

The 6 Month Home Run

31st December 2022 – On New Year's Eve, as we gather at home, enjoy the company of friends and family or celebrate the night away, we hope for a better year after the events 2022. At Stories of the 448th we are reflecting on what it must have been like on December 31st, 1943, when the 448th Bomb Group had just arrived in the UK. The war didn't pause for them to celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of another, even though they dreamed that 1944 would bring an end to the conflict and a reunion with their loved ones.

On December 31st, 1943, the 448th was assigned a mission to La Rochelle in Southern France. The formation faced heavy flak and numerous planes were damaged. That day, they lost two aircraft: #41-29248 [COLD TURKEY], piloted by Lt. Jordon, which was hit in the tail and left wing before disintegrating; all crew members died. Also aircraft #42-7754 [HARMFUL LIL ARMFUL], piloted by Lt. Chase, was shot down; two crew members died, five became POWs and two evaded capture to return to Seething.



(Arthur Meyerowitz)

This is the story of Arthur "Artie" Sidney Meyerowitz and his incredible six-month homerun back to Seething.

Arthur Sidney Meyerowitz was born on 15th August 1918, in the Bronx to David and Rose Meyerowitz. He had a brother Seymour (b.1927). His family lived in a one-bedroom apartment on the third floor.

Arthur's father David had emigrated from Romania to New York as a child. During his life, he had worked as a driver and salesman in the wholesale bakery business. The Great Depression of 1929, made things difficult for the family, but David always ensured his family were fed, housed, and clothed, despite financial struggles.

Arthur graduated from Robert Morris High School in 1936 and began work immediately. He sold electrical fixtures for his uncle, Jack Meyerowitz, and doubled as a receiving and shipping clerk for a wholesale lampshade company in Brooklyn for three and a half years.

Having always been fascinated by airplanes and eager to fly, Arthur enlisted in New York on January 8th, 1941. On his enlistment papers, his occupation was listed as retail manager and he received the service number 32000985.

After completing his basic infantry training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Arthur excelled as a rifleman and later as a .50-caliber machine gunner. On June 8th, 1942, Lieutenant Colonel E.O. Lee, commander of the 60th US Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Bragg, rated Arthur as an "excellent soldier" and recommended that his transfer request to the Air Corps be approved.

Arthur found himself temporarily stationed at the Army air base in Nashville, Tennessee, before relocating near Biloxi, Mississippi. On August 2nd, he was assigned to the flight-training base in Laredo, Texas, where he hoped to earn his wings. But fate was not on his side. During a first-time horse riding experience, the animal jerked its head back, striking Arthur's left eye. The resulting retinal damage required surgery – successful, but it jeopardized his chances of becoming a pilot.

Undeterred by being deemed "physically disqualified for further flying duty because of physical disability" on November 13th, 1942, Arthur resolved to train as a flight engineer. Now a staff sergeant, he arrived at Seething Airbase in December 1943 with Crew 65 aboard Aircraft #42-7709 [MADE OF TIN], joining the 715th Squadron. His crew included:-

2nd Lt. Philip J. Chase – Pilot - 0745621
2nd Lt. Bernard L. Reed – Co-Pilot - 0750844
2nd Lt. Harry K. Farrell, Jr. – Navigator - 0688013
2nd Lt. Roland B. Hallinger – Bombardier - 0673156
S/Sgt. Arthur S. Meyerowitz – Engineer - 32000985
S/Sgt. Joseph De Frame – Radio Operator - 11118062
S/Sgt. Thomas M. McNamara – Gunner - 16088447
S/Sgt. William D. Dunham – Gunner - 34303305
S/Sgt. Anthony Walesik – Gunner - 33034529
S/Sgt. Howard R. Peck – Gunner - 39272980

Passengers

1st Lt. Jack P. Edwards - 0793143
2nd Lt. John A. Black - 0806611
2nd Lt. Henry B. Gabrielson - 0860698
Sgt. Herbert F. Jones - 16114162

A critical lecture on evasion and escape tactics was given by an Intelligence Officer on December 15th, 1943, which later proved useful for two evaders among Arthur's crew.

Arthur's first mission was on December 24th aboard Aircraft #42-64444 [CONSOLIDATED MESS], targeting a Nazi V-1 missile site at Labroye - a brief trek across the English Channel to Pas-de-Calais, in Northern France.

In the early hours of December 31st, Arthur was beckoned to replace flight engineer and top-turret gunner, Sgt George Glevanick aboard Aircraft #42-7754 [HARMFUL LIL ARMFUL]. Sgt George Glevanick had been rushed to base hospital. This would be Arthur's second mission and his crew included:

2nd Lt. Philip J Chase – Pilot – 0-745621
2nd Lt William H Thomas – Co-Pilot – 0-751490
2nd Lt. Harry K Farrell Jr – Navigator - 0-688013
F/O Edward E George – Bombardier – T-001527
S/Sgt Joseph DeFranze – Radio Operator –11118062
S/Sgt William Durham – waist gunner – 34303305
S/Sgt Thomas N McNamara – waist gunner – 16088447
S/Sgt Howard R Peck – tail gunner - 39272980



(S/Sgt William Durham)

At 07:30 eighteen aircraft departed from Seething, embarking on an arduous journey towards La Rochelle. As noon approached and the formation drew closer to their destination, they were ambushed by enemy fighters, who struck Arthur's aircraft. Struggling to keep up, with smoke billowing from engine number three, they found themselves under attack by two Me-109s. Miraculously, Arthur's plane managed a steep dive followed by a swift ascent, but shortly after, it stalled and plummeted towards earth with the cabin and engine in flames. Joseph DeFranze recalled, "*The flames were coming round my legs, so I jumped 15000ft*". The majority of the crew bailed before the plane crashed near Cognac, France. 2nd Lt. Thomas, landed in the heart of Lesparre and was quickly captured. Lt. Chase, Lt. Farrell, F/O George and S/Sgt Peck shared a similar fate and became POWs but S/Sgt Joseph DeFranze

evaded capture and made it back to Seething – his story will be shared at the end. Sadly, S/Sgt William Durham and S/Sgt Thomas N McNamara both lost their lives; the French revealed to Arthur that they were shot by the Germans due to severe burns.

“I bailed out at 18,000 feet, following the radio operator, pilot and co-pilot through the bomb bay. I did not delay my jump and coming down I counted three chutes in the distance before landing in a clump of trees.” Arthur recounted.

Arthur found himself tangled in a tree apart from his crewmates and injured his back while cutting himself free. Undeterred by his injury, he retrieved his parachute from the branches and concealed it under foliage. Fearing a nearby bicycle patrol, he darted through the woods towards a small settlement. *“I heard woodcutters at work but avoided them and hid in some bushes for the rest of the day”*. During the day, Arthur attentively listened to the woodcutters at work while remaining concealed in some nearby bushes. He caught sight of a truck transporting workers under German surveillance that night and chose to approach a house he spotted in the distance. Upon reaching a farmhouse, Arthur stayed hidden until daybreak before cautiously emerging frozen and limping towards the secluded dwelling. Despite his lack of French language skills, Arthur courageously sought assistance from the residents. Fortunately, the French family had connections with a local resistance.

The Brutus Network, a group specialized in helping Allied pilots and crew members escape France to neutral Spain, took responsibility for Arthur's safety. He was moved between multiple safe houses to evade detection. Initially staying at the farmhouse of Jean Barbot for four days, Arthur then spent time at the residence of pharmacist Gisele Chauvin in Lesparre, which was situated dangerously close to a German headquarters. Consequently, he was relocated to Gisele's family home where he obtained falsified documents identifying him as Monsieur Albert of Soulac—a deaf and mute man.

Arthur traveled by bus to Bordeaux with Pierre Dupain, who kept his dog tags for safekeeping. After several days of rest, he journeyed to Moissac where he encountered a German checkpoint but effectively utilized his fraudulent papers and pretended to be deaf and mute. In Moissac, Arthur stayed with Monsieur Auriac before relocating to a farm. During his time in hiding, he assumed various identities including George Lambert from Algiers—a crucial choice due to the liberated state of Algiers which made identity verification challenging for German officials.

Arthur then ventured to Beaumont-de-Lomagne and resided at Mimi Dumas' home for two weeks. While there, Marcel Taillandier—leader of an exceptional Resistance network known as the Morhange network—visited and coordinated Arthur's next move to Toulouse. Over a four-month period in Toulouse, Arthur was joined by British Royal Air Force pilot Flight Lieutenant Richard - also evading capture.



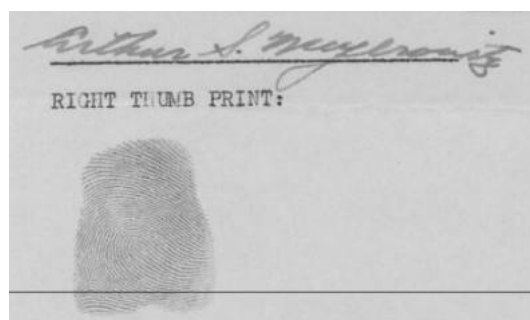
(Richard Cleaver)

[Richard Frank Wharton Cleaver was born on the 9th April 1920 in Northampton, Northamptonshire, England to parents Richard Lovell Cleaver (b.1885) and Annie Mabel Wharton Cleaver (b.1888). He had a sister Philippa (b.1914). Richard joined the RAF in 1942 and was assigned the service number 1457098 then later 12441. In 1943 he had achieved the rank of Flying Officer and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order “in recognition of gallantry and devotion to duty in the execution of air operations during the invasion of Sicily. In this operation, he towed a glider from the United Kingdom to Northern Africa and then Sicily. After successfully releasing the glider at its target, Richard returned to North Africa despite flying a severely damaged plane with only three functioning engines.]

On April 6th, 1944, as part of the 644th Squadron, Richard carried out his first mission to drop weapons to the resistance fighters but could not establish contact upon arrival at the target area. Richard decided to abort the mission and return to base; however due to his low flying altitude, German flak from an airfield in Cognac struck his aircraft. The starboard wing caught fire, causing the aircraft to rapidly lose altitude. Understanding the urgency, Richard ordered his crew to bail out while he remained at the controls to ensure their safe escape. The height of the aircraft at this time was a little over 1000ft and it was descending rapidly. Richard chose to stay at the controls and belly crashed in a field in the dark. With his Halifax bomber now well ablaze, it was acting as a beacon to every German in the area so Richard hastily left the area. Now he was with Arthur in Toulouse.

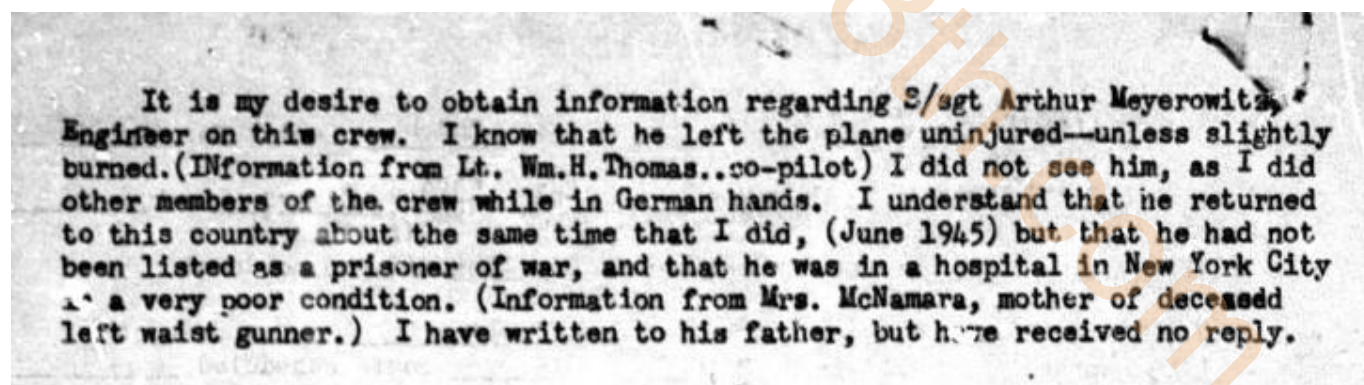
With Marcel Taillandier's help Arthur and Richard set off for Perpignan with their guide Andre Fontes. From here, they were to undergo a perilous trek over the icy Pyrenees. Hindered by German troops in the region, they had to hide during daylight hours and travel only under cover of darkness. They eventually made it over the Pyrenees and remained hidden until a guide sent by Taillandier arrived. This was crucial, as, "neutral" Spain was not safe, as German agents would often bribe Spanish officials to identify Allied Airmen as escaped criminals.

Arthur reached the British Consulate in Barcelona on June 1st, and subsequently traveled alongside Richard and three Belgians through Madrid and Seville before boarding a fishing boat to Gibraltar. They arrived on June 16th, 1944, and after completing necessary examinations and paperwork, Arthur and Richard flew back to London.



Arthur was transported to the United States from Prestwick, Scotland on July 7th, 1944. He spent a year in various military hospitals due to severe his back injury sustained during his harrowing experience and was awarded the Purple Heart for his courage.

Once liberated, Lieutenant Chase sought answers about Arthur's fate.....



In March 1946, Arthur tied the knot with Esther Loew, and together they had two children - Carole, born in 1947, and Mark, born in 1951. The family resided in The Bronx, New York, where Arthur co-owned a ladies' millinery business. Sadly, Arthur passed away in March 1971. For further insight into Arthur's incredible story, grab a copy of Seth Meyerowitz's book titled "The Lost Airman."

As for Richard Cleaver, he returned to his squadron and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his selfless action in the mission on April 6th, 1944. Of his crew members, Sgt R. Hindle and Flt Sgt J. Franklin managed to avoid capture and returned to England; while Sgt. A. Matthews escaped capture too and fought alongside the Maquis until the war ended. Plt Officer N. Wyatt was captured as a POW;

whereas Flt Sgt D.J. Hoddinott tragically succumbed to injuries sustained during bail-out and is now buried at Cognac.



Between September 17th-25th, 1944, Richard served as Acting Squadron Leader of 570th Squadron (RAF) and participated in four missions during the Battle of Arnhem. On his fourth mission—despite his Stirling aircraft being hit—he managed to re-cross the Rhine and crash-landed behind the allied line with all crew members surviving. He was awarded the Militaire Willems-Orde by Royal Decree – the highest Order of the Kingdom of The Netherlands.

Richard went on to become one of the UK's first jet test pilots and a Squadron Leader. He married Dorothy Joan Elliott (b.1923) on July 29th, 1946 at Alwington Church in Devon, with whom he had three children: Gillian Ruth (born in 1948), Elizabeth J (born in 1951), and Philip (born in 1953).

On October 1st, 1953, Richard conducted a flight exercise from Farnborough in a Vampire Mk. 5 VZ835. As he approached the base for landing, Squadron Leader Murley entered the circuit in a Supermarine 510 (Swift). Both pilots received clearance to land; however, Murley sought clarification on their landing order. The tower informed him he was first to land, with Richard, call sign "Sailor 99," ordered to follow. Richard acknowledged the order.

Murley instructed Richard to fly behind and above him – a command that went unacknowledged. Shortly after, Richard initiated an abrupt ascent at an angle of roughly 70 degrees. At 150 feet, his aircraft flipped and nosedived, partially recovering before flipping once more and crashing near Ash Vale. Tragically, Richard perished on impact.



CLEAVER.—On Oct. 1, 1953, in a flying accident, SQUADRON LEADER RICHARD FRANK WHARTON CLEAVER, D.S.O., D.F.C., Militaire Willems Orde, M.A., beloved husband of Dorothy and precious son of Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Cleaver, of 77, Addington Road, West Wickham, Kent. Memorial service at 2.30 p.m. to-morrow (Wednesday), at Staff College Chapel, Bracknell.



(Marcel Taillandier)

Moving back in time to July 11th, 1944, Marcel Taillandier was destined for a fateful meeting with the Maquis of Gers when his vehicle was stopped by the German Military Police for inspection. Recognised by a circulated photograph, Marcel, unarmed, attempted to escape on foot, ultimately seeking refuge atop a church's roof. A local woman betrayed him, ultimately leading to his immediate execution by gunshot. He was buried in a mass grave of the Gestapo in Toulouse. After liberation, Marcel's body was found and reburied in Chateaugay in the Puy-de-Dome. Marcel was married and had two children.

Born on March 25th, 1911 in Condat-en-Combrailles within Puy-de-Dome, Marcel Taillandier was the son of Jean-Baptiste and Marie Debas Taillandier. He joined the military in March 1929 as part of the Versailles Garrison's 8th Engineer Unit (Radio Electrician Engineer). By 1936, he was assigned to the 2nd Bureau - counter-espionage duties within the radio service department of the Ministry of War. Over time, Marcel achieved more prominent roles within the Military Security Service and the counterintelligence section, ultimately leading to his involvement in the extraordinary Morhange Network – an effective resistance group that he dramatically expanded by recruiting soldiers, police officers, and civilians into sabotage operations.



(Brax Castle)

Marcel's network was particularly adept at neutralizing the most significant threats to the Resistance, such as French Gestapo agents, informants, and overenthusiastic bureaucrats. Suspects were discreetly apprehended and taken to Brax Castle for trial by an undercover court composed of legitimate magistrates. If found guilty, they faced execution.

The following narrative recounts the story of Sgt Joseph DeFranzes, who also managed to evade capture.

Born on July 10th, 1923 in Readville, Massachusetts, Joseph Francis DeFranzes was the son of Augustino (b.1860) and Carmella Russo Caraveli DeFranzes (b.1887). His siblings included two brothers, Pasquale "Patrick" Joseph (b.1912) and Luigi "Louis" Paul (b.1921), and five sisters: Philomena "Phillis" (b.1911), Maria "Mary" Frances (b.1915), Raphaelia "Connie" Helen (b.1916), Christine "Chris" J (b.1925), and Evelyn "Edith" (b.1929).

Both Augustino and Carmella were Italian-born; Augustino immigrated in 1881 and Carmella in 1908. Each had been married previously: Augustino to Josep (b.1859) and Carmella to Luigi "Louis" Carvealle (b.1865) in 1908. She had her first five children - Philomena, Patrick, Raphaelia, Louis, and Mary - with Luigi in Rhode Island before marrying Augustino in 1922.

In 1930, the family resided in Boston, Suffolk, Massachusetts, with 70-year-old Augustino as the sole breadwinner, working as a laborer on the steam railroad. The household included Patrick, Mary, Raphaelia, Louis, Joseph, Christine, and Evelyn.

By 1940, the family remained in Boston, with Patrick employed as a laborer, Mary as a housemaid, and Louis as a cleaner. However, Augustino was absent from the 1940 census.

Joseph was drafted on June 30th, 1942, enlisting in Boston on November 24th of the same year. His occupation was recorded as a shipping and receiving clerk.

On December 31st, 1943, Joseph parachuted into pine woods near Etang d'Hourtin. After hiding his parachute in bushes, he journeyed southward on foot. He encountered a man on a bicycle who guided him to his farmhouse for food and temporary shelter. He then stayed at Madame Rabut's house in Pauillac for three weeks and given a fake identity card but the forgery quality was poor. Madame Rabut also had an anti-Nazi German civilian staying with her who worked as an engineer at the Bordeaux submarine pens.

Before departing Pauillac, Joseph agreed to send a message via BBC upon his safe return to England: "*Aux amis de Juliette, meilleurs voeux de Jo*" (Friends of Juliette Best Regards Jo).

On January 20th, 1944, Joseph hid in Le Bouscat's public bathhouse in Bordeaux alongside Lt Hugh Shields (0-743906), who had been shot down on January 5th. They spent six weeks living in the "Bains et Douches" building with the Coicadin family and were frequently visited by resistance members. On March 1st, they went to Toulouse and met "Françoise" (Marie Louise Dissard), who had eight other evaders under her care. The guide that originally was supposed to have met them had been arrested in Perpignan by a German agent posing as a Canadian pilot.

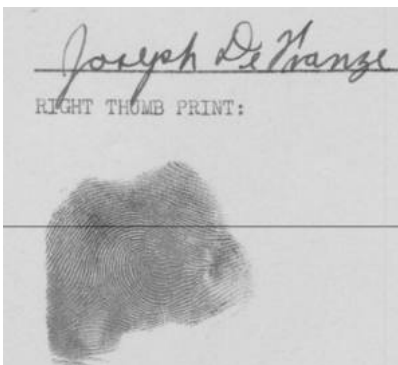
Marie-Louise Dissard, (b.1881), known by her code name "Françoise", played a pivotal role in the French Resistance during World War II's German occupation. She was an integral part of the Pat O'Leary Line which assisted downed Allied airmen in evading capture and returning to Great Britain—a route taken by both Joseph and Arthur. After leaders Ian Garrow and Albert Guérissette were arrested and their network dismantled by the Gestapo in 1943, Marie established her own escape organization known as the Françoise Line. Throughout its operation, the Françoise Line facilitated the escape of over 250 airmen from occupied France back to Great Britain, bringing Marie's total count of rescued individuals to more than 700.



(Marie Dissard receiving the American Medal of Freedom)

The group of evaders Marie had under her care consisting of:-

Sgt Joseph De Franze
2nd Lt. Hugh C Shield
S/Sgt Robert Finney
S/Sgt Stanley J Dymek
2nd Lt. Harold O Freeman
2nd Lt. Ruben Fier
S/Sgt John C McLaughlin
S/Sgt Levi H Collins
S/Sgt Alvin E Sanderson
S/Sgt Kenneth Carson



The group embarked on a train journey to Quillan, where they encountered a Spanish guide. After spending two days there, they traveled by bus to Axat and concealed themselves in the outskirts until nightfall. Subsequently, a taxi conveyed them 12 miles further to meet another guide. They proceeded towards Querigut and were joined by some Polish fugitives. Led by the Spanish guide, Joseph and his company began their voyage across the Pyrenees on March 11th's night. Hindered by deep snow and fatigue, they were compelled to turn back at the initial mountain pass. They recuperated in a barn for several days before Joseph, Lt. Freeman, and S/Sgt Dymek ventured to Usson.

There, they learned of 2nd Lt. Fier and S/Sgt Collins' capture in Axat. For the following eight days, Joseph lodged in a hotel before resuming his journey on March 25th. Their next hiding spot was an abandoned mine; however, their guide's arrest by the Gestapo resulted in an extended hiding period of three more days. During this time, four English evaders and 16 Polish escapees assembled with their group.

On April 1st, 1944, Joseph, S/Sgt Dymek, 2nd Lt. Freeman, S/Sgt McLaughlin, and 2nd Lt. Shields reached Puigcerda in Spain. By April 10th, Joseph was in Gibraltar, and he arrived at Bristol, England ten days later.

Joseph returned to New York from Prestwick, Scotland on May 7th, 1944 and received his discharge on October 28th the following year.

Post-war life saw Joseph relocate to Ohio and marry Marie Icie Wilburn (b.1917) on January 21st, 1946. The couple welcomed a son named Raymond Eugene (b.1945).

Joseph was the esteemed proprietor and manager of the well-regarded J. D Machine Shop. Tragically, he passed away on November 27th, 2000, in Franklin, Knox County, Ohio. Marie, his beloved wife, joined him on March 19th, 2002. The couple are buried at Saint Joseph Cemetery at Lockbourne, Franklin County, Ohio.

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