

THE REAL STORY

by Andrew Tolmachoff

edited by Wayne Tolmachoff

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Editor's Note

This autobiography was compiled from several handwritten letters by Andrew W. Tolmachoff around the year 1996. There were several copies that duplicated Andrew's early life in Arizona through his military service in England. I have tried to include all material facts gleaned from these copies ordered chronologically. I have also corrected misspellings and improved the grammar of the notes but still tried to retain the spirit of Andrew's story in his own words.

This real story is dedicated to Jack M. Tolmachoff, my grandson. His mother asked me to write about my time in the service during World War II. I would like to write a book. It would make a good movie and it wouldn't be fiction. I thought it was important to put my military service into context with my parents' religious and economic struggles so here goes...

My father and mother were born in the area that is today the country of Georgia. My father was William Serge Tolmachoff and my mother Esther Simone Zadorkin¹. At the time of their birth Georgia was part of the Russian Empire. My parents were part of a break away religion from the Russian Orthodox that was known as Molokan. Since this was not the same as the Russian Orthodox state religion, they were harassed by the Czar's military. They also struggled to survive on the little farm they had where they had to pay high taxes to the Czar. They decided to sell the farm and escape Russia by traveling through Poland and then to Germany. In Germany they boarded a ship at a North Sea port and sailed to America. First they landed in New York in 1905². Arriving there was father, mother and my two brothers John and Bill³. Paul⁴ was born on the ship. From New York they then probably traveled to Galveston, Texas and eventually traveled overland to Los Angeles. After living in Los Angeles a couple of months⁵ and with no jobs available, they decided to move to Glendale, Arizona. My father had two brothers and families already living there. He bought a small farm and built a little house. He crammed his family into the house and started his life all over. After a year or two they decided to move to a little bigger farm. They built a house on the farm and started to have a bigger family, eight boys and three girls. Added to the family were Vera, Jack, Mike, Nellie, Alex, Mary, Walter and Andrew⁶.

My father struggled as a farmer. His two brothers helped him some but they each had large families to care for⁷. I was the youngest baby and I could remember how rough it was. When World War I began my father received a letter saying that he was drafted. When they came after him he told the official that he was a very religious man and could not bear arms against another man. He told them he would not go. He was arrested and put in jail. After spending some time in jail the officials asked him about his family. He told them about his wife and numerous children. He had more children than he had cows & horses on the farm. Since he was a Molokan, he didn't eat pig meat. Since they served pork in the prison, this caused him to go on a hunger strike. The military draft officials finally decided to let him go.

¹Vasili Sergevich Tolmachoff (b. abt 1877-d. 2 March 1927); Esverya Semonevna Zadorkin (b. 15 May 1880-d. 1 July 1970)

² As Wassili Tomaszow, sailed 3 February 1905 from Hamburg aboard SS Graf Waldersee. Arrived in Ellis Island, New York on 18 February 1905.

³ Ivan Vasilivich Tolmachoff (b. 26 April 1899-d. 3 June 1952); Vasili Vasilivich Tolmachoff (b. 28 April 1903-d. Nov 1985)

⁴ Paul William Tolmachoff (b. 6 June 1905-d. 6 July 1987). When the family arrived at Ellis Island Paul was not on ship manifest. His listed birth date is after this arrival and it is likely he was born after arriving in Los Angeles.

⁵ Since the family is listed in the 1910 US Census in Los Angeles, they spent at least five years in Los Angeles.

⁶ Vera William Tolmachoff (b. 25 November 1909-d. 25 August 1998); Jack William Tolmachoff (b. 4 December 1914-d. 17 December 1996); Michael William Tolmachoff (b. 27 November 1907- d. 8 October 1953); Jean Nellie Tolmachoff (b. 21 March 1912-d. 16 January 1994); Alex William Tolmachoff (b. 16 October 1916- d. 7 February 1996); Mary William Tolmachoff (b. 1919-d. 26 January 2015); Walter William Tolmachoff (b. 24 August 1921-d. 16 June 1979); Andrew William Tolmachoff (b. 10 December 1923-d. 23 January 2004)

⁷ Alex Sergevich Tolmachoff (b. 1866-d. 8 February 1937) had six children. Mikhail Sergevich Tolmachoff (b. 1 January 1883-d. 22 January 1953) had eleven children, the same number as Vasili Sergevich.

After being released from prison he went back to work on the farm. He was growing cantaloupes for sale. One day he went to the field with a wagon pulled by two horses. His son, Vasili, went with him to help load the boxes onto the wagon. One of the boxes fell forward and scared the horses. The horses and wagon backed up a little and my father fell forward off the wagon in front of a wagon wheel. This scared the horses and they ran forward, pulling the heavy-loaded wagon over my father. This crushed my father's body. This was the story of my father's death. I was three years old at the time.

I remember waking up on that hot summer morning and going outside. I went near the brick oven that we had and saw my father lying on two blocks of ice with a white sheet covering him. At first I did not know what happened. Then I saw this man making a box, a big one. My mother came out of the house and told me in Russian that my father was killed in an accident with the wagon and for me to get ready for funeral services in the house. When I returned to the house there were Russian men with beards and Russian peasant shirts standing around. My mother, sisters and brothers were kneeling in front of the preacher. There was crying, prayers and holy jumping. People were kissing the holy men with their beards over and over. The beards were sticky and I didn't like them. Keep in mind that this wasn't even the funeral service where all of this activity would be repeated.

People started to come to our farm from the other farms in the area to attend the services for my father. I told my mother I didn't want to go through that again. My mother told me I had to go through the ordeal so I ran away from the house through the alfalfa fields. My brother Al gave chase and caught me. I was semi-dragged back to the house and went through the funeral service. I can't remember if I went to the burial at the cemetery. These are some of the things I remembered as a three year old.

My mother, Esther, cried and cried for a long time after the funeral. She tried working the farm after my father's death but couldn't make it. By this time two of her sons, John and Paul, and daughter Vera had already left Arizona and moved back to California. My mother also decided to move back to Los Angeles with Bill, Nellie, Al, Mary, Walter and me. Jack and Mike stayed in Arizona. She had one of her Tolmachoff nephews help move the family using two flatbed trucks. It was terrible. The ride was very hot but we made it to the slums of Los Angeles. There was a lot of misery there. There were no jobs. Nor was there welfare. No friends either. And of course, no money. We were stuck.

My sisters and brothers didn't want to go to school. I did, so I started junior high school. After graduating from junior high school I went to Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles. I graduated at 16 years old, the youngest person to graduate at that time. With my diploma I received a letter that I could go to Los Angeles City College. My mother was very poor and I didn't have any transportation to get to the college which was located on the opposite side of

Los Angeles, over 30 miles away⁸. I didn't have enough money to catch the street car. There was no welfare or any money that I could depend on. I couldn't get a job because no one was hired at age 16.

My mother got a job sewing burlap sacks in the slums of East Los Angeles. It was a dirty, dusty and filthy job besides being real hard work for only \$3.00 per day. I couldn't get any money from her because she had to go to work using the street car. Most of her remaining money went to supplying food on the table for her whole family. She was such a good woman and loved all of her children.

I decided to play baseball and tried out with Hollywood Stars as a pitcher. They told me I had a good arm. Then I shocked them when I said I was 16 years old. They said "No way, you look like you are at least 18 years old." I had a cousin, Lou Novikoff⁹, who was playing for the L.A. Angels¹⁰ at the time but it made no difference. I was still 16 years old. I was told to come back at age 18 and they would work something out so I could pitch. So I joined another baseball team and was selected to be the pitcher. I was throwing knuckle balls, fast pitches and curves. I was really doing well as a pitcher.

During one of our games, someone yelled out that the Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor and we were at war. The USA declared war on Japan followed by Germany and Italy declaring war on the United States. This made me so mad I went to join the Army Air Force. I wanted to fly a fighter plane. At the recruiting office I was asked my age and told them 17 years old. They told me that I would need my parent's signature. I went home and told my mother that I was going to join the Army Air Force and needed her signature. I wanted to revenge the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This caused my mother to cry and she denied giving me the signature, since I was her baby, meaning her youngest child. I pleaded and pleaded with her until she signed the paperwork, allowing me to join the Air Force.

I took the release paper my mother signed to an Army air base in the Glendale-Burbank area and went into the office. The officers asked me from what college I graduated. I said none, that I was a high school graduate. They told me that in order to fly a plane I had to be a college graduate. They said the paper with signature could still be used to join the Army. I said no and took off out of there like a bat out of hell.

About a week later I received a letter from President Roosevelt with a greeting. I thought it was thanks from the Infantile Paralysis Foundation about research I was doing helping one with paralysis to walk. At the time I was working in a garage with a Model T coil and chicken legs. I was able to use the current produced by the coil to open and close the

⁸ From 133 Clarence St. to 855 N. Vermont (LACC), about 6 miles.

⁹ Louis Alexander Novikoff (b. 12 October 1915-d. 30 September 1970). Nicknamed "The Mad Russian", was an American professional baseball player. Andrew and Louis were first cousins.

¹⁰ Minor league team of the Pacific Coast League, not the current major league team. Lou Novikoff did end up playing in the majors for the Chicago Cubs and the Philadelphia Phillies.

severed chicken's paws. This letter of thanks was not delivered. I was told in the letter to report to have my blood test and to later report to the Army Recruiting Station.

I enlisted on March 17, 1943 at 19 years of age. When I went to the army doctors for my physical examination they found me so fit that instead of shoving me into the infantry, they offered me a choice of service- Marine Corps, Navy or Army. I was assigned to the Army. The Army man came up and asked me if I wanted to fly. I said yes. The next day I was at the Pomona Fairgrounds taking shots. Then they issued me Army clothes. After a half night of sleep I was put onto a bus and shipped to Basic Training Center No. 8 in Fresno, California to begin basic training. Basic training was tough. It included running, boxing, throwing hand grenades and exercising. Our group was asked if there were any high school graduates. About six of us raised our hands and we were immediately marched off and put on latrine duty for the whole base. I learned never to volunteer for anything.

After a month of basic training we were told we would be shipped out. We were put on a train. We all wore light-weight khaki pants and shirts. After a day of travel we wound up in Denver, Colorado. This was the first time I had seen snow. It was really cold. We were told to put on our boots and get off the train. When we got off the train we stepped right into slush. Slush is partly melted snow and water that is really cold. After going through this misery we were told to get in four lines and prepare to run. Well here goes. They had me lead the first line. Above the first gate there was a sign that says the best soldiers in the world go through this gate. Boy, what hell after running about a quarter of a mile. We couldn't get any air to breathe, never realizing that Denver is about 15 miles high and we came from a low level. A lot of the gang started to get bloody noses. Finally, we were told to just walk and that's what we did to our barracks.

I was made a squad leader and I did what I was told to do. After going through some tests they found I was suited to be an aviation armorer-gunner and that's what I became. An armorer-gunner is a machine gunner that has to know about bombs, guns and bullets. A couple of days later we were shipped to Buckley Field. Most of the training here was about survival. The training was mostly for the Pacific Islands. What type of worms, bugs and reptiles we could eat to survive. We also learned how to protect ourselves from different poison gases. We also practiced firing 30 caliber and 50 caliber machine guns. After finishing our training at Buckley Field we were shipped back to Denver.

At Denver we went to school again. This was armory school and it took seven weeks. It's about guns, bombs, dynamite and other explosives. It was scary at the start. This man was going to train us about dynamite. We were sitting at our desks and he starts explaining about dynamite. He said it's a powerful explosive and not to get panicky from what he was about to do. He pulled out a dynamite stick and put it over an alcohol flame. Half of the soldiers jumped through the window, the other half through the door. About five of us just went under our

desk. Nothing happened. He explained that dynamite will melt with a flame under it. He told us it takes a spark to make it blow up. Did I get scared? Well, the next time I will wear a diaper.

After the dynamite training we had machine gun training. We fired 50 caliber machine guns. We were taught to take the machine guns apart and to name all of their parts. Then they gave us a challenge. We were put into this room and we had to take the whole gun apart. Then out go the lights and we had to put it back together. There are things I like to touch but screws and gun parts are not among them. It took two days and nights before I passed. It was rough but after practicing over and over it became easy.

We were taken to the gunnery range and had practice firing the machine guns. We started with 30 caliber guns and shot about a thousand rounds each. Then we were sent out to practice with 50 caliber machine guns. These are big and loud. They were one notch down from being cannons. After the training at gunnery practice we were shipped to Salt Lake City, Utah.

After arriving at Salt Lake City we were dropped off at our barracks and told to get some sleep because the next day was Armistice Day. We had to march in a parade in Provo. Well it didn't work out that way. We rode around the city of Provo sitting in the Army truck with our arms folded at attention for about two hours. The people shouted happy messages that made all of us feel happy and joyful. After two days at Salt Lake City we were sent by train to gunnery school at Harlingen, Texas. We were treated real good at the base but when we went into town they were not friendly to soldiers and airmen. We went into a bar and were told that dogs and soldiers were not allowed in the bar. It was a good thing we didn't have our machine guns with us because we were really pissed. We went into town this one time and never again.

It was time for gunnery practice in the air. I went to the area where the airplanes were parked and was approached by a lieutenant and asked if I was a new recruit. I told him yes. He asked if I had ever flown in an airplane before and I answered "no". So he told me to follow him which I did. He said since I had never flown before that he would take it easy with me. He helped me climb into the plane and to belt up to the seat. I checked the machine gun and noticed the bullets were covered with paint. The idea was to see how many of the bullet fired from this gun hit the target.

This pilot was flying real nice and we flew over the Gulf of Mexico. All of a sudden we went into a dive. When we came out of it we started flying upside down. I was hanging by the straps. After flying upside down for about ten minutes we corrected to level flight. I was lucky that I went potty before I got into this plane. In a little while another plane showed up pulling a big white fabric bag. This was the beginning of my airborne gunnery practice. We flew by the bag and the pilot told me to aim at it and not the plane. After shooting at the white bag for an hour we headed back to the landing field. At first I was scared during the flight but by the time we landed I wasn't scared of flying. The only thing I didn't like was flying upside down. After landing we went to see the white bag and it was covered with green holes. That was the color

of the bullets I was firing. I got a good grade. The next day there was a bomber parked at the air field and three of us airmen were loaded into the plane for a flight over the Gulf of Mexico. Again we flew around until a plane towing a white bag appeared. We had waist doors on our bomber and opened them and began firing at the bag. We had 3 different painted bullets on board so we would know which gunner hit the target. I don't remember the color I had but I scored good once again. The soldiers that had lousy scores were dropped out of gunnery school.

After Harlingen I then went to Rattlesnake Field¹¹ in Texas. Here I was made a member of a ten man B-17 crew. I started as a waist gunner in the middle of the plane. Our tail gunner was getting sick on our practice missions so they tried me in the tail. I heard about sea sickness but air sickness in the tail of a B-17 was terrible. When we landed the air surgeon came to me as I got out of the plane. He asked if I would be willing to be a guinea pig on tomorrow's practice mission. I agreed. The next day was a night mission. For it I took a blanket and swallowed three sleeping pills. I was told to lie flat on my back. To get to the tail you had to crawl on your stomach and it wasn't a big deal to roll over onto your back when you were back there. When I laid down I began to worry about how I would react if there was trouble on the plane and I would be too drowsy to bail out. After our practice run we landed. The flight surgeon came into the plane and woke me up. He asked how I felt and I told him "OK". For the next day's practice mission I took only one sleeping pill and was OK. The next day I did not take a pill and was fine riding in the tail. So I was the only man on the crew who could fly in the tail of our plane. We made daily practice flights here for six weeks. I was not nervous flying.

Our crew was then transferred to Alexandria Army Air Base¹² in Louisiana. Here we practiced high altitude flying between 12,000 to 35,000 feet altitude. For these altitudes we used oxygen. It was during this training I had my first fright. We went up to 15,000 feet one day when the alarm came on telling me to prepare to bail out. One of our engines was on fire. At the time, I was not wearing a harness or parachute. I went forward to get into my harness but it would not go over my heavy flight suit. Another crewman tried to help. Luckily for me, the co-pilot announced that the fire went out and the alarm was cancelled.

Although we were trained on how to survive in the jungles in the Pacific Islands, the Army had a change of plans and we were told that we were going to Europe to fight the Germans. It was scary since we were told that the Germans had good soldiers and pilots. We were transferred to Kearney Army Air Base in Nebraska. There we were equipped for overseas and assigned to a B-17G with four engines. We took off and flew towards Goose Bay, Labrador but bad weather forced us to land in Detroit. We had trouble with this landing due to the low ceiling and rain. After five days in Detroit, we took off again but this time headed for Boston. There we loaded our B-17 with silk stockings, candy, bourbon whiskey, beer and lipstick. At this

¹¹ Pyote Air Force Base, Pyote, Texas

¹² It is located in Alexandria, Louisiana and was later named England Air Force Base.

time we were also issued a change of equipment and clothes. We were also processed, meaning we executed wills, insurance and powers of attorney. Our next stop was Labrador, Canada. The ground crews who met us saw our cargo. They called our plane the "Love Plane" like the cruise liner "Love Boat". We spent three days in Labrador. It was a very cold area. We had to wait for the snow to stop falling. When it did we took off again, this time for Belfast in Northern Ireland.

Our flight across the Atlantic was good. When we landed in Belfast we were checked out by the Army Air Corps¹³. They took our equipment and plane away. They then sent us by ferry to England and then by train to London. We arrived in London just in time to see German bombers all over the sky, our first sight of war¹⁴. It was so scary I don't think any of our crew slept that night. They split our crew up and I was sent to Snettisham, England for additional gunnery training. After three weeks in gunnery school our original crew joined up again and was assigned to our bomb group, the 306th in Bedford, England¹⁵. The 306th had a triangle H on the vertical tail. Our bomb squadron was the 369th. We were allowed a few days to get acquainted with the people and the area. After that, we were woken at 3:30am to go on a mission over German occupied France¹⁶. The objective was to bomb German buzz-bomb sites.

On this first bombing mission, I was scared after the plane took off and was given the signal to get into the tail of the plane. It was lonely and spooky back there. When we got to the middle of the English Channel we tested our guns by firing them out with no target. Being in the tail I have two 50 caliber machine guns and they make a lot of noise. After our test firing we continued onto our target. It was a train bridge¹⁷ over a river. We flew into France at an altitude of 10,000 feet. I had never seen flak before since this was my first combat mission. It looked like black bursts coming up all around. We circled four times then let the bombs go. We made a direct hit and turned back to the field at Bedford. We made it back to England without any trouble. When I say we I mean the entire group of 3 squadrons, 63 planes and a total of 630 airmen flying. We made it back to England without any trouble. This flight was considered a milk run to let you know what the war is about. After we landed I could see our plane was hit by lots of flak. There was a hole two feet from where I was sitting that was as big as a fist¹⁸.

Our next mission was to Frankfurt in Ruhr to bomb a railroad station¹⁹. Now this is different. We ran into heavy flak and there were German fighters all over the sky. I saw a couple of B-24s from a squadron behind us on fire and dropping fast out of the sky. Some of

¹³ Entered European Theater of Operations (ETO) on 20 February 1944.

¹⁴ This was during a period of intense German bombing of London coined "The Little Blitz", January 21 to April 19, 1944.

¹⁵ Thurleigh Air Base, Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, England

¹⁶ 28 February 1944 mission over Pas De Calais

¹⁷ This successful mission was attacking "rocket bomb" launch sites. The Germans didn't start using the V-1 "buzz" bomb until after D-Day on 13 June 1944.

¹⁸ The mission report described the flak damage as "slight".

¹⁹ 2 March 1944 mission over Frankfurt, Germany

these planes had airmen with parachutes jumping out, others had none. German fighters also got one of our P-38s that day. With our guns firing you might see one or two German fighter planes on fire going down toward the earth below. We dropped our bombs and got a direct hit on the railroad station. Our ship landed with flak holes in it²⁰.

After we landed we would go to a briefing where the drama really starts. You are asked were the bombs on target? Did you see any of our planes go down? The answer to both questions was yes. They asked the same question about the enemy fighters. Each crew on the 21 planes in the group thinks they are the one that shot a fighter down. I don't think so. If the fighter came from the back side of the group there are 21 x 6 machine guns firing at the fighter. That's 126 machine guns so maybe it was mine, maybe the top turret gunner, maybe the ball turret gunner or perhaps maybe it was a gunner on another plane? Then you are excused and have a late breakfast of 3 shots of Scotch whisky and fried eggs. The flying crew gets fresh fried eggs. The ground crew gets powdered eggs and no booze. There weren't any passes issued to us. This meant there was going to be another mission the next morning. The worst part was going back to our barracks and seeing some of the beds turned up. This means these airmen didn't make it. The saying is that big boys don't cry. Well that's just not true, ask me.

The next morning we were assigned a mission for the first daylight bombing of Berlin²¹. The plan was to fly high over the North Sea and come into Berlin from the north. It was 60° below zero at this altitude and my electric heating unit went haywire, freezing my left foot. It was so cold my window in the tail gunner spot was covered with frost. I had to scratch it away to see anything from 32,000 feet. The clouds and weather forced us to turn back. We made it back from this aborted attack but I believe that 6 bombers with 60 men didn't although there were no flak or enemy fighters. I witnessed two of our bombers collide in the bad weather and explode some distance from our plane. They went down with the crew aboard. It was terrible.

I did not go to the hospital at first to get my foot treated. At 3 AM they came after me for another flight but because of the frozen foot, I was hospitalized for seven days. The foot has been sensitive to cold ever since this mission. I still can't stand cold on it.

The fourth mission was over Berlin in March 1944²². The 306 Bomb Group flew 900 bombers and 300 fighters from Bedford at 7AM. The plan was to go straight to Berlin and straight back. We made the flight all right but lost 67 bombers and many fighters. We lost 268 officers and 402 enlisted men on this flight. The flak was terrific. The resistance of the German Air Force was terrific. They were at full strength. This was the first successful daylight bombing of Berlin. On this mission our plane got over the target and dropped its bomb load before returning to base. When we landed our plane was full of flak holes.

²⁰ Flak damage described as "slight".

²¹ 3 March 1944 mission over Erkner, Germany.

²² 8 March 1944.

After 6 missions²³ we were awakened at 3:30am to attend a briefing. We were told that we were going on a mission to Brunswick, Germany²⁴. Our objective was to bomb the Focke-Wulf airplane parts factory. Brunswick was where the Goering Flying Circus operates from. They have shot down more bombers and fighters than any other German fighter squadron. Brunswick was also surrounded by the best anti-aircraft guns. At the briefing I broke away from the crew. I went to an outhouse and went potty because I was worried and scared. I spent some time walking in circles and thinking that my 7th mission was supposed to be a lucky one. I prayed to God if I was going to die on this mission let me die quickly and not go down on the plane alive.

As the crew got into the plane we talked about being ready, alert and careful. When we took off at 9AM the weather was bad and it was raining. We took off with our full bomb group, 21 bombers of the 306th and also about 300-400 bombers of the 1st Division 8th Army Air Force. We took off and everybody was quiet until we got over the English Channel. As before, we fired our guns but not too much so we would save the bullets for what was waiting for us. Then we gathered into formation and headed for Brunswick.

On this raid I was in the tail as we approached the target here came German fighters. They were all around. I saw two B-17s go down. One plane had parachutes open but the other one without anyone jumping out. We did get over our target, dropped our bombs and turned for home. In 3 minutes we met 30 German fighters. They went through us from the nose and were hidden by the sun, making them hard to see. They knocked down 3 bombers out of the 7 in my own squadron on their first pass. No one bailed out of these three and they didn't have a chance. Then the German fighters came in again. I saw a German fighter coming right at me and my two 50 caliber machine guns. All of a sudden the enemy fire hit our vertical and exploded two feet above my head, tearing a hole big enough for a man to walk through. I was hit with shrapnel from the blast but did not know how badly I was hit. The explosion momentarily knocked me out. When I came to my oxygen mask was disconnected along with my earphones. The first thing I did was reconnect my oxygen line so I could breathe since we were at 26,000 feet altitude. Then our plane went into a dive. I didn't know what was going on since my earphones were disconnected. I didn't know if our plane was crashing, whether anyone was aboard except myself or who else on the crew were dead, wounded or anything.

I went wild. I got the parachute up between my knees and tried to fasten it to the harness. I could only fasten one side because the plane was falling so fast. The descent caused me to be pinned to the armor plate in front of me. Eventually the plane came out of the dive. I struggled to my feet and crept in bent over position to the hatch. I was about to open the door and jump when I realized I'd fastened the parachute to my harness only on one side. I decided

²³ Three more missions were flown previously. 8 March 1944 over Berlin, 20 March 1944 over Frankfurt, Germany and 28 March 1944 over Dijon, France.

²⁴ 29 March 1944 mission over Brunswick, Germany

to jump anyway. Luckily I noticed our plane was flying level. I must have been nuts from the combat and went back to my tail gunner position. There I reconnected my earphones and microphone. I called the pilot and told him I was wounded. The next thing I saw were some German fighters traveling every which way. They were firing on one of our bombers in the distance. It was lagging since it had one motor knocked out and was on fire. I saw one man bail out then the plane went into a vertical dive which meant curtains. I watched it go down and crash. Three German fighters then came at our plane from the rear. We were the weak squadron now since we had lost four out of our 7 bombers, only have three left. As they came on I grabbed my machine guns and started firing. The ammunition belt on my right gun jammed and the gun swung off to the right out of my control. With the guns being locked both on the same pivot, I was unable to aim or fire with the left gun. Somehow I broke the jam loose, I don't know how. This allowed me to fire again with both guns. I let the Germans who were coming at me have everything I had. I got the lead plane. It started on fire, smoking and went down. The other two followed it. I felt weak, dizzy, my eyes were blurry from my wounds. It was also cold at 26,000 feet. The turret gunner said over the phones, "There is a fighter at 9 o'clock". I told him I couldn't see it. He criticized me which made me mad as hell. I called the navigator and asked him how much oxygen pressure there was because I was feeling dizzy. He said, "Never mind that; pay attention to the goddamn fighters". I got sore at him too. Then the pilot called me and asked if I should be replaced. I said "No". I could see the land going away so I knew we were out of enemy territory and on the way home.

I went to the belly of the plane, covered with blood from head to foot with all of my wounds. There were shrapnel holes through my flying suit, through my heater suit, wool undershirt and into the skin of my back. My buttocks were wounded. Two bits of shrapnel went through my flying helmet and lodged in my scalp.

We struggled back to Bedford. We were unable to make a precision landing since our vertical fin was $\frac{3}{4}$ blown away. It was a spooky landing. I think one of the controls was damaged but we made it. There were 69 shrapnel holes in the tail gunner's compartment and I got 6 of them through my skin. The pilot fired a help flare because I was wounded but another plane fired a flare for an emergency and the pilot asked me if I was real bad. He wanted to know if I could wait until after the other airman was picked up. I told him I could wait. Was I trying to be a hero? No. As soon as I got out I was picked up by a truck and taken to the base hospital. Most of the men lost from our outfit that day were on their last mission and were scheduled to return to the U.S.

At the hospital I was brought about six shots of Scotch whisky which I drank real fast. The flight surgeon came and checked me out. This doctor told me they were not set up for the type of operation that I needed. I would be moved the next morning to a hospital about 50 miles away. That evening the doctor came in and gave me some pain pills and some sleeping pills. In a short time I was asleep. In the middle of the night I was woken by a male nurse

fondling my penis. I grabbed him with my hands and tried to strangle him. He started to cry like a baby and begged me not to turn him in since he would be court martialed. Maybe he thought what he had done would get him the death penalty.

I was taken by ambulance the next morning to the distant hospital and taken to this ward that had nothing but men that had operations for piles²⁵. I don't think any of them were airmen. They x-rayed me and dug out the pieces of shrapnel. After staying in the ward for about four days our crew pilot came in and asked me if I was ready to fly because I was needed. I told him I was never operated on and was still in my flight fatigues. When he pulled the sheets back and saw that my clothes and sheets were covered with blood, he blew his top. He went to the main office and raised all kinds of hell. I was told by a nurse that the doctors were shacking up or were in town.

A doctor finally arrived and they put me on a gurney and took me to an operating table. I had to have a spinal but there wasn't anybody there that knew how to do this so everybody was in an uproar. There was a male nurse who said that he had done one before. He said he was an osteopath doctor when he was drafted but could not practice medicine in the service. They laid me on the operating table on my belly and started to give me a shot. He didn't know what he was doing. He kept giving me these shots with six people holding my arms and legs. I was screaming over and over. Then I got a shot in my arm and was out. When I woke up there were a general and another officer standing next to the bed. They asked if I would stand up. I thought to myself that I was going to be executed. Instead they saluted me and put a Purple Heart on my pajamas. I felt strong and saluted them back. As they left, everybody in the ward clapped and that made me feel better yet. Until this day I still cannot tolerate being given a shot.

After a couple of days the pilot returned and said that I was needed. With two drainage tubes on my butt I was taken back to the air base. I don't remember the next mission²⁶ except that I returned from it. I was terribly nervous. I was in a hell of a mental state, resentful and still ill from my wounds. Our plane returned with flak holes again but I didn't witness any of our planes going down.

I had a seven day leave. Like a damn fool I went to London while they were experiencing one of their worst German air raids. I saw many bombs go off and buildings falling 6 or 8 blocks away. When I returned to the barracks half of the beds were turned back. This meant that many of the fellows I knew were missing in action, about 10 of them. I can't even recall the names of members of our crew. I ought to remember them. I can only recall the names of George King, Boyd Bennett, Vernon Michaelitz, Billy Yager and Jenack.²⁷

²⁵ Hemorrhoids

²⁶ April 25, 1944 mission over Nancy, France.

²⁷ On his first mission the crew were Lt. F.R. Warner, pilot; Lt. C.W. McBride, co-pilot, Lt. G.M. Belknap, navigator; Lt. H.F. Jenack, bombardier; Sgt. G.J. King, radio; Sgt. V.V. Michaelitz, top turret gunner; Sgt. B.W. Bennett, ball

Before the Big Invasion we went on another mission over France to bomb bridges²⁸. It was cloudy, rainy and windy. We dropped some bombs but it was too dark for me to see any hits. The raid was aborted and we turned around. On our way home the navigator thought we were over the English Channel so we dropped down to a lower altitude. By God, we flew right over Dunkirk where the Germans had a lot of guns. I was now a waist gunner. The pilot flew the plane lower than usual because of bad weather. When we reached Dunkirk the flak came up all around our plane as far as I could see.

After that experience I went into town, Bedford. I never imagined that after such a narrow escape they would send my crew on a mission the next day. I stayed in town until 3AM then came back and went to bed. Soon I heard footsteps of the guy who wakes everyone up who is to go on a mission. My crew was awakened. I had no sleep. We were ordered on a mission to Leipzig, Germany²⁹. My knees were bothering me and the pilot had me change positions with the waist gunner. We took off in the dark, 4-5AM. It was not until we were well on our way that I noticed I had forgotten my parachute. As we were nearing the target area a big rain and wind storm hit us throwing the bomber up and down, side to side. I was holding a .50 caliber machine gun that was attached to the plastic window. The wind was so severe that the machine gun slipped out of my hands and busted the window. The cold air rushing in slapped me. I got hold of the machine gun and protected my side in case any German fighters came along. It started to be calm when all of a sudden there was an explosion as a piece of shrapnel came through the plastic window and severed the taut cable above my head. I was knocked out. The radio man came to me and helped me. The cable that broke above my head was important to fly the plane. When I woke up we were in a nose dive. Luckily for us the pilot turned on the automatic pilot and regained control of the aircraft. After we straightened out we realized the rest of our outfit had gone ahead. We could not identify ourselves and were in danger of being shot down by our own people as we crossed the channel to England. When we reached our emergency base two hours late near London the pilot told asked if any of us wanted to bail out. We had the dangerous job of setting the plane down with the automatic pilot. We all decided to stay with the plane. We dumped our bombs in the English Channel and flew round and round until we were out of gas. The crew went into the radio room and prepared for a crash landing. We crouched, locked hands over the back of our necks and put our heads between the knees. When we came down to the runway the plane hit the ground pretty hard but the wheels didn't collapse. Still we went all over the field, off and on the landing area. The landing was terrible. When we finally came to a stop, ambulances and fire trucks came around to check us. I was the only one that was injured with a big lump on my

turret gunner; Sgt. R.W. Irwin, right waist gunner; Sgt. W.M. Yeager, left waist gunner and Sgt. A.W. Tolmachoff, tail gunner. All of these airmen survived the war.

²⁸ 27 May 1944 mission to Fecamp.

²⁹ I have not seen a report for this mission.

head. After we got off the plane the crew came over to the pilot and hugged him for saving our lives. To land a big plane with automatic pilot is very hard to do. I was taken to the hospital and checked out with a bruise but no concussion. When we returned to our barracks we found our beds turned down since we had been reported missing in action. Others had seen what had happened with our plane in a nose dive. They had cleaned out everything we owned from our barracks including our clothes. When a crewman was considered lost they clean out all of your belongs quickly to keep the thieves from stealing your possessions. They send what they collect back to your folks. The crew was given a three day leave and all of us took off to London. In London we were treated good. We had blue patches behind our wings, ribbons and medals.

After making a mission on D-Day³⁰ I was made into a night guard with a sub-machine gun to prevent sabotage. One night two men approached me. I demanded "Who goes there?" They continued to walk towards me even though I had my gun raised at them. Again I demanded an answer but they never replied. As they got closer I could see they were dressed as American officers. When they finally came up to me I was reprimanded for not shooting at them! Talk about being between a rock and a hard place!³¹

Almost 61 of our planes were rammed by German fighters including ours. We had a collision with a Focke-Wulf fighter plane that sent us into a diving spin.³² We had a Polish pilot³³ (American citizen) and this man was strong. He knew what he was doing and the bailout bells were ringing but nobody bailed out. I pulled the escape hatch and the door opened but the opening was too small for me wearing heavy sheepskin clothing to bail out. The plane that rammed us hit the vertical tail. To be a "tree top straggler" and fly from Berlin seemed impossible but we did it. How our pilot pulled us out only God sitting next to him knows.

The next mission I remember was to France³⁴ and the target was a bridge. About 36 planes were on this mission and each group had a different target. We flew in at 12,000 feet but it was too cloudy to drop our bombs. We started back and our lead navigator took us over a German air field. German guns started firing at us. Our bombardier³⁵ was wounded in the knee. If they had hit one of our bombs it would have been goodbye. As we headed back for base I saw a big explosion below us. I never found out what it was. On three occasions when returning from missions, just as we started to cross the Channel back to England, a B-17, the same kind of plane as ours, appeared. It would gain on us and I notified the pilot about its presence. He said if it comes closer start firing at it, thinking perhaps the Germans had one of

³⁰ I could not find a report for a mission on 6 June 1944.

³¹ This incident regarding guard duty was told to me whenever I asked about a mission on D-Day.

³² The June 21, 1944 mission to Berlin noted a dented wing due to a collision with another aircraft.

³³ Lieutenant W.J. Gribovicz, aka Captain Walter J Gribb (1919-1982)

³⁴ 25 June 1944 mission to Joigny.

³⁵ Lt. Dwain A Esper Jr (1922-2022)., navigator on this mission. He was the son of a Hollywood movie producer. I had the pleasure of meeting him at the 2018 reunion of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association.

our planes. Each time that B-17 would peel off, go back into France or Holland, just when we reached the English Channel. I still don't know where that plane came from or who it belonged to. When we arrived back at the base all of our bedding and clothes were gone. Witnesses in the other planes said they saw our plane go down with no chutes and we were presumed to be dead.

On another mission to Berlin the sky was black from German flak. A Messerschmidt came onto our tail. His own flak knocked him down.

The doctor after this mission told me to be careful and gave me 10 days of vacation. I went to Scotland. When I came back we made a raid near Switzerland³⁶. It was a bad weather trip. I was flying in a waist gunner position and the plane was in a terrible storm. The machine gun that I was holding came out of my hand and busted the whole plastic window. I thought I might go through it.

After a few days of this I am back in the tail of a B-17³⁷ to support our ground forces for the breakout of Normandy. In our briefing we were told that we would come to a road lit with a line of flares. The bombs were to be dropped beyond this line. After we dropped our bombs, being in the tail, I was in a good position to observe where they fell. I could see that our bombs were hitting on the wrong side of the flare line. So what happened? We killed General McNair³⁸.

After we made the raid when we dropped the bombs on the wrong side of the flares, the flight surgeon grounded me for severe psychoneurosis. Because I was wounded and didn't have as many missions as the rest of my crew, I didn't go back to the United States. I only had 19 of the 21 missions and was grounded.

After being hospitalized for two weeks, I was put on kitchen police duty. After this I was given a sickle to chop weeds around the offices. When I chopped weeds I put on my jacket with my stripes, medals, Purple Heart, Air Medal and Wings. When the new crews came up and asked what I did to get a job like this, I told them frost bite and getting wounded. The next thing I know I'm shipped to Snettisham on the Welsh North Sea area³⁹. It was colder than hell. I was a gunnery instructor for new gunners, navigators and bombardiers. They would ask me if the bombing raids were scary. I told them no but I told them a lie. I was later transferred to train how to locate land mines after the war in Europe ended. I was on my knees with a dagger poking the ground looking for unarmed mines.

I was then transferred to the Third Army Air Force Headquarters and appeared before a medical officer. Later I was transferred to Stone, England and then ordered back to the United

³⁶ 25 June 1944 mission over Joigny, France

³⁷ 24 July 1944 mission over St Lo. The mission report shows Andrew in the left waist gunner position.

³⁸ General Lesley McNair was killed the following day, 25 June 1944 by bombs from Allied planes. Since this general's death was a well-kept secret during the war I am surprised that my father knew about it. I am also sad that he never found out that his mission did not cause this death as he assumed.

³⁹ Actually on the North Sea coast of England, not Wales

States. After three weeks I was sent to Glasgow, Scotland and was put on a Dutch ship called the Nieuw Amsterdam⁴⁰ headed back to the states. This was in December 1944. We were chased by a German submarine above and below the equator. I was berthed below the waterline and was worried about being hit by a torpedo. It took us 6 days to cross the Atlantic. I was relieved and happy when I finally saw the Statue of Liberty.

First I was sent to a camp in New Jersey. Then I was transferred to Camp Beale, California. After three days I was sent to Santa Ana Regional Hospital and diagnosed with severe psychoneurosis. There I was hospitalized for 30 days. I had an EEG and sodium pentothal. The doctors talked to me every day. I was transferred to Santa Ana Convalescent Hospital where I was treated for 5 months. During this stay I had strep throat and was unable to swallow. Finally I was transferred to Victorville Army Air Base. My three months at Victorville included lots of treatment and eventually resulted in a medical discharge. I separated from service on October 17, 1945.

My other brothers entered the service during World War II. My brother Jack was drafted into the Army infantry and was sent to the Pacific battlefields where he saw action. Mike was drafted into the Coast Guard. Al was drafted but was rejected as 4F. He still wanted to serve so was assigned to Army Grave Registration. He was sent to Europe and his duty was identifying the dead in the battlefield. When the war was over in Europe he was sent to the Philippines to dig out soldiers that were murdered by Japanese soldiers during the Bataan Death March. He should have received a medal for going through all the misery he went through. Walter was drafted into the Coast Artillery and I was drafted into the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Jack came back with malaria. After a few months back in a U.S.A. hospital he was healed. Al came back with a chip on his shoulder. Mike came back without a problem. Walter came back with problems. I returned wounded and partly disabled. I keep thinking of our President Clinton who was a draft dodger during the Vietnam War. It makes me sick to think about it.

In all I put in 19 rough missions. I was told a lot of airmen were dead after three missions. I was pretty close to dying. I am proud to be an American and I am glad I survived the war.

⁴⁰ In 1993 my mother organized a family Alaskan cruise. When we walked up to the Holland American cruise ship my father said "Hmmm, Nieuw Amsterdam. This is the ship that brought me back from England". We thought he was losing his mind. The first thing he did after boarding the ship was to walk up to a ship's officer and ask him about the history of the ship. The officer affirmed that although this ship did not exist in the 1940s, a sister ship did and was used for troop transport during the war. I am still looking for documentation of his voyage home.

EPILOGUE

My parents both graduated from Theodore Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles in the summer of 1941 but did not know each other. They were introduced after the war by sisters in each family who had married brothers. They had not dated very long when they were married on August 10, 1945. Since the United States was still at war with Japan and VJ Day would be four days later, my father was required to be in uniform since he was an active soldier. This caused a dilemma because the Molokan sect, being pacifists, did not allow military uniforms in their church. Luckily one of the lay ministers, William Samarin, understood this circumstance and performed the wedding with my father in uniform.

My maternal grandparents lived in Lancaster, CA at the time and my parents moved there for their support. My brother was born in Lancaster. My father then got a job at Southwestern Shuttlers in South Pasadena, CA. My parents purchased and moved into a house in the El Sereno area of Los Angeles. I was born while living in this house. In 1955 my parents purchased a house in the unincorporated area of San Gabriel and my sister Dru Ann first lived in it. My father along with other employees purchased the shutter business and renamed it Louisiana Louvres, Inc. After time, my father's partners left the business and he brought in his brother Jack as a partner.

My father worked long hours and often seven days a week for the success of his business. He did not often speak about his service during the war but would talk about it when asked. Although he worked hard he also found time to enjoy horse racing at Santa Anita Park, weekends in Las Vegas and camping during holidays on the Kern River. He was also a manager for several of my youth baseball teams. He could throw a knuckleball that was impossible to catch. I wonder if Pearl Harbor prevented him from having a professional baseball career.

During the 1990s my father's memory declined and he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. My parents sold the house in San Gabriel and moved to San Luis Obispo to be close to my sister who was their caregiver. My father died in 2004, my brother in 2011, my mother in 2014 and my sister in 2015.

APPENDIX

ANDREW TOLMACHOFF MILITARY DIARY

23 February 1942

Mother's Letter of Consent for Enlistment of a Minor signed by Esther Tolmachoff

10 March 1943

Andrew Tolmachoff enlisted in Army at Camp Hyde, California

28 May 1943

Letter of Recommendation received from T.F. Moorhouse Machine Works in Los Angeles sent to Buckley Field, Colorado

21 June 1943

Letter of Recommendation received from Theodore Roosevelt High School Principal sent to Lowry Field, Colorado

13 July 1943

Diploma from Aircraft Armorers (Bombardment) Technical School

17 July 1943

Letter from chaplain sent to Esther Tolmachoff saying Andrew is attending worship services

12 January 1944

General Power of Attorney signed to Mary Tolmachoff at Alexandria Army Air Base, Alexandria, Louisiana

19 February 1944

Arrived at air station in England and assigned to 306th Bomb Group and 369th Bomb Squadron

20 February 1944

Reported to European Theater of Operations (ETO)

28 February 1944

Mission(1) over Pas De Calais in tail gunner position piloted by F.R. Warner. Twelve 500 pound bombs loaded. All dropped and hit on target. This was a successful bombing of V-1 launch sites along the French coast.

2 March 1944

Mission(2) over Frankfurt in tail gunner position piloted by F.R. Warner. Twelve 500 pound bomb loaded and all dropped. Flak was inaccurate due to the chaff and no enemy fighters were encountered. The bombs appeared to strike in the dock area east of town.

3 March 1944

Mission(3) over Erkner in tail gunner position piloted by F.R. Warner. Forty-two M47A1 bombs loaded and all returned to base. This mission was scrubbed due to bad weather.

8 March 1944

Mission(4) over Berlin piloted by F.R. Warner. This was a very successful mission bombing the Erkner Ball Bearing Works.

20 March 1944

Mission(5) over Frankfurt in tail gunner position piloted by F.R. Warner. Forty 100 pound bombs loaded. Thirty-eight bombs returned. The mission encountered heavy clouds making navigation difficult. On the return they passed south of Paris and luckily made it back without encountering heavy flak. It is not known what happened to the two bombs that were dropped.

27 March 1944

Received Air Medal Award

28 March 1944

Mission(6) over Dijon in tail gunner position piloted by P.C. Jorgenson. Twelve 500 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped. A successful operation bombing the airdrome. No flak or enemy fighters reported and all airplanes returned undamaged.

29 March 1944

Mission(7) over Brunswick in tail gunner position piloted by W.B. Hilton. Ten 100 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped. The objectives were the Waggum airdrom and adjacent works but poor visibility changed the mission to a drop upon the town. On the return trip the fighter escort disappeared and the squadron was attacked by sixteen FW-190s. Two planes were shot down and Andrew was wounded in the buttocks.

1 April 1944

Promotion from Sergeant to Staff Sergeant.

9 April 1944

Received Purple Heart Award.

15 April 1944

Letter sent to Mary Tolmachoff saying brother was wounded.

21 April 1944

Discharged from hospital back to duty.

25 April 1944

Mission(8) over Nancy in tail gunner position piloted by P.C. Jorgenson. Forty-two M47A1 bombs loaded and all were dropped. The airdrome was the target. No flak or fighters were encountered.

27 April 1944

Letter from Brigadier General Dunlop to Mary Tolmachoff that brother is convalescing.

1 May 1944

Telegram to Andrew W. Tolmachoff from Mary Tolmachoff "Don't be an Arrap"

27 May 1944

Mission(9) over Fecamp in tail gunner position piloted by P.C. Jorgenson. Twelve 500 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped in the water. The target was a gun emplacement and most

of the bombs on this mission fell into the water 1 ½ miles from the target. No AA fire or fighters were encountered.

6 June 1944

D-Day. Although Andy writes he flew a mission this day, no crew interrogation form has been found indicating so. There is one missing form for the 3rd mission that day for Pilot McKinney aircraft 42-107153.

11 June 1944

Mission(10) over St. Andre de l'Eure in right waist gunner position piloted by A.P. Kata. Sixteen 250 pound bombs loaded and all returned. The high groups lost sight of the low groups in the clouds and were afraid to drop bombs in fear of hitting planes below. No bombs were dropped on this mission.

21 June 1944

Mission(11) over Berlin piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. All aircraft bombed. This mission struck the city and Tempelhof Airdrome. Dense contrails over the target caused confusion making instrument flying necessary. The Gribovicz plane had a slight collision with another causing a dented wing. AA fire over Berlin was intense.

22 June 1944

Mission(12) over Ghent in right waist gunner position piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. Twelve 500 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped. The objective was the railway marshalling yard. No enemy fighters were encountered, only light flak after crossing the coast.

24 June 1944

Mission(13) over Bremen in right waist gunner position piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. Twelve 500 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped. The target was an oil refinery. Due to weather it was not clear if the target was successfully bombed. Many of the planes were damaged from the moderate flak encountered including the Gribovicz plane.

25 June 1944

Mission(14) over Joigny in gunner position piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. Two 2000 pound bombs loaded and all were dropped. The target was a railroad bridge and photographs indicated a good concentration on the target. Although meager AA fire was encountered, Lt. Dwain Esper, bombardier on the Gribovicz plane, was slightly wounded by flak.

4 July 1944

Awarded Oak Leaf Cluster.

8 July 1944

Mission(15) over Amiens in right waist gunner position piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. Two 2000 pound bombs loaded and all bombs returned. The targets were bridges in the area but clouds that day obscured the whole area preventing any bombing. Near Dunkerque the Gribovicz plane was hit by flak which shot out the rudder and elevator trim tabs, control locking cables and right side oxygen system. The plane was flown back on automatic flight control equipment.

9 July 1944

Mission(16) over Angers in right waist gunner position piloted by W.J. Gribovicz. Two 2000 pound bombs loaded and all bombs were dropped. Railroad bridges in the area were targeted. Pictures showed hits on a bridge south of Angers on the Maine River and another at a bridge at Le Creusil. No enemy aircraft were encountered and the flak was meager. All planes returned undamaged.

24 July 1944

Mission(17) over St. Lo in left waist gunner position piloted by R.D. Buttorff. Thirty-eight 100 pound bombs loaded and all bombs were dropped on the western edge of La Chapelle village. This mission was the start of Operation Cobra to destroy a Panzer division in front of the Army Seventh Division, causing the Breakthrough. Although a signal went out to abort the mission due to bad weather, this group did not receive the word. They ended up finding a hole in the clouds and were able to drop their bombs. The next day a larger carpet bomb mission was flown into the area west of St. Lo with greater success.

30 July 1944

Awarded Oak Leaf Cluster.

28 July 1945

Received ribbons and awards certification.

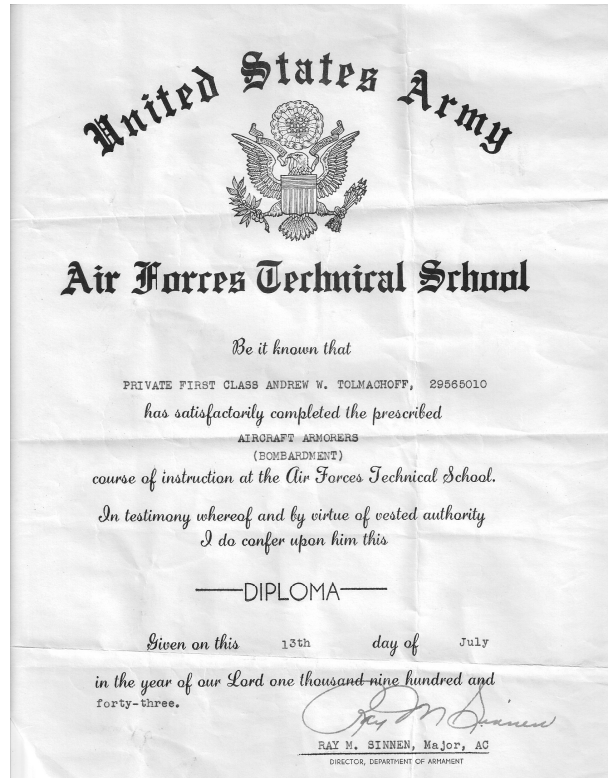


Figure 1- Diploma earned for completing armorers school.

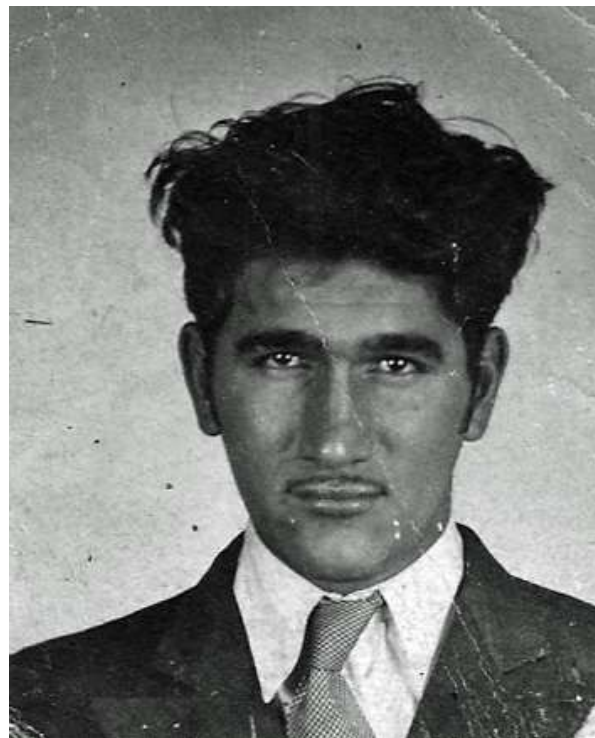


Figure 2- A photo taken during training on using disguises to look like a local person if shot down behind enemy lines.

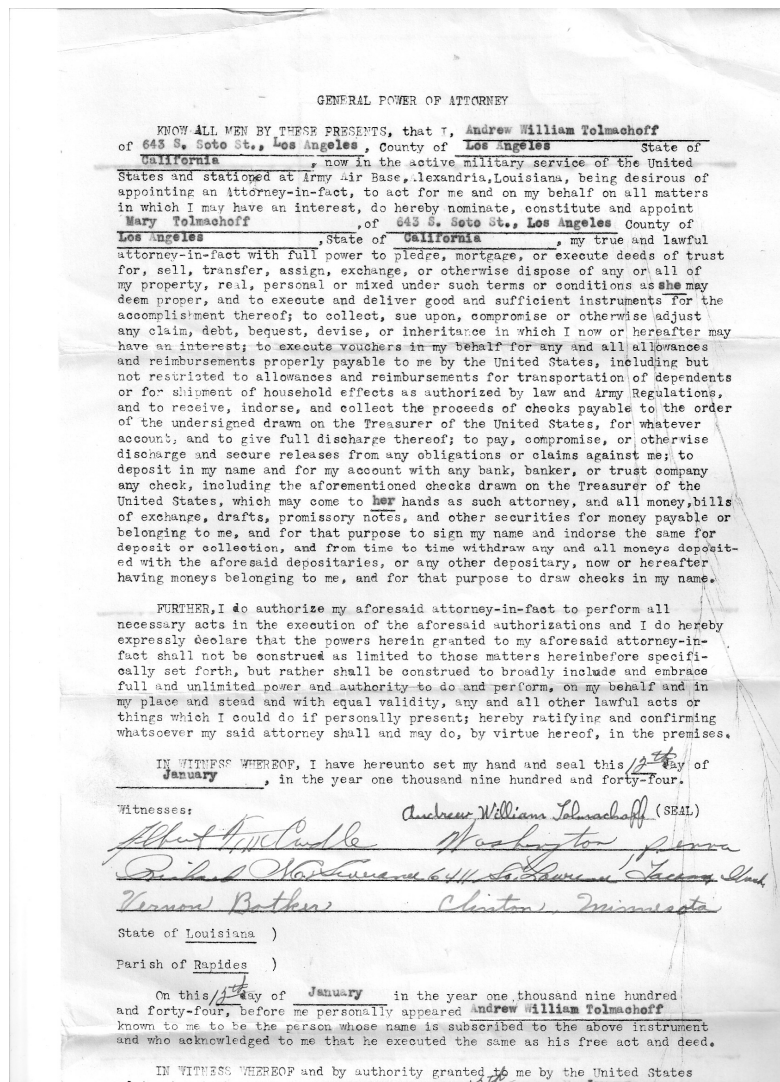


Figure 3- A Power of Attorney was granted to his sister, Mary Tolmachoff, prior to him leaving for England.



Figure 4- Brunswick Raid on 29 March 1944 taken from B-17 piloted by William B. Hilton. Andrew W. Tolmachoff was wounded two minutes after this photo was taken.



Figure 5- Brunswick Raid on 29 March 1944 taken from ball turret of B-17 piloted by William B. Hilton.

IN REPLY
REFER TO Tolmachoff, Andrew W.
PC-N ETO 031

WAR DEPARTMENT ^{AKM}
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON

15 April 1944.

Miss Mary Tolmachoff,
643 South Soto Street,
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Miss Tolmachoff:

It is with deep regret that I must confirm my recent telegram in which you were informed that your brother was wounded. As reports on our wounded are prepared under the adverse conditions of battle, they are of necessity brief and do not give the nature of the wound.

It may be comforting to you to know that our soldiers are given the best possible medical care by some of this country's finest doctors who are assigned to the many excellent hospitals maintained at our overseas bases.

Theater Commanders submit periodic reports of progress on all hospitalized wounded, injured or seriously ill patients. Based on these reports, the War Department will keep you informed of his progress.

In order that mail may reach him as soon as possible, you should use the following temporary address until he is released from the hospital or a change of address is furnished you:

Sgt. Andrew W. Tolmachoff, 39,565,010 (Hosp.),
Central Postal Directory,
APO 640, c/o Postmaster,
New York, New York.

Since the above information is furnished only to you as the emergency addressee, it is requested that you inform all interested relatives and friends.

It is my earnest hope that news of his release from the hospital will soon be forthcoming.

Sincerely yours,

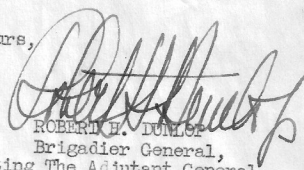

ROBERT H. DWYER
Brigadier General,
Acting The Adjutant General.

Figure 4- Letter to Mary Tolmachoff informing her of brother being wounded.



Figure 5- Probably an early crew photo. The faces look younger by years than the one below after facing combat.



Figure 6- The Paul Jorgensen crew.



Figure 7- William M. Yager, Andrew W. Tolmachoff and Boyd F. Bennett. This photograph was probably taken after 1 April 1944 since Andrew and Boyd appear with Staff Sergeant stripes.



Figure 8- Andrew W. Tolmachoff and Boyd F. Bennett.



Figure 9- Andrew W. Tolmachoff, location probably Snettisham Gunnery Range.



Figure 10- Andrew W. Tolmachoff at Snettisham Gunnery Range.



Figure 11- Andrew W. Tolmachoff with unknown boy at unknown location.

TOLMACHOFF ANDREW W S-SGT 39565010

AARS #4, SAAAB, Santa Ana, Calif. 28 July 1945.

I certify that the Service Record of the above named Em indicates he is entitled to wear ribbons and awards checked "X"

☒	DEC	(-) OLC to DEC
☒	AIR MEDAL	(2) OLC to Air Medal
☒	PURPLE HEART	(-) OLC to Purple Heart
☐	GOOD CONDUCT	
☐	AMERICAN THEATER	AMERICAN DEFENSE

ARMS Form #35-24 (Rev 12 Apr 45)

	Asiatic-Pacific Theater with () Bronze Stars
☒	EAME Theatre with (3) Bronze Stars
	PRESIDENTIAL CITATION with () OLC to Unit Cit
☒	AVN BADGE: Air Crew Member (X) Aerial Gunner (X)
☒	Overseas Service Bars (1)
	Other Awards: <i>James A. Smith Jr.</i>

James A. Smith
Major, Air Corps
Personnel Officer

Figure 5- These cards show the awards that Andrew Tolmachoff was authorized to wear state-side.



S/Sgt Andrew Tolmachoff, Sqdn I returnee: “No—let young men who are getting married and want to set up a home out first.”

Figure 13- A newspaper interviewed him regarding releasing soldiers from their military duty.



Figure 14- Andrew Tolmachoff with his future bride, Ruth Ednoff.



Figure 6- Ruth and Andrew Tolmachoff at the 306th Bombardment Group Reunion Banquet on 31 October 1996. This is about the time that Andrew was writing his memoirs and about the same time family members were noticing signs of dementia.

REFERENCES

Glass, W.W., A. B. Richardson, J.M. Kavanaugh, H.L.P. Moore, (2004) 369TH Squadron Combat Diary, 1942-1945, 306th Bomb Group

Mission Reports. www.306bg.us