Calvin Joseph Barnett – (16130439) – was born 8th October 1925 in Ferndale, Oakland, Michigan to C.J (b.1899) and Margaret Ethel Pilson (b.1895) Barnett. C.J was born 17th April 1899 in Michigan. Margaret was born 9th November 1895 in Brandon, New York. They married in 1924 in Ferndale, Michigan.



(Calvin's father)

C J was working as a Patrolman in the Ferndale Police at the time. He was then a motorcycle officer for the Ferndale Police and in 1927, he was promoted to Sergeant of Traffic. They had Calvin followed by a daughter, Ada Marie (b.1928) and another son, Richard Herbert (b.1933).

In 1930, the family was living in Ferndale, Oakland, Michigan. Calvin's father, C.J, was now a Police Captain. By 1932 he had been promoted to Police Chief. In 1940, the family were still in Ferndale.

On 21st April 1943 at the tender age of 17 Calvin enlisted in Detroit Michigan. His occupation was noted as Stock Clerk.

He married Beverly Bernice Stem (b.1927) 10th January 1948 in Ohio. At the time he was working in a mill.

Calvin passed away on 9th March 2013 in Meridian, Ada, Idaho.

Cpl. William John Davis, Jr. - (37722410) – Was born 21st January 1922 in Kansas to William J (b.1887) and Lenna M. (b.1892) Davis. William's parents, William and Lenna were both born in Kansas and married in 1910 and had two daughters, Helen Louise (b.1914) and Willa Jean (b.1921) followed by William.

In the 1920 census William's parents were living in Kansas with 6 year old Helen. William Sr. was working as a Conductor on the steam railroad.

By the 1930 census the family, which now included Willa and William were living in Ward 7, Kansas City. William Sr. was still working as a Conductor on the steam railroad.

In 1940 the family were still in Kansas, but Helen was not living at home. She had married Paul A Cook. William Sr. was still working as a Conductor on the steam railroad and Willa was working as a Stenographer in a bank.

William Jr. graduated from Argentine High School and Finley Engineering College before being drafted in June 1942. At the time he was working for J M Service Corp. He then enlisted on 17th September 1943, in Ft Leavenworth, Kansas. His occupation was noted as Draftsman. By October 1944, he had completed Radio / Gunner's training at Yuma, Arizona and was transferred to Lincoln, Nebraska.



(Pauline Koprivica)

By the end of his service, William had been promoted to Staff Sergeant. His love of being a Radio Operator continued after the war and he became a ham radio enthusiast. He also worked for Black & Veatch for 34 years.

He met Pauline Koprivica Milligan, who was a war widow and they married and had two daughters, Deborah Ann and Susan Kay.

William passed away on 21st August 2000 in Kansas City.



Cpl. Byron Arthur Thomas – (39925056) – Was born 8th October 1921 in Warm Creek, Genola, Utah to David Bynon (b.1886) and Grace Rebecca Hartvigsen (b.1892) Thomas. Both of Byron's parents were born in Utah and they married 23rd October 1919 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Byron had a twin, Bynon David and had 9 other siblings Wanda (b.1920), Marcia (b.1923), Phyllis (b.1925), Kenneth Gaylen (b.1926), Douglas Gordon (b.1928), Lynn (b.1930), Lowell Livingston (b.1932), and Darwin LaMar (b.1933)

The family lived in Genola on a farm which Byron's father owned. By 1940 the family was still living in Genola and Byron and his twin Bynon were working on his father's farm.



(Byron Thomas)

Byron and his twin Bynon were drafted 16th February 1942. At the time Byron was still working on the family farm and he was deferred for two years to work the farm as his father had been sick in hospital a couple of times. When his father had recovered enough to run the farm Byron enlisted on 8th January 1944 in Fort Douglas, Utah. His occupation was noted as Farm Hand and it was also noted that he was single but had dependents. The dependents note was because Byron was the primary support to his family due to his father's illness.

On 18th February 1944 Byron was at Buckley Field, Colorado for two months basic training. On 19th May he was sent to Lowery Field, Colorado where he learnt about bombs and how they were carried and dropped by the planes. In the July, Byron was sent to Lardo, Texas for gunnery training. By October 1944 Byron was at Fort Worth and had a 14-day furlough. On 1st November 1944 Byron reported at Lincoln, Nebraska and met the rest of the crew.



(Byron & Margaret's wedding)

By the end of the war Byron had been promoted to Sergeant and had received an Air Medal in February 1945 – the circumstances of the award are still unknown. He returned home in July 1945 for his 30-day furlough. He was discharged on 16th November 1945 at Davis Monthan Field, Aris.

After the war he worked in the Tintic mines and then at the U.S Steel's Kiegley Quarry for over 34 years before retiring in 1983.

Byron married Margaret Ida Peterson (b.1934) 21st July 1951 in Santaquin, Utah and had five children Steven, Ren, Sandra, Virginia and Tracey.

After 52 years of marriage Byron sadly passed away on 25th January 2003.

Cpl. Milton Ulanoff – (12129063) – Was born 19th January 1924 in New York to Paul (b.1884) and Sophie (b.1890) Ulanoff. Both Paul and Sophie were born in Kiev which was part of Russia at the time. Paul emigrated to the U.S in 1899, Sophie in 1904. They married in 1910 and had a son, Benj (b.1912) followed by Samuel (b.1913), Leon (b.1917), Hilda (1921-1923), Milton and Arnold (b.1928).

In the 1930 census Paul was working as a Cutter in dresses, Benj was working with his Father and Samuel was a Mechanic in Radios.

On 4th June 1933 Milton's Brother Leon passed away at the tender age of 16 when he went swimming with friends then on 11th April 1935 Milton's Mother, Sophie, passed away. Milton would have been 11 years old.

It looks likes he may have been drafted 30th June 1942 and then enlisted on 1st September 1942 in New York City. His occupation was noted as Skilled Mechanic and Repairmen. He passed away 24th December 1987 in Orange, California.

Cpl. Bernard Jed Varney, Jr. "Chuck" – (31339387) – Was born 24th January 1925 in Jericho, Chittenden, Vermont to Bernard Jed (b.1900) and Hazel Pauline Lyon (b.1902) Varney. Chuck's father Bernard was born 6th February 1900 in Jericho, Chittenden, Vermont. Hazel was born 20th October 1902 in Underhill, Chittenden, Vermont. Bernard and Hazel married in 1922 in Vermont and had Chuck followed by Sidney (b.1927)

In the 1930 census the family was living in Barnet, Caledonia, Vermont, but by 1935 they had moved to Rural, Chittenden, Vermont. By 1940, the family had moved again to Essex Junction, Essex Town, Chittenden, Vermont.





[Sidney Varney was born 18th February 1927 in Jericho. He joined the Navy in 1943 and served with the Sea Bees. He married Dorothy M Bergeron on 2nd August 1947 and had two sons, Terald and Hal. He got remarried to Norma who already had a son, David. After the war he worked in the printing and publishing sector. He passed away on 16th May 1987]

Chuck was drafted 25th January 1943 and enlisted on 22nd April 1943. At the time of enlistment, he was a senior at Essex Junction high school. He left for training at Atlantic City, N J on 8th May 1943. In June he finished his 3 weeks basic training at Atlantic and entered Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa for further training. He missed his graduation at Essex Junction High School, so his mother received his diploma on his behalf.

In November 1943 he was transferred from Nashville, Tennessee to Maxwell Field, Alaska where he undertook pre-flight training. In January 1944, when he finished pre-flight training, he was transferred to Dorr Field, Arcadia, Florida where he took primary flight training.

In October 1944, Chuck graduated as an Aerial Gunner at Harlingen Army Air Field in Texas and received his silver wings. He was then reassigned to Lincoln, Nebraska, and underwent intensive training prior to being assigned to his flight crew.

On 18th December, Chuck's Father passed away suddenly in his sleep. He was a Central Vermont railway mail clerk. At the time Chuck was in USAAF, Casper, Wyoming. He and his brother came home for their Father's funeral, just before Christmas.

By June 1945 Chuck has been promoted to Sergeant and had arrived back at Bradley Field to start his 30 days furlough. In November 1945, Chuck was promoted to Staff Sergeant and stationed at the Physician's General hospital in Plattsburgh. He was transferred to the Coral Gables Hospital in Florida, and met a nurse, Lt Constance Aleta Hendrickson. They got engaged in April 1946 and were married in June 1946 in Coral Gables, Florida.



(Constance)

On 8th July 1946, Chuck was discharged after serving for 38 months with the Eighth Air Force. He started working for Steve's Home Supply, followed by many other jobs; including working as an advertising salesman with a radio station in Miami, a fireman at Ethan Allen Air Force, a mail carrier and he even signed up for the Merchant Navy.



NEVEE TOO LATE — Attended by grandchildren, Mrs. Jennie M. Lyons, aged 73, of Essex Junction, became the bride last week of Frank J. Gokey, also 73, of Wisconsin. Members of the wedding party, shown above, are, (left to right): Sidney Varney, grandson of the bride, best man; Mr. and Mrs. Gokey; Mrs. Constance Varney, matron of honor, and Bernard Varney, another grandson, who gave the bride in marriage.

Chuck and Constance had a son, Kenneth in September 1947 and another son, Charles, in July 1951.

In July 1952, Chuck walked his Grandmother, Jennie M Lyons, down the aisle as she married Frank J Gokey. Sidney was their best man.

Sadly in October 1953 Constance filed for divorce on the grounds of intolerable severity and was given custody of the children.

On 22nd June 1962 Chuck married Barbara Hovey Lull (b.1926) in Essex Junction, Vermont. Sadly just 8 years later, on 17th June 1970 Chuck unexpectedly passed away in Essex Junction, Vermont. He was just 45 years old.

Thomas George Treadwell – (14140879) – Was born 13th February 1922 in Georgia to David Fleetwood (b.1893) and Antoinette Rudisill Thweatt (b.1895) Treadwell. David and Antoinette married on 29th July 1916 and had a daughter, Antoinette (b.1919) followed by Thomas.

In 1920, David, Antoinette and their daughter Antoinette were living in Russelville, Monroe, Georgia, David was a farmer.

By 1930 the family was living in Centre Hill, Fulton, Georgia and David was working in an auto-shop.

In 1940 the family was living in Cobb County, Georgia.

Thomas enlisted 29th October 1942 in Fort McPherson, Atlanta, Georgia. His occupation was noted as semiskilled in fabrication of metal products.

In September 1943 he qualified for Aviation Cadet Training and was stationed at Advanced Single Engine Pilot School in the Guard Squadron, Spence Field, Moultrie, Ga. In December 1943, Thomas was transferred to Parris Island SC.

After the war, Thomas married Lodean Richmond in 1949 and they had 3 children Cheryl, Sandy and Steve. He was the owner of Wheel & Axel Alignment Co in Atlanta for 43 years.

On 4th June 1994, Thomas passed away in Mableton, Cobb, Georgia.



The Missions



In early November 1944 all the crewmembers were at Lincoln, Nebraska and “crewed up”. On 15th November they departed for Casper, Wyoming where they flew almost every day on simulated missions to Minneapolis, Omaha and Amarillo. According to Byron’s notes, Joseph McConnell showed a tendency to want to bail out while training, just to “liven things up”. The crew also trained and became friends with Lt. Shaffter and Lt. Robert Mains who they would later meet up with at Seething.

On 19th January 1945, they left for Topeka, Kansas to pick up a factory fresh B24M Liberator which they would fly over to the UK. On 6th February, they flew to Grenier Field in New Hampshire. On 13th February they left for Goose Bay, Labrador, where they stayed for one night before heading out for Greenland.

The field in Greenland was on the edge of the Polar Ice Cap. When they came into land, they flew up a long deep gorge with shear rock walls on either side; the landing strip was at the end of the canyon. While they were there, they made the most of it with fishing and raft riding. On 18th February they left Greenland for Iceland, which they thought was the most barren, cold and desolate place. This flight was the only flight they ever flew without parachutes on as they felt that there would be little chance of being found if they went down and no chance at all if they had to bail out. After staying in Iceland for two days they then headed for Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, Scotland. They then headed for RAF Valley in Wales where they left the B24 and took the train to Stone in England. A few days later, they arrived in Ditchingham and Seething.

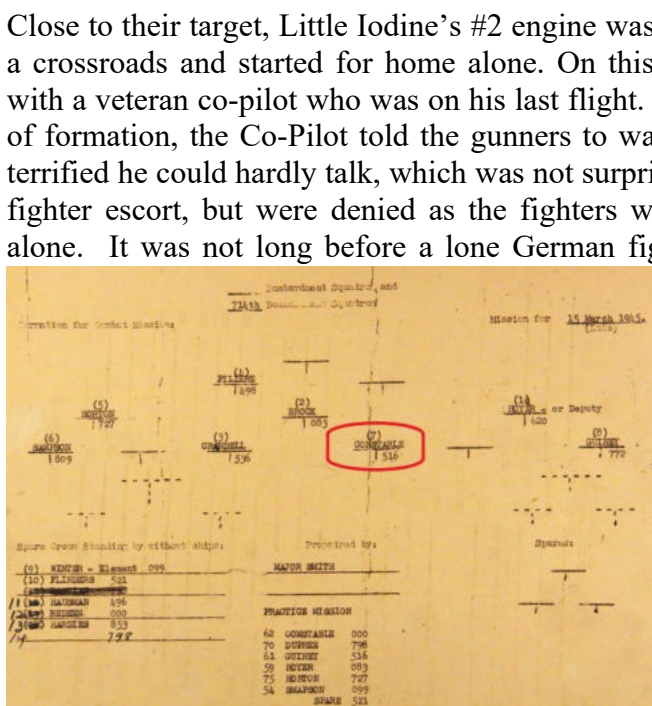
According to Cpl. Bernard Varney's letter to his mother, the crew arrived in England on "Washington's birthday", which was 22nd February. Other records have them then arriving at Seething on 27th February 1945.

Once at Station 146, they were assigned to 714th Squadron and were Replacement Crew 62.

There have been written a number of accounts that Joseph McConnell undertook 60 missions with his B24 Liberator crew; The North Adams Transcript (Massachusetts) in May 1953 was one such account, as well as Wikipedia. Unfortunately Joseph's service file was lost in a fire at the National Archive Center in 1973 so what missions he undertook cannot be fully verified. Bearing in mind that he and his crew arrived at Seething on 27th February 1945, the maximum number of missions they would have been able to do was 42, - the remaining number of missions flown by the 448th Bomb Group between 27th February 1945 and when they were stood down. Contradicting this 60 mission claim was The Payson Chronicle dated 13th July 1945 in which is written that Sgt. Byron A Thomas completed 10 missions during his time at Seething.

Lt. Constable and his crew continued their training while at Seething with the first recorded training flight being 14th March 1945 for 2 hours, followed by one on the 16th March for 3 hours and again on 29th March for 3 hours.

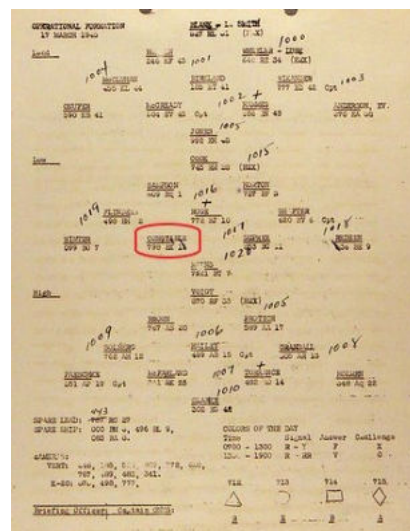
According to records, using Pilot Lt. Harry Constable as a guide and Byron Thomas's flight record and memories, it seems their first mission was **15th March 1945**. The target was a military headquarters complex for the German General Staff, south of Berlin in Zossen. Heavy fog delayed the takeoff by an hour and despite waiting, visibility was still very low. Constable took off at 10:35 in Aircraft #44-10516 [LITTLE IODINE]. The journey over was clear of flak and they saw no German fighters. Scattered clouds and haze did present some difficulty in viewing the target. However, most crews managed to drop their bombs correctly. The low left squadron in the 448th formation did not release due to limited visibility, so they dropped their bombs on a target of opportunity which was a bridge two miles south of Parey, Germany, but the results were poor due to the scattered clouds hindering the aim.



Close to their target, Little Iodine's #2 engine was knocked out. They salvoed their bombs on 3 houses at a crossroads and started for home alone. On this mission Co-pilot Clayton Johnson had been replaced with a veteran co-pilot who was on his last flight. He was there to break the crew in. As they dropped out of formation, the Co-Pilot told the gunners to watch the sun for enemy fighters. Apparently, he was so terrified he could hardly talk, which was not surprising at it was his last mission. The crew called out for a fighter escort, but were denied as the fighters were needed with the main formation, so they flew on alone. It was not long before a lone German fighter spotted them and started climbing towards them before a P-51 came out of nowhere and shot him down. The German pilot bailed out. On the journey home as they were approaching the city of Magdeburg, Constable called to Joseph McConnell for a new heading in order to avoid the city and any heavy fire that was sure to be there. Joseph "Hemmed and Hawed" and stalled for a time, then finally said he had forgotten to bring his maps, but he had a chart that he could use to keep them on course back to England. Constable was so enraged by this that he said that he wanted to kill him! Little Iodine was recorded as returned to Seething at 16:16hrs.

(Taracopp.com)

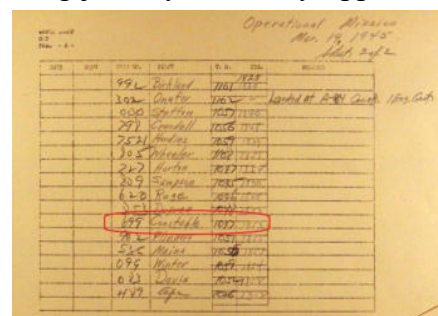
Their next recorded mission was **17th March 1945** and the target was some industrial works in Hannover. Thick cloud hampered the 448th's departure, but Constable took off at 10:23 in **Aircraft #42-94798 [MISS MINOOKIE (BOTTLE BOYS)]**. Thick cloud hampered their assembly and the weather was no better over Germany so they had to use the H2X equipment to identify the target. As they approached the drop point they were met with ineffective flak. It was a weak effort to deter the formation and the crews released their bombs and returned home. No aircraft was damaged during the outward leg, but Miss Minookie lost two engines on the return home. The crew thought they would have to ditch it in the North Sea but sweated out the very rough landing. They returned at 16:31.



(Taracopp.com)



On **19th March 1945**, the target was a power plant for a jet component factory at Baumenheim, Germany. Constable's crew took off at 10:47 in **Aircraft #42-50699 [FEARLESS FOSDICK]**. The weather over the continent was good as they started the long journey. The only opposition they encountered was contrails, but they changed their altitude and the problem was solved as they continued on their way. They didn't even encounter flak. The formation released their bombs and struck the target. Constable returned to Seething at 18:53.



(Taracopp.com)

On **20th March** Byron Thomas and Tom Treadwell went to London for a 2 day leave. They did some sightseeing and talked to the wounded soldiers who were staying there. At night they visited all the pubs they could and drank all they could hold.

The **25th March 1945**, was Palm Sunday and the men were awakened early at 01:30 for the briefing. The target was the underground oil storage depot at Buchen. Constable and crew flew in **Aircraft #42-52496** and were part of the high right squadron. Thick clouds made formation flying difficult, so the lead squadron decided to circle in order to climb above the clouds. This move scattered the formation and the 713th Bomb Squadron was out of position and lagging behind.

At 10:00 the sky became filled with German jet fighters and they attacked the 448th. Aircraft **[SONIA]** was badly damaged but a fighter escort arrived and got them home. Aircraft **[TARFU II]** piloted by Lt. Joseph Steffan was attacked. It was in flames and was seen to hit the ground and explode. Only the Navigator, Lt. Gerald Gottlieb, survived. Byron Thomas witnessed TARFU II being hit.



The 713th Bomb Squadron, who were still lagging, were next to be attacked. Cannon fire exploded in the flight deck of their lead Aircraft **#42-50646** piloted by Lt. Knute Stalland. Only three men from the crew of twelve survived. Aircraft **[DO BUNNY]** piloted by Lt. Paul Jones was the next aircraft to be taken down. They managed to land at the edge of a town called Soltau. They were met by angry town folk and a SS officer. This crew was very lucky that the

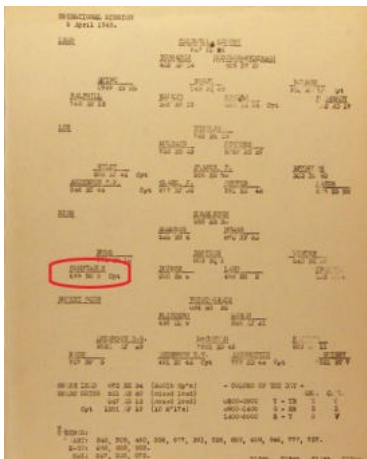
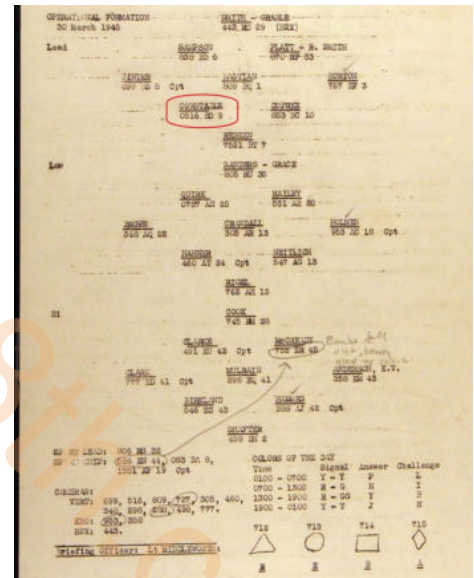
German soldiers from the nearby riding academy interfered, and they survived to become POWs. Constable was an eyewitness to the aircraft being shot down.



Aircraft **[EAGER ONE]** piloted by Lt. Fredrick Tod was the next aircraft to be severely damaged. They decided to head to the nearest emergency airfield in Malmo, Sweden. Everyone was poised for bail out in case they couldn't make it. As they reached the southern coast of Sweden, their engine 3 abruptly stopped so Lt. Tod issued the bail out order. As the crew bailed out Lt. Tod turned the aircraft away from the village of Falsterbo and back out to sea. As the co-pilot started to bail out, the aircraft entered a spin and crashed into the Baltic Sea. The locals tried to help but both Lt. Todd and his co-pilot Lt. Paterson lost their lives.

The 713th Bomb Squadron fell further behind the formation but managed to drop their bombs on the target. Instead of following the planned route back to Seething they decided to take a more direct route as they had so many damaged planes and wounded men.

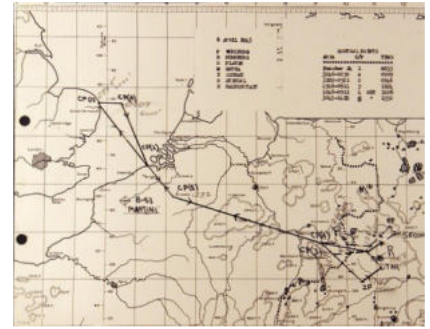
On **30th March 1945**, the target was the docks at Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Constable and crew were flying in A/C #44-10516 **[LITTLE IODINE]** and were part of the Lead Squadron. They were faced with heavy flak and clouds over the target which made the bombing complicated. Despite this the crews released their bombs with excellent results. **LITTLE IODINE** received 10 bullet holes and had its compass and #3 engine shot out. Oil was streaming out and coating the tail. They made it to the coast and followed it for about 2 hours towards Belgium planning on being taken as POWs. They were losing altitude all the way but were lucky enough to have a tail wind. They got to part of the coast where it was about 70-100 miles to England. They were still at 3,000-4,000 feet. Joseph was confident that they could make it back to England. They started to cross and were riding close to the tops of the waves. Twice they were ordered to get into the ditching position by Constable. After a tense journey across the ocean, they saw the coastline of England. They skimmed in low over a cow pasture and belly-landed in a field. It was around this time that Constable decided Joseph had to leave the crew. At the time of writing, we are still researching if Joseph was involved with any other crews on missions. The rest of the missions described below concern Lt Constable and crew, presumably without McConnell.



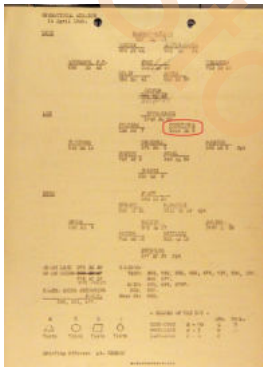
(Taracopp.com)

On **5th April 1945**, the target was an ordnance depot at Bayreuth, Germany. They took off at 06.33 in Aircraft #42-50699 **[FEARLESS FOSDICK]** and assembled over Merville, France. However poor weather led to many crews being unable to locate the formation point and returned to Seething. Lt Constable's crew was not one of them. Out of 39 bombers, 22 continued to the target without experiencing any flak or fighters. Despite 10/10ths cloud cover over the target, they used H2X to identify and bomb. They arrived back at 14.15

On **8th April 1945**, the target was a German airfield at Roth, south of Nurnberg. Constable's crew took off at 07:16 in aircraft **#44-10516 [LITTLE IODINE]**. After hearing of the experiences of other Bomb Groups encountering enemy fighters, the crews were rather anxious, but they need not have worried as the mission turned out to be a milk run. The 448th saw no enemy fighters nor was there any flak to contend with. Constable's crew arrived back at Seething at 14:54.



(Tara.copp.com)



On **14th April 1945**, the target was the Pointe de la Coubre, France. The object was to attack a stronghold along the Gironde estuary to convince the Germans held up there to surrender. Constable's crew were in aircraft **#44-10516 [LITTLE IODINE]** and in the Low Squadron. By this stage of the war the Luftwaffe was severely depleted in aircraft and resources so opposition was negligible. The crew took off at 05:05 and returned at 13:43

(Tara.copp.com)

On **20th April 1945**, the target was the marshalling yard at Muhldorf, Germany. The results were mixed. Just as they approached the target the bombardier in the lead aircraft succumbed to hypoxia as there was an oxygen malfunction and he passed out. The Pilot Lt. James Blank decided to jettison his bombs and as a result the lead squadron missed the target. According to Byron Thompson they levelled a small town nearby. The other squadron had excellent results after their separate bomb run.

On **25th April 1945**, the target was the marshalling yards in Salzburg, Austria. It led to Berchesgarten, Eagle's Nest - Hitler's retreat. The weather was good, and visibility was perfect. The possible issue the 448th faced was the distance to the target. Most of the trip was uneventful.

At 1058 "bombs away" was called. Byron Thomas recalls watching the bombs hit a bridge across the Danube and the marshalling yard. Suddenly flak was bursting everywhere. One shell exploded on the 9 O'clock wing tip and sent two ribs about 2 feet apart clear into the fuselage; the aileron was bent up and sent them into a spin and dive. Byron was thrown up on the ceiling and was stuck there by the force of the fall. He could hear Constable calling out to cut the cable where it came into the plane from the wing. Byron tried to get down to the escape hatch but could only move about 6 inches at a time because of the pressure. When Byron managed to get down to the floor, the aileron tore loose, and the aircraft pulled out of its dive. They had fallen over 3 miles and just under the belly of aircraft were the tops of pine trees. If the aileron hadn't torn away when it did, the crew would have crashed into the mountains. Byron witnessed another aircraft ahead of them being shot out of formation. Two of their engines were feathered and Byron's crew stayed with that aircraft for 15 minutes before it crashed behind enemy lines. Weather that crew survived or not is not known at this moment.

The crew were going to experience even more bad news. F/O John Northrup informed the crew that the nose wheel tyre was flat and the rim was cut in half! When they arrived back to Seething, Constable landed on the tail end, keeping the nose up for as long as possible. When the nose wheel touched, it wobbled and fell off. They skidded along the runway with sheets of fire on both sides of the plane. The fire engines and ambulances raced along side them but the crew were fine.

On **26th April 1945**, Constable and his crew were due to undertake another mission in aircraft **#44-50676** but it was abandoned before takeoff and with that the 448th Bomb Group finished their war, although no-one knew it yet.

May 8th 1945, Constable and crew were in their plane when they were put on hold. They sat there a long time wondering what was up. Finally, an announcement was made on air. The war was over, Germany had surrendered.

The Journey Home

On 13th June 1945 Constable and his crew departed Seething for the final time for RAF Valley, Wales, where they stayed overnight. The next day they flew to the Azores and stayed there for 2 days. Byron was on guard duty one of these nights when he met a man on a bicycle and a bottle of wine. Byron bought the wine and drank it and became quite drunk. The crew then flew to Gander, Newfoundland and stayed overnight before flying to Bradley Field, Connecticut where they said goodbye to their B24. They then left Bradley Field for Boston by train then changed to a troop train. They arrived at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah on 26th June. They were then furloughed until 3rd August.

Returning from furlough Byron left for Sioux Falls, South Dakota, preparing himself to group up and leave for China. When he arrived at Sioux Falls, there was so much congestion and confusion due to all the soldiers back from Europe. Byron was told to report once a week until they had organised everything. Byron and a friend from his training days (Howard Shields) went out to the farmers and worked for them thrashing oats. Byron also worked some time in a slaughterhouse. During this time, on 6th August 1945, an announcement was made on the P.A system that an Atomic Bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and within a few days that war would be over. It is presumed at this time that Joseph McConnell had also been marking time in a similar fashion to Byron as he states in his memoirs that this was the last time he saw Joseph McConnell. When Byron finally left Sioux Falls, Joseph McConnell had been on the A.W.O.L list for 3 weeks. Byron was sent to Davis-Monthan Air base, Tuscon, Arizona to be discharged from the army on the 16th November 1945.

After the war



After the war, Joseph remained in the Army Air Force and by August 1945, he was promoted to Captain and stationed in Florida. He applied once again to train as a pilot. In 1946 he was finally accepted for Pilot Training. On 25th February 1948, Joseph graduated from flight training at Williams Air Force Base, Arizona, and received his coveted pilot's wings.

When the war with Korea broke out, Joseph asked for combat duty but was turned down on the grounds of him being "too old". However, Joseph persisted and eventually he was deployed to the Republic of South Korea in September 1952, and assigned to the 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, 5th Air Force.

Between 14th January and 18th May 1953 Joseph attained a total of 16 aerial victories, all of them being MiG-15s and was credited with damaging another 5-enemy aircraft, while stationed at Suwon Air Base. He became the worlds' first triple jet ace!

In air combat terms, the title “ace” is given to a pilot who shoots down five enemy aircraft.

During his time in Korea, Captain McConnell flew three different F-86 Sabres, all of which he named “Beautious Butch” after his wife, who he nicknamed “Butch” because she was “the butcher of his heart.”

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Joseph returned home to Apple Valley, California, and was stationed at George Air Force Base, where he was assigned to the 445th Fighter Squadron and continued flying F-86s. On 25 August 1954, while test flying in Sabre F-86H-1-NA (serial number 52-1981) at Edwards Air Force Base, Joseph crashed near the base following a control malfunction. The cause of the accident was attributed to a missing bolt. He escaped the aircraft in an ejection seat but was killed when his parachute failed to open.



Joseph had a catholic burial and Captain Manuel Fernandez who was also a Korean jet ace, led 33 Sabre jet fighters in 3 formations in a salute over the chapel. The first formation was of 16 F86s which was closely followed by the second formation of 12 jets in the V-formation. However, this formation left Joseph’s normal position vacant in his honour. The third formation was of 6 jets formed in a perfect Holy Cross, symbolic of Joseph’s faith.

Pearl never remarried and died in 2008. Both Joseph and Pearl are buried at Victor Valley Memorial Park in Victorville, California.

Joseph McConnell was a rare breed. When it came to working in a team he was a square peg in a round hole but on his own (as Byron described him) he was a born flyer, a devil may care, happy go lucky, never care and take nothing serious type of guy. Joseph lived by the sword and he died by the sword.

