

William L. Huddleston
3009 Johnson St.
Grand Prairie, TX 75050
Tel. (214)262-2942

June 11, 1995

306th Echoes
Charlotte, NC

Russell A. Strong,

Dear Mr. Strong,

Enclosed please find a check for the book "First Over Germany, The 306th. Bomb Group" in the amount of \$38.00.

I am enclosing two articles written by Bob ST.John describing a really phenomenal happening in my life when I was contacted in 1993 by a young German, 22 years of age, about details of my being shot down over Germany during WWII. We have come to love and respect this fine young man and I want to present him with this book when he returns here to visit us August 28th. He is still very active in researching American and German air crashes during the war.

Michael and Nicole will be married August 26th in his hometown in Germany....Then, come to the U.S. and to our home for their honeymoon. They plan to stay three weeks with us. They plan to tour America for about a week and a half (Or as long as their budget will allow). He has done so much for me I would like to pay for all his expenses, but, alas! My wife and I are living on social security and can only offer Michael and his bride, Nicole food and lodging.

Michael is always on the look-out for some crash to investigate in his spare time. I am enclosing his address in the event that you would like to include this information in your magazine.

Michael Gudelhofer
Im Weiler 4
53123 Bonn,
GERMANY

Sincerely,

Grace Huddleston

William L (Bill & Grace Huddleston)

Saturday, October 2, 1993

Call whirls WWII gunner into the past



**BOB
ST. JOHN**

That shocking, riveting telephone call Bill Huddleston received at his Grand Prairie home in April transcended time and space, sending his thoughts spiraling back to a day almost 50 years ago when a fraction of a second meant life for him and death for his buddies. It was something he could never forget.

On the afternoon of Feb. 22, 1944, Bill, then 21, was a waist gunner in a B-17 that had just completed its bombing run over an airplane factory in Germany and was returning to base. The bomber had already been hit by flak but suddenly a German Focke Wulf fighter appeared to finish off the kill. The bomber rocked and then began to spiral downward.

Bill had jerked the pin from the door near him, kicked it open and yelled at the other waist gunner, Jack Osborn, "We've got to get out of here, Jack!"

And then there was a loud sound . . . and then he was into space, pulling the cord on his parachute and floating down into a snow-covered mountainous area between the villages of Daaden and Emmerzhausen. Bill was captured and he almost starved before being liberated by the British after 15 months, which of course seemed like years.

Feelings of guilt

In an album, Bill has an old picture of the B-17 crew, the youngest 19, the eldest 27, and over the years he had felt an unjustified guilt and asked himself why he had lived and they had died. He had always wondered exactly what their final fate had been.

He started getting answers when the telephone call came that day from Michael Gudelhofer, a conscientious 22-year-old federal policeman in Germany.

For the last five years, Michael has been doing extensive research on both Germany and the enemy airplanes that crashed in his country during WWII. He also wanted to know the fate of their pilots and crews. He became intrigued with a story his father had told him about an American who had parachuted to safety in their area. With help from sources in the United States, he was eventually able to locate that man, Bill Huddleston.

Michael was not only able to tell Bill, now 70, that he had been blown out of the B-17 when it broke in half but also that six of the 10 crew members had been found in the rear section of the plane. A German soldier had pulled one young man, who was still alive, out of the burning wreckage only to watch him die on the way to the hospital. Michael said he knew where they were buried and would take Bill there if he visited Germany.

"Michael is such a nice young man," said Grace, who has been married to Bill for 45 years. "We're retired and living on Social Security, so we couldn't afford to call him in Germany. But he's called us several times, sent us pictures of the place where Bill bailed out, and we've continually corresponded."

When the Huddlestons informed Michael they'd love to accept his invitation to visit but really had no money for the trip, he told them, "Don't worry, I will get you to Germany somehow."

Trip arranged

And he will. He has not only arranged to have their airfare paid but also has found them free accommodations. They're scheduled to leave Dallas on Oct. 15 and return Oct. 22. Michael plans to take them on a tour of the countryside and to the grave of Bill's friends, where a cross and plaque will be placed in their honor.

"By going back and seeing the graves, I think it will put to rest some of the things that have bothered me from the past," said Bill.

I located Michael between work shifts in his home in St. Augustin, Germany. He said he had first begun researching the fate of his countrymen who had crashed, but then decided that the Americans who died were also just young men who did what they had to do for their country.

"I knew that they had friends and families who must also wonder about their fate and began researching them also," he said.

"Those who died on both sides were little more than kids, just beginning their lives. Perhaps if I can remind people of this they will think of war as a madness we should no longer be a part of."

Michael is also making plans for a trip to the United States to visit the Huddlestons because he said they have friendship, which fortunately also can transcend time and space.

Linked by war, couples build solid friendship



**BOB
ST. JOHN**

They were like family and certainly renewed your faith that friendship and love are not bound by age, time, space nor some old misplaced prejudice.

There they were laughing and hugging — the couple from Germany, a giant young man named Michael Gudelhofer and his fiancée, Nicole Borchers, and Grace and Bill Huddlestone, nice people from Grand Prairie.

They were together because Michael, a 23-year-old federal policeman, had once sought out Bill Huddlestone to help him put to rest ghosts of an incident that happened some 50 years ago.

They had been subjects of previous columns. During World War II, the B-17 in which Bill was a gunner had been shot down near the southwestern village of Daaden. He parachuted to safety, was captured and spent 15 months in prison before being liberated near the end of the war. The fate of other members of the crew haunted Bill all those years until April 1993, when Michael called.

Michael, who grew up near the crash site, had heard stories from his father and grandfather about the crash and the young American who survived. He was so intrigued about the incident that he did extensive research and eventually located Bill, informing him of the deaths of his former crew members.

For more than five years now, Michael has been researching German and Allied planes that crashed in his country during the war and the fates of the pilots and crews. His feelings for the airmen, who were so very young, know no nationality.

When I called him in Germany last year, he had explained that he felt compelled to let the survivors know what had happened to their friends, relatives and loved ones.

Exchanging visits

Furthermore, Michael and the Huddlestones formed a long-distance friendship, and he invited them to visit Daaden, which they did in mid-October of last year. They were honored at banquets and taken to the crash site, which was marked by a memorial plaque and a cross. Michael and his father, Werner, made the cross.

The Huddlestones had invited Michael to visit them, and he did, arriving with Nicole on March 24. To the delight of Grace, who says she plans to stay after them until they get married, Michael presented Nicole an engagement ring as their flight here crossed over Greenland.

We visited the other day at Cable Access of Dallas Inc., during filming of a one-hour show about their story. When *Michael Called* will premiere April 26 at 8 p.m. in Dallas on TCI Cablevision's Channel 23B.

Michael, who stands about 6-feet-7, explained that his so-called hobby has become more time-consuming than his profession: "Since I was very young, I have been intrigued with the planes and those who flew them," he said. "They were so young. It was so tragic that they died."

"All the research is very costly, but I still do it as much as I can. If I can find out what really happened to those who died and let their loved ones know, perhaps it will ease their minds."

Michael and Nicole, who will be here until April 11, have been freaked out by the malls. "So big. America has bigger things than I imagined," Michael said. "We had to stop for breath in the shopping mall. It was as big as a village."

"The people are different here. We went to church, and they were so outgoing and friendly. They hug you, and you are friends. It was that way in my village in Germany. But Germans are ordinarily more reserved. Neighbors say 'hello' and nothing else."

Feeling like family

Nicole said they like this area so much they could live here. And they mentioned that being with the Huddlestones was, indeed, "just like being with our family."

The Huddlestones agree. "They are such nice people," said Grace. "They're so thoughtful and polite. We just love them."

I've gotten to know the Huddlestones and was thinking what a perfect couple they are to have someone from a foreign country visit. And the more I get to know Michael and Nicole, I feel they are the perfect people to visit.

The Dallas Morning News

William L. Huddleston
3009 Johnson Street
Grand Prairie, TX. 75050

July 15, 1993

306th ECHOES
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, NC. 28205

306th ECHOES Editor:

Dear Sir:

I would like to express my appreciation to you for your publication of the 306th ECHOES. Thank you for making it available to me.

I am enclosing my crew's group picture to be published in your magazine.

I am the lone survivor of this group with the exception of (1) man who was shot down on his first mission. Upon our arrival at Thurleigh Air Base, England, each of us were assigned to a different pilot and mission. The name of this man is Sgt. Nick Tricoleus ... pictured 3rd. from left, TOP ROW.

In our regular crew, and not shown in picture, was S/Sgt. Silvie R. Paoli, Radio Operator. We were shot down on our 8th mission, Feb. 22, 1944. Our plane exploded and I was standing in the door. Consequently, I found myself falling and managed to get my chute open. I was captured and held 15 months in 3 different Stalag-Luft Camps. Stalag-Luft VI, Stalag-Luft III and Stalag-Luft IV. I met up with Tricoleus while I was prisoner-of-war.

Identifying the men in the picture:

TOP ROW: Left to Right: S/Sgt. Earl c. Swilley, " " " " " "

S/Sgt William L. Huddleston, S/Sgt. Nicholous Tricoleus,

Sgt. Jack E. Osborn, S/Sgt. Maurice D. Pershing,

Sgt. William E. Van Hootte.

(Pilot)

Bottom Row: 2nd. Lt. Carey N. Oliver, 2nd. Lt. George E. Dumas, 2nd. Lt. George A. Milburn, 2nd. Lt. Siegal L. Hawkins. Eight of these pictured died from the explosion, with Paoli taking the place of Tricoleus: accounting for (9) crewmen who died that day.

I would like to have my name placed in your publication, please.
S/Sgt. William L. Huddleston-Engineer/Gunner, 367th. Squadron,
306th. Bomb Group. *2nd. Engineer (Right Waist)*

Sincerely,
William L. Huddleston

*P.S. This Is Not The Plane That We Flew
(Our's Was Named "The Flak Shack")*