

SECRET

By Authority of
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(6)

SECRET - AMERICAN
MOST SECRET - BRITISH

Initials *W.L.R.*

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
P/W and X Detachment
Military Intelligence Service

Date *10/10/43*

9 October 1943

E & E REPORT NO. 116
EVASION IN FRANCE

X Archibald L. ROBERTSON, 2d Lt, O-798090
350 Bomb Squadron, 100 Bomb Group

MIA: 10 July 1943
Arrived in Spain: 22 September 1943
Arrived in Gibraltar: 1 October 1943
Arrived in UK: 5 October 1943

AGE: 20 years
LENGTH OF SERVICE: 1 8/12 years
HOME ADDRESS: 328 West Mag
AUBURN, Alabama

MEMBERS OF CREW: (This information checked with PWIB)

PILOT	O-791081	1st Lt Charles L. DUNCAN	P/W
CO-PILOT	O-798090	2d Lt Archibald L. ROBERTSON	NARRATOR
NAVIGATOR	O-731267	2d Lt Oliver M. CHIESE	MIA P/W
BOMBARDIER	O-737093	1st Lt William H. FORBES	MIA P/W
RADIO OPERATOR	34332447	Sgt Edison A. OLIVER	P/W
TOP TURRET GUNNER	18063077	T/Sgt Ernest (NMI) DE LOS SANTOS	P/W
BALL TURRET GUNNER	37292132	S/Sgt Gene F. FRANK	P/W
WAIST GUNNER	20345534	S/Sgt Bernard I. HANOVER	P/W
WAIST GUNNER	35481170	Sgt Parrish (NMI) REYNOLDS	MIA RTD 1/559
TAIL GUNNER	37450306	S/Sgt William D. WHITLEY	P/W

10 July 1943
THORPE-ABBOTS

We left THORPE-ABBOTS at 1700 hours, 10 July 1943, to bomb LE BOURGET. Because of heavy overcast our bombs were not dropped. We were moving to the secondary target when yellow-nosed FW 190's attacked. Our number one engine caught fire and was feathered. To evade the fighters and get to cloud cover we went into a power dive. The cloud cover was lower than we thought and at 15000 feet I gave the order to bale out. The engineer had jumped already, after salvaging the bombs. The IFF and bombsight had been destroyed when I left the plane at 3000 feet. I believe only the pilot was left in the plane.

DAMAGED BY
FIGHTERS

I landed at 1000 hours, in a wheat field and removed my flying equipment immediately. There were no woods in sight and I didn't consider the wheat fields a good place to hide. Across a shallow valley, about 100 yards away, I saw a thicket of thorn bushes and ran there to hide my chute and Mae West. I followed the gradual rise of the slope almost to the hilltop before crawling into a small bush-thicket. Back at the scene of my landing, I saw several peasants walking through the wheat fields, looking for me. They didn't search very long and about fifteen minutes later the Germans

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SEARCHES
GERMAN SEARCH

arrived. They combed the wheat fields, walking about twenty feet apart. They must have known exactly where I parachuted because they paid particular attention to that area. One searcher walked between me and the hiding place of my chute. After thirty minutes they moved out of my sight. I fell asleep for about five hours.

CAPTURED BY
GERMAN SOLDIER

From my hiding place I could see a large wood several miles in the distance. Thinking it safe now, if I used caution, I walked diagonally down the slope toward the floor of the valley where a lane crossed a railroad track. Rather than go at once across the tracks I crept up to the edge of the embankment. When I peered over onto the tracks an armed German soldier was standing about ten feet away, looking up at me. He said something, in German, which I didn't understand so I made no answer. He motioned me, with his rifle, to put up my hands and when I had gotten down to where he stood he pointed down the tracks, motioning me to go ahead.

30 3

To get onto the tracks we had to go up a five-foot embankment of fine cinders and gravel. As I started up I slipped and fell but clambered on up to the tracks. I heard the German slip also and glancing around saw that he had fallen. Though his rifle still was in one hand it had dropped to the gravel. Impulsively, I kicked out at him as hard as I could and caught him under the chin. He sprawled on his back and when I saw he was unconscious I started running.

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At the top of the embankment on the opposite side of the tracks I stumbled across a small drainage ditch, covered over with small thick brush. I went back for the German and dragged him into this ditch. It was half-filled with water and if he was not already dead he would have drowned in the ditch.

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I ran, then, for about a mile before I reached a two-acre tract of woods. I didn't stop there but went on in the general direction of the larger wood. I started to pass a field of haystacks but seeing they were stacked bundles of hay I went to one, pulled out several of the supporting sheafs, crawled in, and pulled the bundles back in place to cover me.

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After eating the Horlick's and chocolate tablets, I fell asleep. At dusk I awoke and left my hiding place to find food. I was given food at a farmhouse on the edge of a small village but the farmer motioned me to leave after I had eaten. I meant to return to the haystack but as I approached it I saw, in the still twilight, someone silhouetted at the other end of the field. I walked down the road. A French peasant, I was about to pass, stopped me and asked, with motions, if I were not English. I answered, yes, and showed him the uniform beneath my coveralls. He led me into the small wood through which I had run earlier in the day. After taking my coveralls and cutting away the shoulder straps and insignia from my field jacket, he told me to wait for his return. Very soon afterward he took me to a main highway where we joined two of his friends.

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By now it had grown dark. I saw that we were walking through the small village where I had managed to get food. I thought we were going to a house I had understood from my helpers that they had been German prisoners of war but were released to work in the fields. Before I realized it we were at the gate of a camp enclosure. My companions pulled a drunken not and after one had shown a pass he slipped it behind his back to me. I flashed it to the guard and followed my friends to their hut. They kept me hidden

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HIDDEN BY
FRIENDS IN A
LABOR CAMP

in the camp for two nights and told me they were arranging to send me to PARIS for identity papers. While I was in this camp I never completely understood what kind of camp it was or the regulations of the place. There seemed to be certain hours during which the occupants had to show passes and other hours when they could move in and out freely. At daylight, 12 July, I was told that I was to be taken to PARIS by train that day. We went to the gate to leave the enclosure but were stopped by a German sentry. Not having the correct pass we had to stay in the camp until several hours later when we walked out the gate without being questioned.

We had missed the train to PARIS so I was taken to a house about a mile from the camp. The ground-floor was a German officers' mess but the upstairs belonged to friends of my companions. I slept there that night and left for PARIS with one of these friends early the next morning. I was wearing a pair of blue trousers, my tan officers' shirt and a French sport jacket.

The tickets to PARIS were bought with money from my Escape Purse. When the train got to ROUEN, my companion and I changed to the PARIS train. Before it was due to leave he told me to wait, he would be back in a moment. I thought he was going to the lavatory.

GOES TO PARIS
WITHOUT HELP

He never returned. I went on to PARIS alone. Back at the house where I spent the night I had gotten rid of everything except dog-tags, water bottle, insignia and compass. I had been given sandwiches and now about 400 francs were left from my 2000.

ADVISED TO
LEAVE PARIS

The train arrived in the ST LAZARE Station, PARIS, at 1100 hours. I kept my ticket ready, got into the crowd going out the gate and walked into the street without difficulty. I started looking for a photo shop, because I had none, but could only find one and it was filled with German soldiers. By 1400 hours I still didn't know what to do. I couldn't find the slums section where I thought I might be able to approach some one for help. I saw a lot of American bars and after looking one over carefully I went in, thinking I might find a barman who spoke English. The one I chose had a man standing in the door and no one around. After I got in I saw a sign that seemed to be advertising a drink and I asked for that. The barman looked puzzled and asked me something, I nodded. He fixed some kind of a drink for me. I told him then who I was and that I needed help. He could speak a few words of English and after telling me to stay there, came back in a few minutes with a man who could speak English. I repeated my story again. Both of the men wanted to help but they were scared. Finally they said the only thing to do was leave PARIS as quickly as possible. They told me I was on the north side and gave general directions to follow. I kept my compass in my hand and started south. Once, two people tried to ask directions but I shook my head and walked on. I found the main highway to ORLEANS and followed it. While still in the outskirts of PARIS an elderly gendarme stopped me and asked for papers. I shook my head, at first, then spoke in English telling him my identity. He walked away without another word.

By late afternoon I was in the country. At a one-room farmhouse I got food and a bed of hay was fixed for me on the porch. The next morning I continued following the highway. I kept my water bottle filled and still had the few sandwiches I had been given before going to PARIS. In the afternoon I looked for places to stay. At several farmhouses I was

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given food but the people would not let me stay. At one farmhouse they pretended not to understand what I wanted and motioned, threateningly, for me to leave. At 1700 hours I found a lady who, after looking at my blisters, said I could stay in the barn. After I was hidden I fell asleep but was awakened at 2000 hours by another lady who fed me and treated my blisters.

SECURITY HELF
AND
JOURNEY
ARRANGED

The next morning she awakened me again and this time had two Frenchmen with her. They asked me to dress and follow them. I was taken in a truck to a house in a small village. For seven weeks from 15 July to 4 September, I lived in this house while my friend urged me to be patient until he made arrangements for my journey.

Compiled By:

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1st Lt, AC

Approved By:

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APPENDIX "B" TO E & E REPORT NO. 116

1. The following information has been obtained after an interview with an Officer who evaded capture by the enemy, after being in enemy-occupied territory.

2. Further circulation of this information may be made, but when doing so, no information as to the source may be divulged.

Statement of information covering period from 10 July 1943
to 22 September 1943

1. At NEVILLE, near LE HAVRE, a few German medium tanks were seen parked under trees in farmyards. 10 July 1943
2. Approximately 10 kilometers south of ETAMPES there is a training field. On 25 July there were 135 twin-engine planes and 10 single engine planes based at the field. By the middle of August 100 of these planes had been moved to ITALY. Only twin engine planes are left on the field. Their propellers revolve in opposite directions and they have a single tail. (hearsay)
3. French source stated that 35 submarines were in the submarine yards at LA PALLICE on 1 September 1943.