UPDATED 2ND EDITION*

SAINTS OF VALOR

MORMON MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

Sherman L. Fleek

GREG KOFFORD BOOKS

Saints of Valor

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Mormon Medal of Honor Recipients

Updated Second Edition

Sherman L. Fleek

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Dedicated to all Americans
who served in the Armed Forces,
during war and peace,
and especially to those who
returned home scarred or who
"gave the last full measure of devotion."

Contents

Part 3
The Cold War

Part 4
The War on Terror

Foreword

Robert C. Freeman

This book is expressly dedicated to telling the stories of Latter-day Saints who have received this nation's highest honor: the Medal of Honor. While surprisingly few in number, the individual stories of these heroes are anything but insignificant. These accounts are powerful and poignant, producing a keener appreciation for the notion of noble and selfless service. The scriptural ideal, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13), has no apter fulfillment than in the context of war. In the case of the nine Latter-day Saints whose heroic actions are vividly recounted by the accomplished military historian Sherman L. Fleek, five survived to return home and four did not. All were nonetheless prepared to give their lives for friends both known and unknown.

There is an obvious and understandable question that must be asked in connection with a volume such as this. It is simply this, "What of the countless others who have deserved such attention but who, through the vicissitudes of history, never had their day of fame?" It is true that many other fallen warriors and others merited this decoration. Likely some were Latter-day Saints. Of course, for various reasons the valor of some is not given its due attention. There are always issues of race, religion, and a variety of other cul-

tural or political issues that are obstacles for what otherwise ought to be. In the end, we are left to embrace the eternal perspective that, in the case of the unnamed hero, like the fallen and unidentified soldier, daily remembered in our nation's best-known military cemetery, Arlington, they are surely known to God.

On the topic of Latter-day Saints in the military, the stories recounted in this volume represent a distinctive pinnacle; but the pattern of Latter-day Saints' service in wartime has been remarkable, from the experience of the Mormon Battalion down to the present day. Sherman Fleek tells the stories of five Medal of Honor recipients from World War II, two from Vietnam, and one each from World War I and Korea. Each story is unique. Each is worthy of preserving for Latter-day Saints both old and young and of telling again and again through the generations that follow.

The reality is that some of these individuals were not strong in the gospel at the time of their youthful service. One recipient didn't join the LDS Church until well after his service in the military concluded. Wisely, the determination was made to commemorate in this volume all soldiers who were Latter-day Saints by any definition and at any point in their lives who received this decoration. As a military historian, Sherman Fleek is not primarily focused on the spiritual qualities of these individuals. Instead, their achievement was valor in combat. Little in war is inspiring, but even with war's horrors, these gripping combat accounts can indeed inspire. As a Latter-day Saint himself, he wants to preserve the legacy of other Latter-day Saints in the military for us today and for those yet unborn.

The author has exerted great efforts to discover relevant government, military, and family records from which to reconstruct the stories of these men. The main focus has been to emphasize the circumstances and events for which their gallantry received the nation's highest military award. As we consider these heroes, we should think also of the families they left behind. Only three were married at the time of their service in the military. Most were young and single with bright hopes and futures ahead of them. Given their exhibition of courage and valor, they would have led

full and contributing lives in society. But destiny willed it otherwise. We are simply left to be grateful for their gift of courage.

One of those who returned home, and the first Latter-day Saint to be a Medal of Honor recipient was Thomas Neibaur. Private Neibaur's story is particularly notable because through it we see that sometimes heroes are forgotten. On his return home from World War I, he was given a hero's welcome, but soon his celebrated status dimmed and he found himself left without means of gainful employment. Great struggles came to his family, and soon he was left a widower with several children to raise. Sadly, he was ill equipped to navigate the dreadful days of the Great Depression. He became a casualty of this terrible economic time like many other Americans, whereas twenty years earlier the Germans could not defeat him on the battlefield. Ultimately he returned his Medal of Honor to Washington, D.C., as a protest with the terse observation that the medal couldn't feed his family. The remainder of his life is one of pathos, cut short at the age of forty-four.

Following Thomas Neibaur's nearly unmatched heroism, eight other Mormons have been honored and recognized. For four of them, this recognition came after they had laid their lives on the altar of freedom and, as Abraham Lincoln declared, "gave the last full measure of devotion." Americans of other religious denominations also contributed to this gallant list of heroes. These nine Mormons are now also singled out for their service and valor "above and beyond the call of duty."

While this story is perhaps not unique in the annals of military history, for all of us it is a sobering reminder that we should never tire of paying tribute to the returning warrior who gives so much and asks for so little in return. At Margraten Cemetery in the Netherlands, established for American soldiers after World War II, appears the poignant reminder: "We gave our tomorrows so you could have your todays." And, oh how these men gave.

August 2011
Brigham Young University

Introduction

August 1967

Some days I recall this memory as though it were yesterday. The scene is vivid and alive with all the sights, sounds, and color of real life—even more now when looking back to that time using the spectacles of maturity, wisdom, and experience. Yet it was more than forty years ago; and I was young—a month short of twelve years old.

I recall very clearly that it was a typical lazy Utah summer morning. I was still drowsy and half asleep as morning broke bright and sunny in this desert land. It was still cool before the penetrating summer rays burned into your brain, baked your skin to a cherry red, and left your mouth parched by the oven-like heat. The Wasatch Range cast its purple shadow down upon a thin strip of flat valley land between the mountains' high grandeur and placid Great Salt Lake a few miles to the west of my home of Layton.

I was always a "morning person" even as a young kid. But this particular morning I was still in bed even though the sun had already risen from its slumber to exact activity from all living creatures.

As I lay there, I heard footfalls, the heavy steps of my father coming up the steep stairs of our split-level house. I heard the creak of the door and saw his roundish, pudgy face poke in. My older brother Roger was fast asleep in his twin bed next to mine.

"Sherman," he said in his normal voice—he did not think to whisper. "Do you want to go out to breakfast?" he asked with a half smile. "At the Sands Café?" Wow I thought! I jumped to the floor, smiled, nodded, and began to jam my feet into my shoes. Who needed socks? I slept in my shirt and cut-off shorts. Why change? It was summer, and I was a child of the sun.

As we climbed in our 1957 Pontiac station wagon, Dad looked at me through his dark sunglasses. Glenn Ottis Fleek—a thirty-year career veteran himself—always wore sunglasses a lot, even inside, because he had lost an eye and sunlight bothered his remaining eye.

"Before we go to breakfast, we need to do one thing," he said.

"Run an errand?" I asked.

"No. Attend a ceremony."

I sat back in the seat and looked out the window, "*Drat!*"

Twenty minutes later I stood among forty or so other people surrounding a large thing, covered with a white sheet or cloth. There were some men in blue uniforms, Air Force uniforms, and others in Sunday dress, suits; the few women and girls wore nice dresses. It seemed like a church thing, but it was not. Dad always dressed nicely, slacks and collared shirts. As for me, who cares? I was only eleven and this was not my thing anyway.

There were flags on staffs and rifles on military shoulders—an honor guard with no shooting. It was not a funeral. There were flowers on stands and a huge red, white, and blue ribbon tied around that strange thing shrouded by the cloth. I had no idea what it all meant. All I cared about was breakfast at Sands Café just down the road on Main Street in Clearfield. Yet there we stood at South Clearfield Elementary School.

The pledge of allegiance, and words and more words, speeches, the ribbon cut, the cloth removed from the waist-high monument, shaking hands, laughs and smiles; and then, finally we were off in our Pontiac.

Though I was not terribly interested in the entire affair, as we drove away, I asked Dad a question: "Why was the main guy—the guy they talked so much about—why was he wearing a medal around his neck? What was that thing?"

Dad looked at me, his eyes peeking over his sunglasses, and said, "Sherman, that is the Medal of Honor."

The Medal of Honor. I repeated the title.

"Who was that guy?" I ventured one more question as my stomach growled.

"Major Bernard Fisher. They just dedicated the park in his honor."

* * *

That was my first memory about the Medal of Honor, the highest decoration and honor the United States can bestow on a person. More than forty years later, retired Colonel "Bernie" Fisher is still with us, living quietly in Idaho, and well into his octogenarian years.

At age eleven I did not know or realize that Hugh B. Brown, a member of the LDS Church First Presidency, was in attendance that day representing the Church. Nor did I know that "Major" Brown had served in the Canadian Army during World War I. His attendance demonstrated a thin line in Utah—the Church and its unique connection in all civil and military affairs in Utah. Mormons as a people and the institution of the Church have always been deeply patriotic, despite historic experiences when they were victimized by state militias and government officials. They maintained that patriotism even as the rest of the nation plunged into bitter opposition to the Vietnam War. The Mormon people have never discarded their ideals of service, commitment, and duty for popular movements. President Brown was a symbol of that collective commitment. That connection is a central part of the story this book tells: LDS servicemen and their valor.

Since that time as a citizen, a professional soldier, and a military historian I have come to learn the incredible significance of the Medal of Honor. As all Americans should, I have the greatest respect, not only for the decoration, but also for the men who received this supreme award of valor.[1] This highest of all American awards and decorations, it is unlike other prominent awards or forms of recognition because it means that the recipient has performed an act of valor at great personal risk and peril. Since its establishment in 1861 during the Civil War, 3,477 Medals of Honor have been presented; nineteen individuals have received two separate awards of the medal. Nearly a fifth, some 600 of the recipients, died during the action for which they were later recognized. Four of the LDS recipients died in action and never knew they had received their nation's highest decoration posthumously.

The Americans who have been awarded this supreme decoration are themselves imperfect, normal humans with all the common talents, frailties, goodness, and weaknesses that are part of life. Most of them led exemplary lives after their acts of valor; a few did not. Those failings do not diminish their act of valor nor tarnish the honor of the medal itself. The gap between a shining moment and what may be years of frustration or adversity is part of human life. After all, the Medal of Honor is not a lifetime achievement award.

For nearly 150 years, the United States has recognized military heroes for extreme acts of gallantry during an armed conflict against the nation's enemies. Compared to the tens of millions of Americans who have served in times of peace and war, Medal of Honor recipients form a select and unique class of citizens. One example readily comes to mind; some four million American citizens served in World War I; only 124 received the Medal of Honor. The Distinguished Service Cross for the Army, the second in precedence after the Medal of Honor, has been presented to 13,000 individuals since that same time; whereas some 150,000 Silver Star Medals have been awarded.[2]

This is a book about nine American fighting men, who among other connections, have two common cords that bind them together. They are each a recipient of the Medal of Honor, and they are also baptized members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called Mormons. There are many connections and common threads that provide association, but these two are unique. Few Americans have received the Medal of Honor, and the Mormon community is a small but growing minority among the vast citizenry of this nation. Therefore, these two associations are narrow and also significant.

One of the purposes of this book is to tell the story of valor, to demonstrate to current and future generations what a real hero is. There are many types of heroes, and being a hero has different meanings to people. Some seem confused. Sports figures, entertainers, politicians, artists, authors, the wealthy, and powerful people are not actual heroes; they may be popular, successful, influential, and serve as role models to some, but they are not heroes in the true sense of the term. Heroes are individuals who willingly risk their lives in an act of bravery to save comrades and fulfill a mission. Police and firemen also share this distinction. Heroes can also be any citizen who, at the risk of his or her life, attempts to save others in danger. Some heroes have paid the ultimate price by sacrificing their own lives on the altar of freedom, selfless service, and devotion to duty. These are true heroes.

* * *

The service and sacrifice of Mormons in war began with the Mexican War (1846–48). Though Latter-day Saints served in state militia units in Missouri, especially particularly during the Mormon War of 1838, and in the Nauvoo Legion in Illinois in the early 1840s—the Mormon Battalion was the first time LDS people were enlisted into federal service during a declared war. Since that time, Mormons have served in all of America's wars, at home and abroad. The Mormon view of war aligns most closely

with mainstream American ideals encompassing devotion to duty. Service to one's nation is a sacred duty and an article of basic LDS faith. In fact, there is no basis for pacifism or grounds to claim conscientious objector status, according to LDS doctrine. Individuals who do are making a personal choice. At times the Church has modified its basic programs to conform to military and political needs, such as limiting the number of missionaries during the draft years of the Vietnam War to make more men available for military service.

Mormons have served bravely, proudly, and sincerely in time of war. Mormon doctrine pronounces that Saints should "denounce war and proclaim peace" (D&C 98:16). Yet Mormon scripture, especially in the eclectic Book of Mormon, tells of warrior-prophets and of mighty soldiers serving in vast and bloody wars, and the desolation of entire peoples and lands as the result of warfare. These stories, like Joshua and David, prophet-generals in the Bible, provide examples of religious people taking up arms in defense of nation, liberty, family, and their people. Mormons from the early foundation of the Church to modern times have been nurtured on stories of the valor and heroism of soldiers. This has not changed. The compelling stories of these LDS Medal of Honor awardees need to be told to secure their memory and their sacrifice for the future. Hopefully, generations will to come to know and appreciate these brave warriors, imperfect as they may be, and will continue to inspire others as they inspire us today.

* * *

The history of the Medal of Honor is a proud story. The accounts of valor are compelling and sometimes heart-wrenching. It is best to let the story speak for itself. The final truth is that people, citizens, and especially soldiers, respect awards of valor. Whether jealousy, disappointment, or other human emotions follow for some people, there is great honor attached to elite decorations, especially the Medal of Honor.

The young American republic had no military system of awards and decorations for nearly a hundred years from the beginning of the American Revolution. Many Americans and patriots felt that medals, honors, and military orders were unfitting for a new republic because they smacked of European aristocracy and elitist grandeur. Yet, even General George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the American forces, established a Badge of Military Merit and awarded it to at least three enlisted soldiers in 1783, just before the Continental Army was disbanded. This was the only American military decoration until 1861.[3]

During the American Civil War, the U.S. Congress established "a medal of honor" for U.S. Navy sailors for bravery and meritorious service at sea. Then in 1862, another Congressional act established the Army medal "to such noncommissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection." A year later, Army officers were included and the first awards were made. However, the Navy did not authorize the Medal of Honor for officers until 1915. Some 2,500 medals were awarded through the course of the Civil War. Many were bestowed for lesser acts of valor by later standards, mainly because the government had not established criteria that would further define the high standard. Many awards presented during the Civil War and the frontier wars would most likely not have merited a Medal of Honor under the modern process. That does not mean these individuals of the past did not deserve their recognition. It merely means that standards and the nomination criteria have evolved, just as the military has. In fact, after the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876, many awards were presented, some of questionable merit. The Army later convened a special board that advised: "The conduct which deserves such recognition should not be a simple discharge of duty, but such acts beyond this that if omitted or refused to be done, should not justly subject the person to censure as a shortcoming or failure."[4]

Another aspect that changed the Medal of Honor nomination process occurred in the 1890s when there was a rush of awards presented to Union veterans who individually submitted their own applications for the Medal of Honor to the War Department. There were so many that it became nearly a fad. With minimal review and oversight, hundreds of medals were presented, or in most cases, mailed to the self-nominees. One of these self-applicants was Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, the hero of the Little Round Top at Gettysburg in 1863, who led the famous 20th Maine Volunteer Regiment. Many of these individuals deserved the award, but the "self-nomination" process was flawed; it diluted the high ideals represented by the medal. Later Congress established by law the requirement that nominations originate through the military chain of command and not the individual. Also, "gallantry and intrepidity" beyond what is normally expected of a soldier became a standard.

In 1916 the War Department convened a board that eventually revoked 911 Civil War and Indians war decorations and again provided more guidance.[5] In 1917, Congress, at the Army and Navy Departments' urging, began to establish other awards for different levels of valor or meritorious service. This year was an interesting one because the United States entered World War I in 1917; and it soon became obvious that, in such a large conflict, the armed forces needed to reorganize its award system. Thus, the "triad of valor and service" was established with the Medal of Honor, along with the Distinguished Service Cross (and the Navy Cross) for extraordinary heroism, and the Distinguished Service Medal (Navy version in 1919) for exemplary meritorious duty and service. The Silver Star Medal has a curious evolution. It was first established by the Army as the "Star Citation" and consisted of a miniature star pinned on the Victory Medal awarded to World War I recipients. Later in 1932, the Silver Star was established by Congress as a separate decoration as it appears today; the Purple Heart came forth in the same year. Other decorations followed such as the Bronze Star Medal and Legion of Merit in 1942 during World War II.[6]

Air Force Army Navy

Medals rendered by Hyrum H. Fleek, 2011.

The standards, criteria, and process for nomination for the Medal of Honor have become very stringent in recent years. Starting in 1972 (the last year of major combat in Vietnam), no combat survivors were awarded the Medal of Honor. That changed in 2010 when Army Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta received the Medal of Honor. Sergeant Giunta's courage in Afghanistan was such that after nearly forty years the Medal of Honor award was bestowed upon a living recipient.[7] Others have and will follow.

A final comment about the Medal of Honor is its title and official designation. No matter how this title and name has permeated our culture and official records, the real name and only name of this decoration is the "Medal of Honor," not the "Congressional Medal of Honor." Yes, it is bestowed in the name of Congress by the president but it has never been the Congress's medal. Congress has established two dozen military decorations. The people who are awarded the medal are "recipients" or "awardees." No one "wins" or "earns" the medal. It is not an academic degree or a footrace; every profession has its own vocabulary. These may seem like petty points, but when discussing matters of life and death, honor and valor, proper language and titles should be used.[8]

* * *

Nine Mormons have received the Medal of Honor for valor and gallantry above and beyond what is expected of a soldier in combat.[9] Although each one has a harrowing story of service and courage, some are more intense than others. Four lost their lives. One or two survived by what seem miracles, given their amazing actions and circumstances. All four branches of the service are represented: five Army (one was a pilot with the Army Air Forces during World War II), two Navy, and one each of the Marine Corps and Air Force. Four were military professionals who made the service their careers; five were not career-minded or we do not know because three died at an early age. They were mostly from Utah and Idaho, although one hailed from California, and another, a convert, came from Chicago. Only one served a proselytizing mission for the Church. Two were pilots; one commanded a battleship at Pearl Harbor; two fought in the South Pacific during World War II; one fought in France during the Great War; one served in Korea, and two served in Vietnam.

As for individual gallantry, as the reader will see, their stories are unique. One recipient landed his aircraft to rescue a downed fellow airman; another bashed two enemy soldiers' heads togehter and killed two others with his bare hands; another was a medic who treated dozens of wounded over a two-week period, repeatedly risking his life for others, and left the battlefield only after he was severely wounded; three recipients single-handedly stopped an enemy advance or attack; two of them perished in the act; one, though severely wounded, flew back to a base in England; his aircraft was so damaged that it was literally a heap of junk afterward; and, finally after an all-night action when enemy troops attempted a landing, one Mormon soldier disobeyed orders and remained at his fighting position; and then sadly, an LDS soldier experienced such personal tragedy and adversity after the war that he returned his Medal of Honor to Congress in protest.

* * *

This book describes each LDS Medal of Honor recipient in chronological order in a separate chapter. Each serviceman had a different military experience, but my focus is on the military story leading up to the day or events that resulted in the awarding of the Medal of Honor. This book is not a full biography of each person; therefore, their lives before and after the military story are briefly summarized with the fullest detail being given to the relevant military action. I have also, where appropriate, included religious or faith-promoting characteristics where they form part of the military story.

The most challenging problem I faced in this study was identifying and locating biographic material—especially official military documents to tell the story. In some cases there was ample material. Three of the nine individuals already have biographies written about them. Sadly, a few have little information because they died so young and so long ago that most of the family and friends who knew them are no longer alive, and documentary records are sparse. Here I had to rely on secondary accounts, more background and general information, to capture their valor and service. Regardless, each of these individuals performed incredible acts of courage—selfless service in the face of extremely dangerous combat conditions against great odds. They risked their lives to help their comrades-in-arms and fulfill their military mission.

My other hope is that those who read these accounts will find anew or reinforce a sense of awe and profound respect for the level of valor and devotion that the Medal of Honor requires, not only on paper but in the hearts and souls of Americans. The purpose of the Medal of Honor is to recognize and reward gallantry and intrepidity that are so rare that even the most battle-hardened combat veteran would recognize and be awed by such acts. Every generation needs heroes, and before us are nine Latter-day Saints who were heroes.

Notes

1. Technically, one woman, Dr. Mary Walker, a civilian contract surgeon, received the Medal of Honor after the Civil War. Later in 1916, the award was rightfully rescinded on the grounds that she was a civilian and that it was awarded based on meritorious service, not battlefield courage. Therefore, she was not eligible. She refused to surrender it. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter, bowing to political forces, reinstated the award.

2. US Army Center of Military History, http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/mohstats.html (accessed September 5, 2009).

3. During the Mexican War and for a few years after, the Army awarded Certificates of Merit to soldiers for acts of valor in combat; also, during this era, the Army rewarded faithful service and valor with "brevet" honorary promotions.

4. Peter Collier, *Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor beyond the Call of Duty*, 282.

5. Ibid.

6. The "silver star citation" was a small star device awarded for valor and attached to the Victory Medal during World War I. In 1932 Congress established the Silver Star Medal and also the Military Order of the Purple Heart. The Distinguished Flying Cross had been established in November 1918 for aerial service and gallantry.

7. Dana Hegeth, "Medal of Honor Is Bittersweet, Soldier Says," Washington Post, September 16, 2010, A-4.

8. Collier, *Medal of Honor*, 283–84.

9. In this book the term "soldier" may be used at times to represent all service-members of the separate branches of the armed forces.

Acknowledgements

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."—William Arthur Ward

Without the assistance and generosity of many people, especially the families of the Medal of Honor recipients, there would be no *Saints of Valor*. I am deeply indebted to those who provided papers, letters, photos, and personal accounts, and especially official military documents and personnel records, and copies thereof. Without these and the great support of family, friends, and others, than it would have nearly impossible to ferret out the material and conduct the research required.

The list to thank is long, but the need to recognize is just as important. The guiding light and support of Robert ("Bob") Freeman, professor of history and doctrine at Brigham Young University, was crucial and very helpful. It was he who first alerted me to Thomas Neibaur and his story back in 2005, and then followed up with mentions of Edward Michael and Larry Maxam. His connections with so many LDS veterans and families were very important to this project. The surviving daughter of Thomas Neibaur, Marian Neibaur Hunkerford of Ohio, and his nephew Anthony Gardner of St. Anthony, Idaho, helped place me on the journey of LDS Medal of Honor recipients. From that connection, my biography of Private Neibaur emerged.

The two young men who lost their lives in the Pacific Theater during World War II, Nathan ("Junior") Van Noy and Leonard

Brostrom both from Preston, Idaho, was a challenge to locate and obtain any information at all because all the family and friends are long since gone. Jay McKenzie, a lawyer in town, came to the rescue. He was instrumental in obtaining, scanning, and then sending me dozens of documents on Van Noy and a few items about Brostrom. He was also the steward of PFC Brostrom's actual of Medal of Honor for several years.

Louise Michael, the widow of Lt. Col. Edward Michael, USAF (Ret) provided many documents, photos, and great assistance in research on this brave bomber pilot. At one point, she exclaimed that I needed to come to California because she had so many papers that I needed to sort through them myself, then I could decide what I needed. Gayle Alvarez of the Idaho Military Museum in Boise assisted with all four of the Idaho heroes over several years. She was especially helpful with information on Brostrom and also Sergeant David B. Bleak. Without her help, biographical research would have been very challenging. The Fisher families of Idaho and Utah sent me reports, accounts, and studies of Colonel Bernard ("Bernie") Fisher's story, not only during Vietnam but also of the rest of his life.

A special thanks goes to several individuals who helped me learn the story of Corporal Larry Maxam and his gallantry during Vietnam. I first learned of and then made contact with Larry's younger brother, Robin Maxam, residing in Australia. He also sent me copies of letters, documents, and photos of his older brother. He recommended that I contact Lt. Col. John B. Long, USMC (Ret), who provided me with copies of the actual Medal of Honor nomination packet and other critical information. I also talked with or corresponded by email with several Marines who served with Maxam in Vietnam. The crowning moment for me came in April 2010 when I attended the dedication of a Burbank City park in Corporal Maxam's honor. Hundreds were in attendance, including a half dozen older but still gung-ho Marines who had witnessed Maxam's courage. What a surreal experience it was for me to meet

gallant men whose names already appeared in my book, to shake their hands, and offer them my heartfelt thanks. For several hours I listened as they recounted the exploits of their friend and buddy.

This book is pioneering in some ways but not in all. Of the nine LDS awardees, three already have biographies written about them. In 2007 Gary Toyn published, *The Quiet Hero*, about the Navy corpsman George Wahlen whose bravery and medical service on Iwo Jima saved dozens of wounded Marines. Sadly George Wahlen passed away in 2009. Gary reviewed and blessed my chapter on Wahlen. To well-known author and student of history Jerry Borrowman, I owe special thanks for his assistance and encouragement. Jerry was the true pioneer and trail blazer for LDS Medal of Honor history when he co-authored *Beyond the Call of Duty* with Bernard Fisher in 2004. Jerry also took time to read and comment on several of the manuscript chapters.

I would like to thank my good friends and discriminating readers of much of what I have written: John Roller of Stafford, Virginia, Randy Madsen of San Diego, California, and especially my mentor as a historian, retired Army Lt. Col. Joseph Whitehorne, Ph.D., of Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

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As a father, I take great pride in my young son, Hyrum Hinckley Fleek. His incredible skill, talent, and patience with me,

produced wonderful graphic representations of some thirty decorations, both foreign and domestic, including ribbons and badges. By taking samples from on-line and other sources, he crafted these superb graphic designs that are not only striking but accurate and proportionately correct. He also developed and drew most the maps and some of the diagrams that help tell the story. What a wonderful experience it was for both of us to spend hours in front of his computer tweaking and creating these pieces of art in nearly perfect detail. I am so proud of him.

Sherman L. Fleek
September 2011
West Point, New York

Part 2
The Global War

An Introduction to World War II

What can one write about World War II that has not been written already a hundred times? Following an earlier world war, "The Great War," this second conflict was greater, longer, bloodier, and much wider spread. It was truly global. All oceans and most continents saw combat in some form. If World War I changed the map of Europe and the Middle East, World War II changed the world's.

The war was all encompassing and universal with some 16 million Americans in uniform. Latter-day Saints served in all the theaters of war, all the areas of operation, all combat zones, all branches of services, and for many of the nations at war—including the German forces. At the beginning of the war, the LDS Church membership was some 880,000 and by the end of the war in 1945, more than 100,000 Mormon men and women had served in American uniform.[1] Several thousand did not return home.[2]

From this war, five Mormons received the Medal of Honor, three of them posthumously. Mervyn Bennion was a professional officer, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, who died while in command of a battleship at Pearl Harbor. He refused to leave the bridge despite being seriously wounded and continued to command his ship and inspire his crew until the end. Edward Michael was not a member at the time of his valiant service as bomber

pilot in England. He was able to pilot his heavily damaged B-17 hundreds of miles back to England despite his own wounds, saving his crew members. Eighteen-year-old Nathan ("Junior") Van Noy died while repelling a Japanese night assault on "Scarlet Beach" with only the support of his machine-gun loader. Leonard Brostrom went from the LDS mission field to the battlefield, the only one of the nine LDS Medal of Honor recipients to serve a mission. He was killed assaulting a Japanese machine-gun position on the island of Leyte. George Wahlen, the last LDS recipient of World War II, was not a warrior, but a naval corpsman (medic) who for nearly two weeks treated dozens of marines on Iwo Jima. Despite being wounded three times, he refused to be evacuated. Only after a third and very serious wound would he allow others to remove him from the combat area. Junior Van Noy and Leonard Brostrom, by coincidence, were from the same small town. Today a monument marks their graves and valor in Preston, Idaho.

The following chapters and stories tell of heroism at Pearl Harbor, in the air over Germany, in the Philippines, Iwo Jima, and New Guinea. Two served in the Navy and two were Army, though one was a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Forces which later became the Air Force. The biographical and official information and material available about these five individuals varies. George Wahlen has already been a subject of a biography while only the sketchiest information exists about Leonard Brostrom.

These Latter-day Saints proved their mettle and willingness to serve and sacrifice.

* * *

For the United States and the Allied powers, the world conflict was divided into several theaters of war. The European Theater of Operations (ETO), which also included Africa and the Middle East, became the main and first priority. The objective was to defeat Hitler's Nazi Reich, which the Allied political and military leaders considered the most dangerous and important of

the enemy Axis powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan. This consolidated war aim or international strategy became known as "Europe First."[3] Only a few dozen select government leaders, scientists, and military officials among both the Allied and Axis leaders knew about the potential development and use of nuclear weapons. The Allies believed correctly that Nazi Germany had the capability of developing this weapon. Therefore, a highly secret arms race occurred with two objectives: to defeat Hitler's Germany and to develop an atomic weapon themselves.[4]

Yet the war was fought with conventional weapons—rifles, tanks, aircraft, bombs, and ships across most of the world.

* * *

It was Adolf Hitler and his diabolical regime and ideology that caused the war. After Germany's crushing defeat in the First World War and the harshly punitive reparations and restrictions imposed on it, it defined itself as a victim and faced a political, economic, and moral vacuum. The Treaty of Versailles allowed the evil of National Socialism to spawn and grow. Hitler tested the will of the Allied powers to resist German rearmament and aggression by conducting several successful bloodless invasions. The fighting war began when Poland in September 1939 resisted Nazi incursions. By America's entry into the European war in late 1941, Germany was at the height of its power and success. Fortunately, Hitler insisted on an ill-fated and foolish strategy to invade Soviet Russia in June 1941 that landed the German army at the gates of Moscow. Only Great Britain had survived the Nazi juggernaut, but the Russian winter halted the German advance. Hitler's gamble to quickly annihilate the Communist menace of the Soviet Union failed. It took months of preparation, but the United States declared war in December 1941 as a result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and was promptly engaged in both theaters of war. Because isolationist sentiment had slowed American armament, it scrambled to put the home front on full

war-time production. American soldiers hit the beach in North Africa in November 1942, then advanced to Sicily, then crawled up the boot of Italy. Fascist Italy fell in September 1943, but Germany regrouped and fought a superb defensive campaign in Italy for nearly two more years.[5]

The vast steppes of eastern Europe were the epicenter for the rest of the war. Ukraine and Russia saw the ultimate and immense battles of modern warfare. Millions of soldiers served in the German Wehrmacht and Russian "fronts," opposing each other during four grueling summers and winters that saw millions perish. The names of Stalingrad, Leningrad, Kiev, Kursk, and Warsaw are seared into German, Russian, and eastern European collective memory. The United States and its citizens never saw, imagined, or suffered the conditions of the eastern front.[6]

* * *

Japan was a brutal and difficult enemy to face and the main characteristic of this theater of war was the huge Pacific Ocean, a watery battlefield of millions of square miles, thousands of miles across, surrounded by mainland continents and dotted by tens of thousands of islands, small and large. Thus, the Pacific was divided into two major areas: the Southwest Pacific Area under General Douglas MacArthur, and the Pacific Ocean Areas under Admiral Chester Nimitz.[7] Both were Americans who also commanded hundreds of thousands of Allied men, hundreds of ships, and tens of thousands of Allied aircraft. The Pacific war was a daunting logistical challenge. What is called now the "operational art" level of war evolved into an island-hopping strategy, moving from island chain to individual islands in an inexorable and bitterly fought advance toward mainland Japan. Some of these islands or groups were huge—like the Philippines or New Guinea. Others were essential staging areas for forward bases and future operations. Iwo Jima was one; Okinawa was perhaps the bloodiest fight. The Pacific was a naval war unparalleled in history. Vast fleets battled each

other by carrier and land-based aircraft, or surface engagements. Sleek, silent submarines, the jackals of the deep, carried out deadly attacks on commercial vessels and warships.

While the war in the Pacific was fought across a nautical arena, most of the troops in the Allied and Japanese efforts were ground forces. The United States trained and equipped six Marine Corps divisions to fight in the Pacific,[8] partnering with the U.S. Army's twenty-one combat divisions.[9]

The enemy was not only Japanese soldiers but beriberi, malaria, dysentery, and malnutrition. Americans served in beautiful, exotic tropic scenes and also nasty, sweltering jungles. Guam, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan—names the soldiers and Marines had never heard two years earlier—became as familiar as Cleveland, Chicago, and Boston. Though Europe was a higher priority overall, the Navy and other branches received vast stores of provisions, ammunition, most of the naval craft, and several million troops. The way to Tokyo was long, slow, and difficult.

* * *

While the Pacific war's main characteristic was a huge ocean, the ETO's climate covered extremes: the harsh deserts of North Africa, the fertile farmlands of Italy, France, Germany, and the Low Countries, the rugged Carpathian Mountains and towering Alps, and lastly, the great steppes of the central continent, itself an ocean of ice and snow.

This global war was also a war of technology, gadgets, and devices: radar, napalm, radios, armored vehicles, and immense numbers of everything from toilet paper to hand grenades, from mountains of supplies to landing craft that could carry an infantry regiment along with their tanks. Bombers and German V–1 and V–2 rockets, jet aircraft, and airborne operations involving thousands of parachute troops landing behind enemy lines to wreak havoc were some of the facets of industrialized warfare. The Germans were innovative, but it was the American scientists who beat

them to the ultimate prize: the atomic bomb. Beyond the atomic bombs, conventional bombs leveled scores of cities in Japan and Europe; tens of thousands of civilians died from fire-bombs, rockets, and calamitous after-effects of disrupted food and water supplies, inadequate clothing and shelter, and epidemics without enough doctors or drugs.[10]

By far the worst calamity that humankind has ever faced in world history was the Nazi holocaust. Millions perished in this methodical, organized, state-planned, state-directed, and popularly supported mass murder. Massacres have always characterized human warfare, but this campaign against Jews and other state-labeled "undesirables" was the lowest point in humanity's grim history. It is impossible to imagine that such a crime occurred, but it actually did.[11]

Finally, after six years the guns fell silent, the gates to the concentration camps opened, the bombs ceased falling, and the assembly lines of war and destruction stopped. Those who survived returned—but not to what they had left. Everything had changed.

* * *

In all these theaters of war, lands, campaigns, battles, and types of warfare, Mormons served. We, of later generations, the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of these veterans, sat around the firesides and kitchen table to hear the endless and marvelous tales of "the war." With pride, sorrow, and even a little bitterness, our parents and grandparents passed on their memories. Many did not tell their stories; their demons perished with them. Yet as a people, Latter-day Saints shouldered arms and marched off. Even in the hell of war, there were heavenly moments. Converts were baptized, chapels built, food shared, covenants kept, scriptures read, services held, and knees bent in sincere prayer.

What follows is the story of five Mormons who received the Medal of Honor for courage and valor above and beyond what is normally expected.

Notes

1. Robert C. Freeman and Dennis A. Wright, eds., *Saints at War: Experiences of Latter-day Saints in World War II*, 6.

2. An estimated 4,000 Latter-day Saints in the U.S. armed forces died in World War II. Statistical Report, *LDS General Conference Report*, April 1946, 168.

3. Richard W. Stewart, ed., *The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2003*, Vol. 2 of American Military History, 84.

4. John Keegan, *The Second World War*, 582–84.

5. Ibid., 460–68.

6. Ibid., 473–76, 512–15.

7. Keegan, *The Second World War*, 290. Nimitz also commanded two relatively quiet areas that experienced little combat, the North and South Pacific Areas.

8. Thomas Parrish, ed., *The Simon and Schuster Encyclopedia of World War II*, 649.

9. Stewart, *The United States Army in a Global Era, 1917–2003*, 123.

10. Keegan, *The Second World War*, 581–82.

11. Ibid., 288–89.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward Michael. Unless otherwise noted, the photographs in this chapter are from Louise Michael and family.

Chapter Four

Lieutenant Edward S. Michael and the Crew of "Bertie Lee"

April 11, 1944, England

Turbulence caused by many gaping holes, damaged surfaces, and the wild wind buffeted the wounded bomber as it pitched, rolled, and yawed nearly out of control. The co-pilot did his best to manhandle the stricken B–17 Flying Fortress as it made the last of several passes over the obscure airfield on the English Channel. The co-pilot's wounded aircraft commander had fainted from loss of blood. The Royal Air Force airfield at Grimsby, England, built for fighters, not bombers, looked like a postage stamp compared to the bomber's home base. But RAF Grimsby, near Waltham, 175 miles northeast of London, was the first available field. During the last pass prior to the approach, the wounded pilot suddenly regained consciousness and, after a moment, resumed control of the aircraft, determined to land his bomber. After all, the *Bertie Lee*, named for his wife, was his aircraft, his responsibility.

The long, deadly mission was nearly over, after hours of attacks by German Luftwaffe fighters and flak[1]—antiaircraft fire. German fighter attacks had damaged the *Bertie Lee* before it could reach its

target east of Berlin. Losing both airspeed and altitude, the aircraft commander turned the heavy bomber about before it could drop its load of forty-two, 100-pound incendiary bombs. One of the direct hits by a German fighter's 20mm round smashed into the bomb bay, igniting a small fire that eventually threatened to either engulf the bomber or cause it to explode in mid-air. It was a miracle that the aircraft was even airborne. And that had been hours ago.

The pilot, with the co-pilot's assistance, wrestled the bomber, trying to force it into its final approach. The rudder, the left wing, the elevators, and the trim tabs had all received hits from flak or German fighters. Another 20mm burst had struck the cockpit, destroying all of the instruments except the magnetic compass and two engine gauges. Hydraulic fluid was smeared across the windscreen, and it was nearly impossible to see out.

The British ground crew and especially the controllers in the small tower tried their best to raise the American bomber on the radio, on the standard emergency frequencies, but failed. The radio had been shot out.

Then the crippled bomber fired flares, signaling that it was in trouble. The tower responded with its own flares, confirming the emergency. The ground emergency crew sprang into action. Ambulances, firefighters on fire trucks, and many others sped to the flight line.

The pilot decided that his best option was to attempt a crash landing on a strip of grass next to one of the runways. But it was risky. He had no idea how the aircraft would handle, or if he could descend in a smooth controlled approach on a shallow glide path to his intended landing point. He did not know whether the rudder, elevators, trim tabs, flaps, and especially hydraulic-assisted controls would allow him to land smoothly or whether they would jam on final approach. That was only half of the story.

Not only were the controls sluggish, but the guns of the ball-turret on the belly of the fuselage were stuck, pointing directly down. The bomb-bay doors were jammed open. Worst of all, the landing gear would not lower, either mechanically or manually.

That is why the pilot elected to land on the turf and not on the concrete runway. It would have to be a belly landing.

Slowly the pilot made a standard-rate turn to final approach and carefully reduced power. This maneuver too was extremely tricky. The 20mm hit that had struck the instrument panel had also disabled the power controls on two engines. The super-charger levers on the other two engines were "inop." This landing would require a very delicate control touch and great skill.

Tensely the ground crew, tower controllers, and emergency personnel watched.

The British airfield commander, a group captain, wrote later:

> You could see that "Birdie [Bertie] Lee" had had a rough time as she circled the airfield at Grimsby. . . . Our Squadron were busy on their own account that afternoon—getting ready for night ops. . . . [We did] watch the "Birdie Lee's" gallant attempt at the almost impossible. At last she touched down so smoothly that she seemed to be skidding along on her bomb-doors for a few hundred yards before her weight told and she settled in the turf . . . a picture of a battered grace, and perfect, cold-blooded airmanship. Her props flashed angrily in the sunlight as they hit the grass and buckled back in a smother of dirt, and with hardly a sound the fortress came to a rest.[2]

The ambulance and other vehicles rushed to the smoldering aircraft as smoke and heat gushed from the engines and bomb bay. A flight doctor sprinted up to the aircraft and peered into the narrow, pipe-like fuselage, then called: "Where's the rest of the crew?" The pilot was already on a stretcher and being carried away. He called back: "They're gone! I ordered them to bail out. I never thought we would live to get back here." Then, after a moment's pause, he cried, "Oh God, what will I tell their families?"

For the next nine months, First Lieutenant Edward Michael would constantly think about his seven fellow crewmen who had bailed out. Were they alive? Were they prisoners of war?

* * *

The *Bertie Lee* after its last mission, never to fly again. The typed caption attached to these photos reads: "Damage sustained to aircraft on the last combat mission flown by Major Michael, which resulted in the award of the CMH." The vertical stabilizer and elevators sustained severe flak damage that caused them to be nearly jammed and inoperative.

The fuselage above the wing had a large hole caused by the fire in the bomb bay that nearly burned completely through the bomber.

The nose and plexi-glass took numerous flak and 20mm hits by German fighters.

The wind-screen was severely damaged by a 20mm hit from a German fighter, which also destroyed all the instruments on the panel.

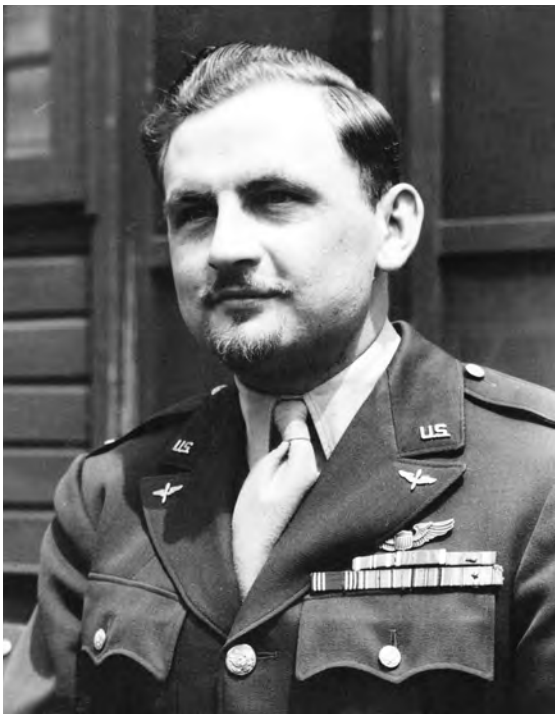
Months passed before word arrived that six of his seven parachuting crew members had survived the jump and were in German hands. Miraculously, Lt. Michael, his co-pilot Lieutenant Franklin Westberg from Albert Lea, Minnesota, and the bombardier, Lieutenant John Lieber from Flushing, Long Island, had nursed the bomber back to England. Lt. Michael was severely wounded in the right leg; after being hospitalized in England for weeks, he was sent home to the United States. For months, he harassed the Army Air Force personnel staff and eventually the Red Cross for information on his crew members. The last mystery involved Sergeant Jewell Phillips. Severely wounded, he had been the last to bail out. Had he died on the way down? Had he survive the jump only to die of his wounds later?

During Michael's hospital stay, he worried, prayed, and pressed for information. At first, because he was in recovery, he did not shave; after a few weeks with no information, Ed Michael decided that not shaving was how he could demonstrate to himself and others his resolve and hope for his crew members. As Samson derived strength from his long locks, Lt. Edward Michael would symbolically show his determination—by not shaving—that Sergeant Phillips would one day be accounted for.

As time passed, Lt. Michael learned that he had been nominated to receive the Medal of Honor for his heroism and leadership on his twenty-sixth mission against Nazi Germany. In late November 1944, the nomination was confirmed. He would indeed receive the nation's highest award for valor. He still did not shave his chin except to shape his blond Van Dyke beard and mustache.[3]

For a time his superiors ignored the situation; but when the White House announced that President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself would present Lt. Michael with his Medal of Honor on January 10, 1945, Michael's officers ordered him to shave and present a proper military appearance before the nation's commander-in-chief.[4]

Ed Michael refused. Until he learned what had happened to Jewell Phillips, he would not shave.



Lieutenant Ed Michael with a goatee.

January 10, the day of the presentation arrived. As Lt. Michael, his wife, Bertie Lee, and his parents prepared to leave their hotel for the White House, an army officer knocked on the door. He brought word that Sergeant Phillips was in a hospital in England. His wounds were so severe that the Germans had repatriated him to Sweden, and he reached to England through diplomatic channels.

Grinning from ear to ear, Lt. Edward Michael went into the bathroom and picked up his razor.[5]

* * *

When people think of the air war in Europe during World War II, they may have images of sleek P–51 Mustangs mixing it up in dogfights with German Messerschmitts and Focke Wulfes, or scenes from the old footage of aircraft in dogfights—gray and

fuzzy, shooting, dodging, and slicing through the air. A few movies show lumbering but magnificent B–17s flying in perfect formations, dropping waves of bombs that fell gracefully on targets far below, with flames blossoming up from German factories, refineries, or cities. These cultural depictions show a mighty American war machine going forth in vast numbers, a virtual armada of bombers, fighters, and transport aircraft winging their way to victory. This glamorous depiction is true—but it is incomplete.

What is not commonly known is that thousands of American airmen died in the skies over France, Germany, England, and other parts of Europe, besides in the Pacific Theater. Thousands of aircraft were lost, to be replaced with even more airframes from American aircraft assembly factories. As the common soldier fought and lived in the muck of mud—struggling and dying by the yard across Africa, Italy, France, and then finally Germany—theirs was an awful labor of constant privation, danger, fear, and the unknown. But these valiant men normally entered the front once, perhaps twice during various campaigns. The incredible amphibious landings at Morocco, Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and Normandy were frightening and life-changing experiences. But very few soldiers ever endured such a dreadful event again.[6]

In contrast, aircrews—pilots, radiomen, bombardiers, navigators, and gunners—may have slept between sheets in real beds every night, but every time they climbed aboard an aircraft to strike at Nazi Germany's power, it was as though they were hitting the beach and entering the combat area. To fly twenty or thirty missions over Germany and occupied Europe, each time evading hundreds of bursts of flak and then fighting off dozens of German fighters swarming like flies on a carcass, reaching the target area, dropping bombs and then, once again enduring both flak batteries and enemy fighters on the way home was a terrible aspect of air warfare. Each successful mission was a miracle for these men, celebrated afterwards with some happy hours of drinking, dancing, and girls. Then two days later, they woke up again before dawn, ate, received a mission briefing, and by sunlight embarked once again across the

English Channel to face flak and fighters. This was an incredibly stressful way to fight a war. Experts and veterans have puzzled for some time about how such a lifestyle is possible; some have hypothesized that some learned to cope in "light-switch" style: on or off, compartmentalizing their experience with no leakage from "on mission" to "off duty"—except, of course, for nightmares. American flyers may have had three "hots and a cot," but such moments of comfort ended every time they hit the flight-line. In an instant, a crippled or damaged aircraft meant the men had to parachute into enemy territory and, if they survived capture, then spend the remainder of the war in a prison camp.

During one mission on October 14, 1943, 320 heavy American bombers—B–17s and B–24s—were dispatched on a mission to Schweinfurt, Germany. The bombers carried more than 3,000 aircrew members. Two hundred ninety bombers made it to the target area and dropped their ordnance. Another thirty aircraft went down on the return to base; 594 men either died aboard their aircraft or survived to become prisoners of war. Thus, on one day, the U.S. 8th Air Force in England lost 20 percent of its men and aircraft sent aloft. In the annals of American military aviation history it is called "Black Thursday" to this day.[7]

The air war in Europe was an essential part of the Allied war effort to defeat Nazi Germany. Since the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, Great Britain had taken the war to German-occupied Europe in the air. Some day-time bombing missions were conducted early on, but soon it became obvious that it was more practical to conduct a night bombing campaign; besides, British resources of aircraft, aviators, bombs, and fuel were limited. It singlehandedly fought the Axis powers of Italy and Germany for nearly two years.[8]

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Britain officially had the United States as its formidable ally. First beginning as a trickle in the summer of 1942, then a flood, hundreds of American aircraft arrived in England. Bomb groups and squadrons were formed, airfields manned, and missions commenced in July

1942. The great question soon was raised by Major General Ira Eaker, the first commander of the 8th Air Force: Could American military might stand the test of a daylight bombing campaign with all of its risks? It was up to General Eaker and his faithful Army airmen to prove the legitimacy of daylight bombing.[9]

The answer was yes, which is why, seventeen months later on April 11, 1944, Lt. Edward Michael, through daring, courage, and exceptional skill, saved two of his men and aircraft and later received the Medal of Honor. Some thirty years later, he became a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ed Michael served his country, his family, and his new church with all his heart and soul until the day he died in 1994.

* * *

The family name in Polish was originally "Mikolayczyk," but that was too hard for Americans to say, so the first generation of immigrants adopted the name "Mikol" which was easier for the American tongue. Born May 2, 1918, in Chicago to Stanley Mikol and Lillian Harriet Konior Mikol, Edward was the second of three children, between two sisters, Loretta and Armella. They were very strong Roman Catholics, devout and faithful. In fact, the family had several members who became members of religious orders. Three of Edward's aunts became nuns, one eventually was a mother superior, and another was a teacher in Catholic schools for many years. Called both "Eddie" and "Skip," the future pilot grew up in a rough-and-tumble section of Chicago. There were ball games, card playing, wild drinking, and street fights nearly every day, and Skip became a tough city kid, street-wise and determined. He never caused any trouble with the law, attended mass every Sunday, served as an altar boy, and loved the Roman faith; but he hated paying money into the collection plate and swore he would never become a priest like some of his uncles and cousins. He was nevertheless a young man of faith.[10]

The family finally decided to adopt the Anglicized last name of "Michael." Skip was seven when his parents bought and moved into their first house, a small, humble dwelling. At age nine, Skip discovered his calling in life. He would watch airplanes "buzz" his house at low levels and land in fields and pastures near the city. He often went out to Glenview Naval Air Station where he spent hours watching the old biplanes land and take off. The desire to fly entered into his soul.

He entered his teen years with the Great Depression. Money was tight, and he caddied at nearby Bunker Hill Golf Course where he became friends with a wealthy businessman who owned his private aircraft. Skip saved his money for flying lessons. He graduated from Carl Schurz High School, but he would rather take flying lessons than attend college.[11]

In November 1940 at age twenty-two, Edward Michael took a drastic step. With war raging in Europe and the American isolationists hoping for peace and security, he joined the U.S. Army and applied for the aviation cadet program. He failed the admittance test by two points, a terrible disappointment. Instead, he was assigned as a mechanic on Army aircraft at Wheeler Airfield in the Hawaiian Islands. Wheeler Field was an old Army Air Corps field some thirty miles north of Pearl Harbor, Oahu.[12]

That's what Skip Michael was doing on the quiet Sunday morning of December 7, 1941, when Japanese carrier-based aircraft launched a surprise attack on American military bases and facilities on Oahu. Pearl Harbor and the Pacific Fleet were the main targets; however, dozens of aircraft attacked the Army posts of Hickam Airfield, Wheeler Airfield, and Schofield Barracks. Michael was assigned "KP"—kitchen police—that Sunday morning when he heard the drone of fighter bombers. He stood amazed as waves of Japanese aircraft flew overhead, dropping bombs near him. Machine-gun rounds struck the parade field where he was crossing to the flight line, and a rock chip hit him in the face.[13]

America was now in the greatest of all wars, a true global war. For Ed Michael, war brought the opportunity to attend flight

Air Cadet Edward Michael in 1943.

school. He had no college, a circumstance that would haunt him and thousands of officers later, especially those who elected to stay in the service after the war. Ed received primary and advanced pilot training at Douglas Airfield, Arizona, in October 1942, flying the AT–6 Texan and other single-engine trainers.

Primary flight training was a difficult and challenging experience, requiring him to master the fundamentals of flight and aerodynamics, and to gain an expert's knowledge of a powerful machine and its mechanical systems. After the required hours of supervised instruction, students progressed to the exciting day when they flew "solo," then continued to advance in skill and confidence. It was in Douglas, Arizona, where he met and married Bertie Lee, for whom he named his aircraft.

On April 12, 1943, Edward Michael graduated from flight training and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army

Air Forces. He wanted to fly fighters, as did most pilot trainees, but the Army Air Forces needed bomber pilots. He received orders for a B–17 transition at Hobbs Field, New Mexico.[14]

* * *

In August 1934, the Army Air Corps, the forerunner of the Army Air Forces, announced a bid for a new bomber prototype to replace the outdated Martin B–10B. The requirements were, basically, a bomber that performed well at 10,000 feet MSL (Mean Sea Level), could reach a cruising airspeed of at least 200 mph, had a range of 2,000 miles, and could carry "a useful bomb-load," which was not defined precisely. The tactics and war plans of the 1930s called for a bomber that would fly reconnaissance and coastal defense missions to bomb enemy vessels or submarines. War planners did not envision another European war or a world war.

Most companies prepared and entered designs for twin-engine aircraft into the competition. The Boeing Company in Seattle, however, showcased a four-engine aircraft with a sturdy aerodynamic design, its famous blunt rounded wingtips, and a massive tail and rudder, called the "Cheyenne Tail" in later models. These were the most obvious characteristics of the Model 299, which had its first flight on July 28, 1935. The Air Corps officers were immensely impressed, not only because of its design, but because of its incredible performance and ability to carry nearly 5,000 pounds of ordnance. A reporter on hand for the test flight saw the many machine guns protruding from the airframe and casually called it a "flying fortress." The name stuck. The War Department ordered thirteen airframes of the model, now designated as the YB–17, in January 1936. By 1941, the Army Air Forces had just under two hundred B–17s in various models based in Hawaii, the Philippines, and the United States.[15]

The B–17 was the work-horse bomber of World War II. Some 12,000 airframes were manufactured in several different models. There were other fine bombers—the B–24 Liberator, B–25

Tail markings of a B–17G, denote the 305th Bombardment Group and the fuselage "WF" of the 364th Bomb Squadron. The *Bertie Lee* had the same markings. Computer graphic by Hyrum H. Fleek.

Mitchell, and the B–29 Superfortress, along with the British Lancaster, Wellington, and Handley-Page Halifax—yet the Flying Fortress caught both the imagination and soul of the American war effort. The bomber was simple, reliable, and efficient. It could endure a great deal of punishment and still remain aloft. The B–17G Model that would be christened the *Bertie Lee*, flown by Lieutenant Michael, was built in 1942, so its tail number began with "2": 2–37931. The B–17 had a cruising airspeed of 182 mph, a service ceiling of 36,500 feet, an unpressurized cabin, and a gross takeoff weight of 65,500, depending on conditions. It carried 2,450 gallons (14,400 pounds) of fuel, and was powered by four Wright R–1820–97 "Cyclone" engines that were super-charged radials (meaning that the cylinders were mounted in a circle). Each engine produced 1,200 shaft horsepower. The flight controls, landing gear, ball and top gun turrets, and several other systems were powered and operated by hydraulic and electrical systems.[16]

There was no heating system for the crew on missions with open waist gun windows, so at high altitudes the temperature could be 30° below zero, and touching metal with bare skin was a painful experience. The men wore heavy fleece-lined leather coats, trousers, and gloves that had electrical webbing laced throughout that provided heat. The famous "flak jacket" of later wars was first developed for bomber crews—a heavy leather garment lined with plate-armor, front and rear. Besides parachutes, flak jackets, and fleece-lined flight suits, the airmen also wore oxygen masks, life-

preservers, sometimes "steel pot" helmets, and, underneath all the gear, pistols and other personal equipment. The seemingly glamorous B–17 was actually a hard way to fight a war.

The most important function of the B–17 was not the defense of the crew or the plane but dropping bombs on a target. Keeping personnel safe was a necessary prerequisite, but bombing runs were the sole purpose of the bomber and main mission of the men, squadrons, support functions, and the Army Air Forces. A key crewmember was the bombardier who squatted on a steel seat and bent over the famous and innovative Norden bombsight, a state-of-the-art device then and one of the best-guarded equipment secrets of World War II. The goal was to place 50 percent of the bomb-load within a 100-foot area—the mean target center—from altitudes above 20,000 feet, In reality, the bombers rarely dropped more than 50 percent within a quarter mile of the target center.[17]

The Norden was a sophisticated gadget with several sight glasses, electric gyros, and a stabilizing mechanism. It was linked to the flight controls by an autopilot that the pilot switched on, allowing the bombardier, who was in the most exposed station of the plane, to fly it through the bomb run. There were control measures that the navigator provided to the pilots and bombardier for references, such as the rally point, check points, the initial point, release point, and then the final course for the approach and bomb run. Then the bombardier took control. If a bomber was serving as flight lead aircraft, dozens if not hundreds of bombers followed the leader to the release point. These functions required intensive training, team-work, coordination, and expertise.[18]

* * *

Bertie Lee Michael returned to her family in Douglas, Arizona, when Lieutenant Ed Michael received orders to deploy overseas, arriving in England on November 3, 1943. At this point in the war, literally hundreds of airfields in England and Scotland supported the Allied air effort. Not only were thousands of bombers

stationed at small airfields or bases throughout the United Kingdom, but there were also just as many fighter bases and airfields for transport aircraft. Including the British squadrons, England was an island honeycombed with airfields, aircraft, and airmen.

Ed Michael joined the 364th Bombardment Squadron at Chelveston, a small town north of London. A squadron had twelve aircraft and some 250 aircrew men and ground support personnel, commanded by a lieutenant colonel by authorization, but sometimes a major or even a captain as the war progressed. The 364th Bomb Squadron, along with three other bomb squadrons, formed the 305th Bombardment Group (Heavy). The "Can Do" 305th Bombardment Group, formed in Salt Lake City, Utah, on March 1, 1942, was one of the first B–17 groups to arrive in England in September 1942. The first group commander was a man who would sear his name into U.S. Air Force and Cold War history as the master architect and father of the Strategic Air Command: Lt. Col. Curtis LeMay. He later served as Air Force Chief of Staff and ran for vice president of the United States in 1968 with George Wallace of Georgia.[19]

Each bomb group was normally stationed at an assigned airfield. Thus, the groups were self-sustaining organizations with medical, maintenance, security, mess, transportation, clerical, and construction personnel besides the aircrews who flew the missions. Perhaps the real heroes of the Allied air war were the unglamorous ground support crews—especially the mechanics, the airframe, powerplant, and avionics specialists, the ordnance loaders, machine-gun armorers, electricians, and refuelers. After a mission, some aircraft returned that should have never flown again; but with incredible skill and determination, ground crews worked unceasingly to repair, rebuild, and prepare aircraft to be functional and airworthy by the next morning. These soldiers—mechanics, cooks, military police, supply, weathermen, ordnance men, and clerks—were the unsung heroes of the U.S. Army Air Forces during the war.

Michael, through fate or fortune, was billeted with another pilot and aircraft commander of the 364th Squadron, First Lieu-

tenant William L. Lawley from Birmingham, Alabama. Lawley would receive the Medal of Honor for heroic actions on February 20, 1944. Thus, two future Medal of Honor recipients were roommates for several months and many missions.[20]

* * *

Soon after arriving in England, Ed Michael began flying missions with a crew of nine others. Three were officers: co-pilot, bombardier, and navigator. Six were enlisted men: the engineer, who doubled as the top turret gunner, two waist gunners, the ball turret gunner, the radio operator, and the finally the tail gunner. Thirteen M–2 .50 caliber Browning machine guns protruded from the aircraft like quills on a porcupine. Each gun had a basic load of some 200 rounds that came in nine-yard belts packed in each ammunition can. Four positions mounted "twin-fifties": the chin turret under the nose, on the B–17G model like the *Bertie Lee*; then twin guns for the top, ball, and tail positions. The only crew members who did not man guns were the two pilots.[21] This is why the B–17 was a powerfully armed aircraft—one the German Luftwaffe feared.

These gun positions were not used in a haphazard display of American fireworks and individual "cowboy" bravado. Each position had an area, a field of fire with interlocking and overlapping coverage with the other gunners, providing an umbrella of defense for each aircraft. Then, each aircraft provided coverage and protection against German fighters for the entire formation by squadron and bomb group. This was the other great strength of the B–17 when flying tight formations.[22] Around them swarmed the fast-moving Allied fighters: P–47 Thunderbolts, P–51 Mustangs, and P–38 Lightnings.

The 8th Air Force and all American flying units by 1943 had developed an incentive system of total missions flown. After reaching a certain number, the crew would be reassigned other duties in the United States: recruiting, pilot and aircrew training, or war bonds. The first criterion was twenty-five missions—which the

famous *Memphis Belle* reached in May 1943.[23] Then in January 1944, the 8th Air Force received a new commander, Lt. Gen. James ("Jimmy") Doolittle, one of the most colorful American pilots and air force commanders in history. Before World War II, he had been a civilian airplane racer and stunt pilot with the reputation of being a dare-devil. While serving in the Army Air Corps, he was a flight training officer and leader. By 1941, Doolittle was a lieutenant colonel, qualified to fly the twin engine B–25 Mitchell medium bomber. He was chosen to command and lead the famous attack on Tokyo in April 1942, America's first offensive strike in the Pacific. His squadron of B–25s took off from the swaying deck of the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* in terrible weather. He was later awarded the Medal of Honor.

One of the first decisions Gen. Doolittle made was to scrap the twenty-five-mission policy because the Allied air effort needed experienced aircrew members. Soon, a new formula was created for each man, taking into account number of missions, number of months in the Europe Theater of Operations (ETO), and other factors. This policy changed the horizon of expectations for aircrews and individuals. Michael's crew had to fly twenty-seven missions before they could return home. Later in 1944, the policy changed and increased the mission total even more.

On January 22, 1944, Lt. Michael received his first of four Air Medals, one for every five combat missions flown. The Air Medal is an attractive medal: a diving eagle suspended from an orange and purple ribbon.[24] The missions soon added up, week after week. Sometimes the winter weather was so harsh that missions were scrapped for several days. Ground crews used those times to make their damaged and overworked aircraft airworthy.

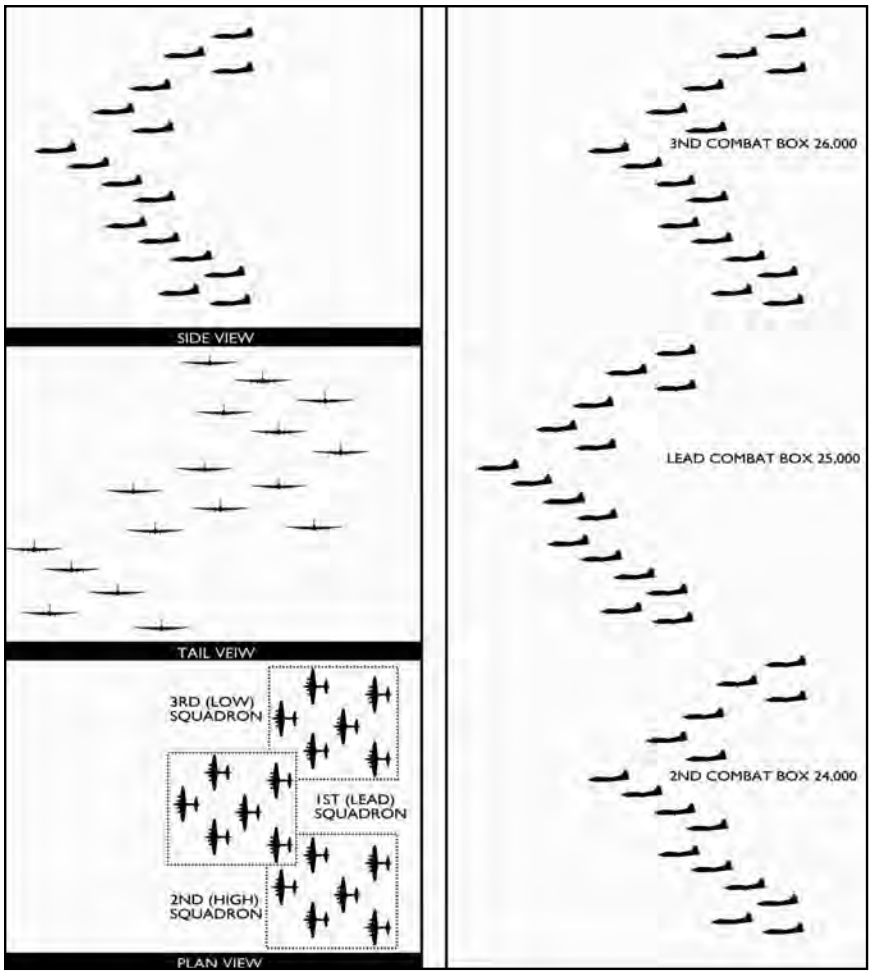
The Allied air campaign from late 1942 to 1944 had strategic objectives more than mere night and daylight bombing. At first the targets were mostly in France: German U-boat pens, docks, and repair facilities. Then in 1943 more missions were directed against German harbor cities, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Wilhelmshaven, and

other northern cities that had military targets. The logical next step was to strike at the German aircraft industry.

From the very beginning, dozens of German fighter groups and hundreds of squadrons deployed across France and Germany were a critical factor. The German fighter aircraft—the Focke-Wulf 190 and Messerschmitt 109—were superb airframes packing 20mm cannons and several rapid-fire machine guns of lesser calibers. The German pilots at this time were tough, hardened, and experienced aviators. Many had scored hundreds of victories against allied fighters and bombers. These wolves and jackals of the air perfected the art of the hunt. With the help of ground-based radar, the *Jägdgeschwader* (fighter groups), or JGs, were directed against the lumbering, densely grouped Allied bomber formations. With the incredible firepower that the bombers controlled, the Germans soon learned that the area most vulnerable to an attack was straight on at the twelve o'clock position and from above. At closing speeds nearing 500 mph, the German hunters had only seconds to fire their deadly 20mm cannons; the bomber gunners had even less time to engage straight on with their .50 caliber Browning machine guns.

The Allied formations were usually organized by bombardment groups with three separate squadrons at high, middle, and low levels, forming squadron "combat boxes" of some ten or so aircraft with wing tips only a few dozen feet apart, yet they were staggered left or right, and high and low. These combat boxes were the best solution for defense against German *Jägdflieger* ("fighters") and their tactics. Yet once the bomber formations flew through the menacing fighters and neared their targets, they were easy targets for another German antiaircraft weapon: flak.

As the tightly formed bomber groups plodded over Germany, France, and the Low Countries, they were extremely vulnerable to German "barrage boxes." Again, the Germans had nearly perfected the art of the kill by grouping eight or so Flak 40 128mm rapid-firing antiaircraft guns in batteries. Some were mounted on platforms or high places to provide better fields of fire. In Germany, especially surrounding major industrialized cities such as



Left, combat box stagger; right combat wing-three combat boxes. Front, side, and top views of a typical squadron "combat box" depicting high, middle, and low elements. Each bomb group had this organization. Diagram by Hyrum H. Fleek.

Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, and Bremerhaven, the Germans built 120-foot-high, concrete "flak towers" well above houses and buildings that afforded them a clear field of fire.[25] The Flak 40 had entered service in 1942 and, by this point in the war, was the most effective German antiaircraft gun. Each gun and mount weighed twelve tons, had a rate of fire of 20 rounds per minute, and could reach an altitude or range of 35,000 feet.[26]

The "barrage box" concentrated fire from several flak batteries into a tight "box" that the Germans plotted, based on knowing or deducing where the bomber formations would have to fly. The flak towers and "barrage boxes" near major bombing targets and other likely areas were part of the German defense scheme known as *Festung Europa* ("Fortress Europe"). The idea resembled duck hunting—aiming the shotgun into the flight path of the duck, waiting until the duck flew into the sights, and then firing. All the Germans had to do was wait for dozens of B–17s to fly into the barrage box. The combination of fighters and flak guns was lethal.[27]

* * *

Between Ed Michael's arrival in England on November 3, 1943, and April 11, 1944, his day of greatest challenge, the *Bertie Lee* flew bombing mission after bombing mission—twenty in all. The crew roster changed, due to illness or reassignment. "Mike," as some of his friends called him, honed his skills as a pilot, and his crew developed that brotherhood peculiar to warriors.

In early 1944, 8th Army Air Force planners developed a very aggressive plan later known as "Big Week." For several weeks, the weather over Europe was miserable; but then, beginning on February 20, the weather staff predicted a week of storm-free weather. The plan called for a "maximum effort," meaning that any craft that was airworthy and could carry a bomb would go up. At this time, the Army Air Forces were using the first onboard radar, the H2S/H2X, to help navigators pinpoint the target areas, though the tactic of BTO—"bombing through overcast"—was often used.[28]

The second day of "Big Week" was February 21, with 861 bombers taking to the skies. Hundreds of bombers in twenty-eight bomb groups, with dozens of squadrons from all three Air Divisions of the 8th Air Force winged their way to a dozen different targets in Germany. The Allied effort was particularly targeting aircraft factories in an effect to cripple Germany's vaunted Luftwaffe. Allied losses that day were sixteen bombers destroyed

or lost, another 105 damaged, and twenty-four airmen killed. It was actually a light day for losses.[29] Some historians and others believe that "Big Week" was the turning point in the air war. Gen. Doolittle commented after the war: "It is generally conceded that the war in air against Germany was won during the phase of our operations between the beginning of February 1944 and D-Day. The rate of attrition of the Luftwaffe's pilots exceeded Germany's rate of replacement."[30]

Lt. Michael and the *Bertie Lee*'s crew flew during "Big Week" and for two more months with no serious hits, no crew member wounded, and no disruptions of its assigned missions. On March 31, Lt. Michael was awarded his fourth Air Medal—twenty missions without a scratch or major incident. That would all change two weeks later.

* * *

April 11, 1944, Day of Days

The *Bertie Lee* crew began their morning mission routine at 0230 when the duty officer awakened them for breakfast at 0300. This was mission number twenty-six for eight of the ten crew members; with Gen. Doolittle's new "pro-rated" system they had one more mission before they would be rotated back to the United States. But as life, war, and fate would have it, the first snafu[31] occurred when two crew members missed breakfast, then didn't show up for the 0500 briefing.

Where were they?

Staff Sergeant Clarence Luce, the tail gunner, and Sergeant Jewell Phillips, engineer and top turret gunner, from Alto, Texas, were new, so recently assigned to the *Bertie Lee* that they were not billeted with the rest of the enlisted crew as per standard procedure. Another crew member had to find the duty sergeant, then find their barracks, and get them out of bed. This was Sergeant Phillips's first combat mission—and his last, though he did not

know it. They reached the aircraft at 0645, unfed and hardly ready for the 0700 engine start and line-up. One of the crew members asked the pilot how long the mission would be, and when they would return to base.

"Seven o'clock this evening," Lt. Michael called through the intercom.

"Oh, no, don't say that!" returned the airman. "I got a date with the prettiest girl in England tonight, and the last bus leaves for town at six!"[32]

The two tardy sergeants were not the only new members of the crew. Second Lieutenant Meredity Calvert, the navigator, from Lincoln Park, Pennsylvania, was also on his first mission with the *Bertie Lee*. The officers, four of them, attended the 0400 mission briefing. The mission had been posted the night before and involved 828 aircraft drawn from the 8th Air Force with several targets in Germany. One of the missions was a ball-bearing factory in Stettin, some seventy miles east of Berlin on the Oder River. Along with the *Bertie Lee*, 126 other B–17s from various groups and squadrons would fly to Stettin to drop thousands of tons of bombs. The day's mission would eventually cost five aircraft lost, 406 damaged, nineteen airmen dead, thirty-one wounded, and 126 missing—presumably dead or captured. The Americans claimed seventy-three enemy aircraft destroyed and twenty-four probable kills.[33]

Most of the flight paths to Germany were over the North Sea, crossing landward only when necessary to avoid flak and fighters. Yet to fly beyond Berlin was indeed a difficult proposition which would require more fuel, a longer flight time, and a reduction of the ordnance they could carry. Inevitably, it would also expose their aircraft to more time over enemy territory with more concentrated flak batteries to evade. For Lt. Michael and his crew, this was the most dangerous mission yet, and it did not start well.

The flight altitude was 13,000 feet, rather low, with *Bertie Lee* assigned to the high squadron as the third ship in the staggered formation of several elements. This was the most vulnerable position—aviators called it "Purple Heart Corner"—because it was

the closest ship in the formation for the *Jägdflieger* killers to attack. Over the North Sea, the crew tested their weapons; they were already above 10,000 feet so they were on supplemental oxygen and the ambient air temperature was at 10° F or less—not terribly cold.

Tail number 2–37931 lumbered along carrying ten American airmen, forty-two hundred-pound incendiary bombs, and the hope that after this mission and one more, seven of these men would return home to their families.

The huge aerial armada took various routes to its targets in Rostock, Politz, and Stettin. By the time the *Bertie Lee* crossed into Germany, the Allied fighters had already turned back because they reached their "bingo-time" a term for their fuel limit. The vulnerable bombers were flying with only their own guns for protection.

At 1045, enemy flak struck the left wing of the *Bertie Lee*, ripping a two-foot-wide gaping hole completely through the aluminum airfoil. Lt. Michael called to Fred Wilkins, a staff sergeant from Columbia Station, Ohio. He had the only clear view of the aircraft from underneath. Was any gas leaking from the wing tank? Wilkins called back the good news: no gas leak. Hundreds of gallons of valuable fuel were in that wing, so they had some good luck.

Minutes later, the crew saw a formation of B–24s fly over and ahead of their formation. Later in the far distance Michael and his co-pilot, Second Lieutenant Franklin Westberg, noticed some strange flashes on the distant horizon. They were not flak bursts. What they were witnessing were several B–17s in a formation three minutes ahead of them exploding from attacks by *Jägdgeschwader* 2, perhaps one of the most notorious and experienced fighter wings in the Luftwaffe. Its nickname was "Richthofen" after the famous World War I ace, Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, who was credited with eighty kills before he was shot down in 1918. In a few minutes, these German hunters would strike *Bertie Lee* and the 305th Bombardment Group.[34]

The first fighter attack seemed to come out of nowhere.

"It seemed like all hell had broken loose," Michael wrote in a later account. An estimated 125 ME–109s and 150 FW–190s

swarmed in like flies, mostly at twelve o'clock high; but after the first passes, the assault came from all directions. "Bombers and fighter planes were going down in flames," Michael recorded. "The enemy planes plunged toward the Fortresses in what seemed to be a suicide mission. Nothing like this had ever been encountered before by the crew of the 'Bertie Lee.' They [the Germans] flew directly through the bomber formations forcing them to give way or collide in mid-air."[35]

In the midst of the desperate fight, forward gun positions engaged a German fighter flying head on at *Bertie Lee*. "One enemy plane seemed to . . . level his ship off as one would level his rifle when drawing a bead on a target." Michael called over the intercom to the top turret gunner, Sergeant Phillips, "Get that plane!"

The top turret and also the "cheek" guns in the nose, manned by bombardier John Lieber and the navigator, Meredity Calvert, opened fire on the menacing fighter. Yellow and orange flames burst from the guns, both from the fighter and the bomber. Closer and closer, the two aircraft closed.

Then, the German killer burst into flames from underneath and reeled off into a steep dive. The crew of the *Bertie Lee* who saw the kill, hollered with delight. Other fighters were attacking also—diving, strafing, and firing as the gunners continued to return fire. The scene was like a bar brawl with aircraft instead of men.

Suddenly a blast rattled the aircraft, then another, followed by two more severe shocks. The bomber began to stagger as it flew along. Four direct hits from the German fighters' 20mm cannon had slammed into the bomber. The crew knew immediately that their B–17 was in trouble.

One blast destroyed the instrument panel and also lacerated Ed Michael's right thigh. The 20mm round had severed two throttle controls and cables on two engines and damaged the supercharger controls of the other two engines. The controls and gas and air mixture of all four engines would be difficult to manage the remainder of the flight. Blood pooled on the floor under Ed's seat.[36]

In moments the *Bertie Lee* began to lose altitude and airspeed. Michael and Frank Westberg did all they could to force the battered bomber back into formation—but it was no use. Slowly, the stricken aircraft fell out of the formation, well before reaching the target area. As Edward Michael was bleeding, and perhaps slowly dying, so was the *Bertie Lee*.[37]

The wind lashed through a gaping hole behind Westberg's head. Fortunately he had been wearing his steel helmet when the cannon round struck, or he may have been seriously wounded also. Then, suddenly, the aircraft began to roll and pitch wildly. German machine-gun fire had ripped through some of the flight control cables and linkages, besides wrecking the elevators, rudder, and trim taps on the elevators.

Then, violently the aircraft rolled over into a spin, dropping several thousand feet in only a few minutes. Michael and Westberg together wrestled the mammoth bomber to gain control against the forces of gravity, centrifugal force, velocity, and weight. Finally they managed to level off and fly the rattling aircraft along. Lt. Westberg later declared, "Lt. Michael was struggling with the controls, and I was helping out. . . . It took our combined weight and energy to get her flying level again. We lost about 3,000 feet, but did not lose the fighters that were following us down."[38]

The fighters began their gun runs again.

Then the most awful news came over the intercom: "Sir, the bombs are on fire."

The third of the four 20mm shells had hit the bomb bay, and some of the aircraft's forty incendiary bombs were ablaze.

Panic set in.

"Release the bombs!" Michael yelled over the intercom. He waited but felt no lift or shift as the heavy bombs dropped.

He called out again, "Release the bomb load!"

Again and again, he anxiously called. He did not know that the intercom between the pilot's station, bombardier, and navigator, was out.

The fire in the bomb bay was actually small at first, but at any moment the bombs could explode. When they did, the entire aircraft and its crew would disintegrate in an incendiary inferno. In great pain, Michael considered the options. If they bailed out over Germany, the entire crew of ten would be captured and interned in a prison camp for the remainder of the war. But could the heavily damaged bomber make it back to England? Lt. Ed Michael faced a dreadful decision—the first of several in the next few hours.

He decided the crew had to bail out.

With so many enemy fighters pouncing for the kill, he had to first evade these killers. Michael lowered the nose; and with Westberg's help, they dove into a bank of clouds to escape the German pursuers. They had turned back toward England, but their course and bearing were nearly impossible to determine. The navigator, Calvert, had lost his references and positions during the fighting, the evasive maneuvers, and the cloud cover. They were somewhere over northern Germany. Their last known position was Braunschweig, west of Berlin. Only two power instruments were operative—manifold pressure and one tachometer. The single flight instrument that had not been destroyed was the magnetic compass, not an especially reliable source for navigation.[39]

Onward flew the *Bertie Lee*, managing to evade German fighters as the bombs continued to burn.

Then Sergeant Phillips struggled up the catwalk past the smoldering bomb load and reached the cockpit. He stood in terror and agony, blood dripping down his face. A blast from the first 20mm salvo had struck and disabled the top turret gun that Phillips manned. Frank Westberg, in his statement for Michael's Medal of Honor nomination, wrote, "How the Engineer did not get killed, I do not know. That boy was in bad shape. He was bleeding about the head and his eye had been shot out of its socket. He held it in his hand, and was trying to feel his way around" the aircraft.[40]

Just then another blast smashed into the nose area of the crippled bomber. Bombardier John Lieber was thrown from his chin turret position backward into the navigator's position. In his

hands, he held the firing handles for the twin .50 caliber machine guns; the handle cables had been sheared off by the blast. Lieber was shaken but not hurt.

The fire continued to burn in the bomb bay.

Michael yanked on the emergency bomb-release handle mounted near his seat. Nothing.

Michael called out the order: "Bail out!"

The crew began to strap on their parachutes and bail out. In a few moments, six white canopies puffed open as these men floated down to a year of captivity. The circling German *Jägdfliegers* held their fire, allowing the descending jumpers to clear the air space before they resumed their attacks. Not all aviators observed this old-fashioned act of chivalry, though technically the Geneva Convention protected airmen during their exit and descent from a downed aircraft.[41]

Wasting no time as the men bailed out and floated down, Michael banked the aircraft and flew directly into a cloud to lose the German killers.

It worked.

For several minutes and miles, the *Bertie Lee* sliced through a thick cover of cumulus clouds. With the flight instruments shot away—especially the artificial horizon (gyro) and turn-and-slip indicator, it was nearly impossible to know if the plane was flying straight and level. This maneuver bought them a few minutes' respite from fighters and flak.

The bomber broke out at 2,500 feet above ground altitude and flew on. The Germans were gone; but the bombs were still burning and the badly wounded Sergeant Phillips was still on board. He could not don his chute by himself or deploy it.

Ed Michael gave the controls to Westberg, clambered out of his seat, and despite the searing pain from his bleeding wound, hobbled back to Phillips, helped him strap on his parachute, and then positioned him at the lower belly hatch. He gave him one last look, realizing that he might never see this brave airman again. Then he pushed the wounded man into the swirling air and pulled the rip-

cord as Phillips, groaning with agony, fell down and away from the limping bomber.[42]

In the rear, avoiding the flames as best he could, Michael tried the manual bomb release himself several times.

Nothing.

He crawled back to the cockpit and told Frank Westberg to bail out. He would fly the aircraft, allowing Westberg to escape.

Westberg refused.

They argued.

Then Michael got out of his seat and opened the door to the cockpit to show Westberg the dangerous situation in the bomb bay. As he did, flames lapped up a few feet toward the door.

The sight changed Westberg's mind. They both decided to bail out. Westberg turned on the autopilot and they began to struggle into their parachutes.

Just then, a lone German fighter swooped down on the crippled bomber and fired its lethal 20mm cannon.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Suddenly, to Michael and Westberg's utter surprise, the *Bertie Lee*'s nose gun fired back at the German.

The fighter made another pass; and the nose gun blasted dozens of .50 caliber rounds into the diving adversary. The German plane exploded in front of the lumbering bomber, spraying burning fuel and metal. Pieces of the fighter struck the right wing of the bomber.[43]

Michael immediately yelled, "Who is it?" and struggled into the navigator and bombardier's stations in the nose, down under the cockpit. There he saw Lieutenant Lieber, the bombardier, manning a "cheek" gun in the nose.

Michael was mad as hell. He demanded why Lieber had not bailed out.

Just as angry, Lieber showed Michael his parachute, shredded by enemy cannon fire. "My parachute's no good with a 20-millimeter shell hole in it," Lieber shouted above the noise.

Three men and only two serviceable parachutes. What to do?

"Take my chute," Michael pleaded. "For God's sake, jump. This plane is doomed."

"No, Mike, if we cannot both jump, we'll go down together."

Michael tossed his parachute on the deck and said, "All right, if that's the way you feel. But maybe this will change your mind. The bombs are on fire," he pointed to the bomb bay. "If you are planning on staying in this plane, get rid of those bombs if you have to kick them out."[44]

Westberg from the pilot's station yelled that Lieber could have his chute. Then the three argued about who would bail out. Michael cut through the wrangling by making the decision that the only option was to nurse the battered bomber back to England. He crawled back to his pilot seat.

Michael was still losing blood. His aircraft was crippled. It had weak engines, damaged flight controls, inoperative hydraulic and electrical systems, no instruments, no radio, no navigational aides, three men, two parachutes, and forty-two incendiary bombs in a burning bomb bay. It was a flying death-trap. The fire had burned a hole four feet long and two feet wide in the side of the fuselage. The airframe could snap in half at any minute.

Furthermore, they had no real idea where they were. They had been northeast of Berlin when they were first hit, then flew a 180° heading for some time during the fighter attack, then had turned back, flying a 350° heading as they maneuvered to avoid flak and fighters.[45]

After some effort, Lieber manually opened the bomb-bay doors and released the bombs that fell away to earth with smoke trailing after them.

Michael had just strapped himself back in his seat when he felt the lift from the dropping bombs. He looked at his watch. It was 1115. The *Bertie Lee* had been airborne four hours and had sustained the first hit at 1045—approximately thirty minutes. Amazingly, the bombs had been on fire for about twenty minutes but had not exploded.

They flew along over northern Germany, hoping to reach the safety of the North Sea, west of the Denmark Jutland peninsula

Then flak burst a few hundred yards ahead of them. Then came a closer burst. Flak hit the rudder and elevators once again. The pilots could feel it in the controls.

Michael and Westberg decided to drop to treetop level. In a few minutes, the *Bertie Lee* was winging its way about two hundred miles per hour only fifty feet above the trees and farm houses, barns, and German landscape. They saw a German soldier on the ground aim his rifle at the bomber and fire. After fifteen minutes at this low altitude, they climbed back to about 2,500 feet and flew safely along for about five minutes.

Then, once again a lone German fighter engaged them. Lieber crawled back along the cat-walk past the jammed-open bomb-bay doors. He fired the waist gun, making some hits on the German. Michael once again flew into clouds to evade the fighter.

It worked again.

The minutes stretched out agonizingly as the *Bertie Lee* descended to a low altitude to avoid more fighters and flak attacks. They flew so low that Michael and the others thought their wings might hit rooftops or trees. They saw people on the ground smiling and waving up at them. Were they over France? Holland? Belgium? They did not know. Some of civilians seemed to be pointing, and the aircrew interpreted these gestures as the direction to England.

In the far distance, the crew saw a coastline. They dared to hope that perhaps the worst was over. Lieber was trying to apply first aid to Michael, who was still losing blood. The floor of the cockpit was sticky and smeared with it.

It was just past noon, and the *Bertie Lee* was now over water, chugging slowly at a low level. The aircraft was not over the open sea. It was actually crossing near Zuider Zee, a large inlet of the Netherlands.[46] In the distance, the flyers saw two flak towers on the causeway a mile or two apart. The flak guns still had the bomber's range and opened fire.

Lt. Michael dared not take evasive action. The *Bertie Lee* was only about ten feet above the water. Accidentally dipping a wing into the water could cause the B–17 to cartwheel and crash. What occurred next was amazing. As the bomber approached the dyke, the flak guns fell silent. The antiaircraft guns were designed to engage targets at high altitudes. The Germans could not depress their guns enough to sight in on the low-flying stricken bomber.[47]

In minutes, the American metal bird flew out over the North Sea, and Michael coaxed the aircraft up to about 3,000 feet, giving them time to react in the event of engine failure or other problems. Later, Lt. Michael wrote in his personal account that he counted five separate miracles.[48] He and Frank Westberg also prayed together, though the co-pilot remarked he was not a believer.

Then for the third time, a lone German *Jägdflieger* attacked the weakened plane. Its 20mm cannon fire burst near the aircraft but missed. There were no clouds to hide in. Lieber had fired all the ammunition on board. The bomber was defenseless.

But after a couple of gun runs, the menacing hunter was gone.

Vanished.

To a man, the three crew members always thought that it was either a miracle or that the German flyer felt sorry for the crippled B–17 and broke off the engagement.

By 1330 as they flew farther across the North Sea, they wrestled with the problem of navigation. Where were they? How many miles away was England? What if their course was too far north and completely missed Great Britain? Every minute or two, the two pilots looked at the "mag" compass. It became an obsession. And what about fuel? Would they have enough?

And could Lt. Michael make it? Somewhere over the North Sea, he slipped into unconsciousness. After hours of intense strain and pain, a half dozen attacks, the loss of his men, uncertainty over the aircraft's ability to fly, the safety of his last two crewmembers, and the loss of blood were taking a ferocious toll.

In the next hour, they spotted a British fighter and then a destroyer. Their hearts lifted.

The longer the *Bertie Lee* flew. the worse the weather became. The ceiling and visibility decreased, and Westberg had to descend to retain a visual reference with the horizon. At times they were only ten feet above the English Channel.

Finally, with the ceiling down to two hundred feet, Westberg and Lieber spotted the coast. For the next hour, the *Bertie Lee*, damaged so badly it would never fly again, crept closer to land. As the last miracle, Ed Michael regained consciousness and took control of the B–17 bomber. The battered bomber's landing gear would not lower, the windscreen was demolished due to flak hits; the rigging controls of the engines were badly mangled, the flight controls and hydraulics were nearly nonexistent, and the ball turret gun barrels and the bomb bay doors were stuck downward.

Such a dangerous situation would require phenomenal skill.

According to Michael's Medal of Honor citation, "Despite these apparently insurmountable obstacles, he landed the plane without mishap."[49]

* * *

Because of wartime security, Ed Michael's wife in Arizona and parents in Chicago learned no immediate details about this nearly fatal mission. On May 25, 1944, six weeks after this dangerous mission, the War Department sent Bertie Lee Michael a telegram at her home in Douglas, Arizona. It printed Ed Michael's rank, the date of the action. The crucial message was the line: SLIGHTLY SEVERELY WOUNDED IN ACTION IN THE EUROPEAN AREA. "Severely" was crossed out.[50] It did not say where the action had occurred or where Ed Michael was.

Ed Michael also felt the frustrations of censorship and security during war. He was not allowed to write home any details; but from his hospital room, he thought of a clever way to send word to his family in Chicago. He wrote about the close call of "Skip," his own boyhood nickname, on April 17, 1944:

Dear Mom & Dad:

Well, I haven't heard from anyone back home as yet nor from any of the neighborhood boys that may be out here but I did hear about Skip from one of the boys who knows him very well.

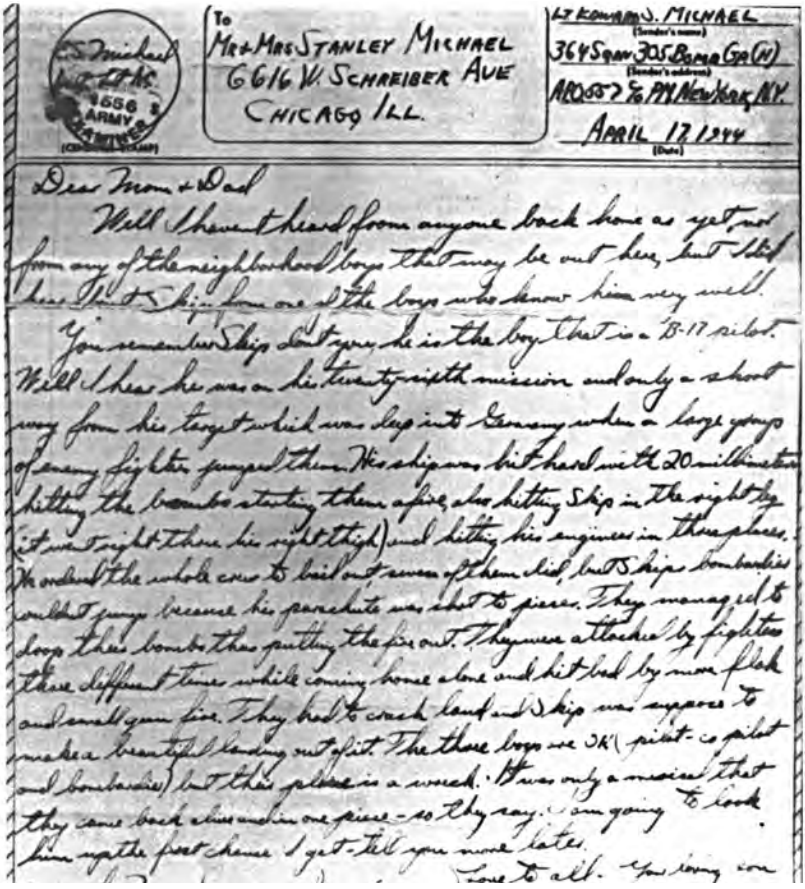
You remember Skip don't you? He is the boy that is a B-17 pilot. Well, I hear that he was on his twenty-sixth mission and only a short way from his target which was deep into Germany when a large group of enemy fighters jumped them. His ship was hit hard with 20 millimeter hitting the bombs starting them afire, also hitting Skip in the right leg (it went right through his right thigh) and hitting his engines in several places. He ordered the whole crew to bail out, seven of them did, but Skip's bombardier couldn't jump because his parachute was shot to pieces. They managed to get to drop their bombs thus putting the fire out. They were attacked by fighters three different times while coming home alone and hit bad by more flak and small gun fire. They had to crash land and Skip was able to make a beautiful landing out of it. The three boys were Skip (pilot, co pilot and bombardier) but the plane was a wreck. It was only a miracle that they came back alive and in one piece—so they say. I am going to look him up the first chance I get—tell you more later.

Kisses to mom. I love you all.

Edward[51]

Now Bertie Lee and the Michael family at least knew that Ed was safe though wounded, but that soon he would be coming home. The war was over for him. Edward must have been delighted for that circumstance to a degree. But his heart ached for his seven crewmembers who were now listed as missing in action. Frank Westberg and John Lieber came to the hospital to visit Ed on occasion. They naturally talked about the mission and also their comrades.

All seven members who bailed out landed near Helmstedt, were soon captured and were interned in Luft Stalag 17B near Krems, Austria. For a year, these men endured the privation and hardships of prison life under sometimes brutal and austere conditions. Sergeant Phillips was repatriated through Sweden due to



To
Mr+Mrs Stanley Michael
6616 W. Schreiber Ave
Chicago Ill.

Lt Edward S. Michael
364 Sqdn 305 Bomb Gp (H)
APO 557 % PM New York NY.
April 17 1944

Dear Mom + Dad

Well I have not heard from anyone back home as yet, nor from any of the neighborhood boys that may be out here, but I did hear from Skip. One of the boys who knows him very well.

You remember Skip don't you, he is the boy that is a B-17 pilot. Well I hear he was on his twenty-eighth mission and only a short way from his target when he was shot into. Germany when a large group of enemy fighter grouped them. His ship was hit hard with 20 millimeter hitting the bomb station there afire, also hitting Skip in the right leg (it was right there his right thigh) and hitting his engineer in three places. He ordered the whole crew to bail out seven of them did, but Skip bombardier couldn't jump because his parachute was about to pieces. They managed to drop their bombs there putting the fire out. They were attacked by fighters three different times while coming home alone and hit bad by anti flak and small gun fire. They had to crash land and Skip was supposed to make a beautiful landing but didn't. The three boys are OK (pilot - co pilot and bombardier) but their plane is a wreck. It was only a miracle that they came back alive and in one piece - so they say. I am going to look him up the first chance I get. Tell you more later.

Love to all. Your loving son

Ed Michael's handwritten letter to the Michael family about "Skip's" adventures.

his severe wounds. Eventually on May 3, 1945, American soldiers reached the camp and freed the five hundred remaining American airmen.[52]

Four months earlier on January 10, 1945, Bertie Lee Michael, Stanley and Lillian Michael, and Lieutenant John Lieber watched President Franklin D. Roosevelt present the Medal of Honor to Captain Edward Michael in the Oval Office. It was the last Medal of Honor ceremony at which President Roosevelt officiated. Frank Westberg and John Lieber had already been awarded the Silver Star Medal for their valor that day. All three officers had also received

the Distinguished Flying Cross, the highest American award for valor in flight.[53]

* * *

Captain Edward Michael settled into a life-long career with the U.S. Air Force, totaling thirty-one years. He and Bertie moved to Love Field in Dallas, Texas, where Ed spent two years as a "ferry pilot," transporting B–17s from station to station, including from overseas bases back to the States. Though the great and dependable B–17 bomber had had less than ten years of service, the demands of war and peace were different. Within months of the end of hostilities, thousands of perfectly good fighters, bombers, and transport aircraft were taken to the "bone yard." Many service members felt the same way.

In 1947 the U.S. Air Force was created; and at this time, Ed was transferred to Hill Air Force Base in Utah. It was Ed Michael's first encounter with the Mormons of Utah as a community and culture. He made many temporary duty trips and also learned to fly other aircraft such as the reliable C–47 (the civilian DC–3), and then the new and exciting B–52 at McConnell Air Force Base outside Wichita, Kansas.

In 1950, the Korean War commenced. Later still, the USA became enmeshed with war in Vietnam. Michael's official documents cite the Air Force regulation that, as a recipient of the Medal of Honor, he was exempt from duty in a combat zone, although he served in other assignments.[54]

Bertie Lee and Ed divorced during these hectic years of many transfers, temporary assignments, and new aircraft training schools. They had a son, Gary Michael, and an adopted daughter, Nancy Lee Michael. Ed was promoted to major on January 14, 1955. One of his career challenges was that he lacked college credentials, unlike many older officers who had gone to college before World War II. Newer commissioned officers had acquired college degrees after the war, which was one of the requirements for a commissioned of-

ficer, especially in peace time. In 1957 while stationed in Utah as a recruiting officer assigned to Fort Douglas, he met Louise on a blind date. She was a devout LDS woman from Springville, Utah. They married on November 21, 1958, and together they began a wonderful marriage of nearly forty years. Religion was a major facet of their lives. Ed was Catholic, a believer, but not always a practitioner, whereas Louise was a faithful Latter-day Saint. Ed attended LDS services with Louise and also Catholic mass on occasion.

For the next twenty years, Ed and Louise lived and served in several places: Kelly AFB in Texas, and McConnell again. In 1959 they moved to Travis AFB near Sacramento, California; and though they served other tours elsewhere, they returned so frequently to Travis that it became their home station. The Michaels served in Lajes Air Base in the Azores, part of Portugal, in the mid-Atlantic. There they adopted Wendy, their only child.[55]

Back in the United States, Ed read the Book of Mormon and eventually took the missionary lessons. Louise knew that the decision about converting had to be his alone; she did not even sit in on the lessons, but she was thrilled when he told her, "I don't know how anyone can read this [Book of Mormon] and deny it that it was from God." In 1976, he was baptized into the LDS Church. Two years later, he and Louise were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, and Wendy was sealed to them. Ed was comfortable with his religious decisions, and new life.

As a recipient of the Medal of Honor, Ed Michael had a certain degree of celebrity status among his Air Force comrades, friends, and even among the general public. On May 2, 1963, Ed attended a White House ceremony hosted by President John F. Kennedy for Medal of Honor recipients. Ed quipped, "It sure was nice that the president had this special birthday party for me." It was, indeed, Ed's birthday. Later the passenger terminal that Ed supervised at Lajes Air Base in the Azores was renovated and named after him. He loved the opportunity to meet other recipients at Medal of Honor Society reunions and ceremonies. He became friends with many fellow recipients, but he was especially close to Lt. Gen.

President John F. Kennedy greets Maj. Ed Michael at the White House, 1963.

Jimmy Doolittle, his former commander of the 8th Air Force in Europe. He also became fast friends with fellow Mormon Bernie Fisher. The friends often went fishing together, especially after Ed retired in 1971.

Being a war hero had its sour moments also. He did not like to speak to groups, but he loved to meet people and talk one to one, or, on occasion, to small groups.[56] While still on active duty, Ed came home one day extremely upset. Louise tried to understand what had happened, but Ed refused to open up. All he said was, "I will never wear this in public again!" He jerked the Medal of Hon-

or ribbon from his rack of ribbons. He never explained what happened. Louise could only speculate. Had someone made an unkind comment? Had someone pestered Ed about the mission on that day in April 1944? Had someone sneered at his "special" status?[57]

Ed, Louise, and Wendy lived off base near Travis after he retired. Fishing, friends, family, church, and working around the house were his joys. Ed was thrilled to attend reunions with his former aircrew or other comrades, especially the fortieth anniversary of the flight day, in 1984. Co-pilot Frank Westberg and bombardier John Lieber joined Ed and Louise for the celebration; it was a touching occasion.[58]

At age seventy-six, Ed began to fail physically. He died in 1994 and was buried in Springville, Utah, Louise's hometown, a place where he had never lived. In July 1997, Louise Michael was invited to Lajes Air Base in the Azores as the guest of honor when the beautiful, renovated dining facility was rededicated in memory of Lt. Col. Edward Michael, USAF (retired), and recipient of the Medal of Honor.

Perhaps one of the best epitaphs for the memory of Ed Michael was one he wrote himself in 1992 when he applied for a new decoration created by Congress, the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal. In the "remarks" section of the form, he described in a few words his career in the military, including his service during the attack on December 7, 1941. Then he added: "In closing may I proudly say that I feel that the short time I served as a G.I. [enlisted man] still seems more rewarding (due to my being at Wheeler [Air Field] during that surprise attack) than all my other (31 yrs) put together."[59]

Edward S. Michael

Rank and organization: First Lieutenant, U.S. Army Air Forces, 364th Bomber Squadron, 305th Bomber Group. Place and date: Over Germany, 11 April 1944. Entered service at: Chicago, Ill. Born: 2 May 1918, Chicago, Ill. G.O. No.: 5, 15 January 1945.

Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as pilot of a B–17 aircraft on a heavy-bombardment mission to Germany, 11 April 1944. The group in which 1st Lt. Michael was flying was attacked by a swarm of fighters. His plane was singled out and the fighters pressed their attacks home recklessly, completely disregarding the Allied fighter escort and their own intense flak. His plane was riddled from nose to tail with exploding cannon shells and knocked out of formation, with a large number of fighters following it down, blasting it with cannon fire as it descended. A cannon shell exploded in the cockpit, wounded the copilot, wrecked the instruments, and blew out the side window. 1st Lt. Michael was seriously and painfully wounded in the right thigh. Hydraulic fluid filmed over the windshield making visibility impossible, and smoke filled the cockpit. The controls failed to respond and 3,000 feet were lost before he succeeded in leveling off. The radio operator informed him that the whole bomb

bay was in flames as a result of the explosion of 3 cannon shells, which had ignited the incendiaries. With a full load of incendiaries in the bomb bay and a considerable gas load in the tanks, the danger of fire enveloping the plane and the tanks exploding seemed imminent. When the emergency release lever failed to function, 1st Lt. Michael at once gave the order to bail out and 7 of the crew left the plane. Seeing the bombardier firing the navigator's gun at the enemy planes, 1st Lt. Michael ordered him to bail out as the plane was liable to explode any minute. When the bombardier looked for his parachute he found that it had been riddled with 20mm. fragments and was useless. 1st Lt. Michael, seeing the ruined parachute, realized that if the plane was abandoned the bombardier would perish and decided that the only chance would be a crash landing. Completely disregarding his own painful and profusely bleeding wounds, but thinking only of the safety of the remaining crewmembers, he gallantly evaded the enemy, using violent evasive action despite the battered condition of his plane. After the plane had been under sustained enemy attack for fully 45 minutes, 1st Lt. Michael finally lost the persistent fighters in a cloud bank. Upon emerging, an accurate barrage of flak caused him to come down to treetop level where flak towers poured a continuous rain of fire on the plane. He continued into France, realizing that at any moment a crash landing might have to be attempted, but trying to get as far as possible to increase the escape possibilities if a safe landing could be achieved. 1st Lt. Michael flew the plane until he became exhausted from the loss of blood, which had formed on the floor in pools, and he lost consciousness. The copilot succeeded in reaching England and sighted an RAF field near the coast. 1st Lt. Michael finally regained consciousness and insisted upon taking over the controls to land the plane. The undercarriage was useless; the bomb bay doors were jammed open; the hydraulic system and altimeter were shot out. In addition, there was no airspeed indicator, the ball turret was jammed with the guns pointing downward, and the flaps would not respond. Despite these apparently insurmountable obstacles, he landed the plane without mishap.

Notes

1. Flak is short for *Flugzeugabwehrkanone*, literally, antiaircraft gun. Ian V. Hogg, *German Artillery of World War Two*, 22.

2. George K. Schubert, Officer Commanding RAF Station, Grimsby, Memorandum to Operations Officer, 364th Bomb Squadron, 305th Bombardment Group, USAAF, Chelveston, April 17, 1944, in Edward Michael, Official Military Records, Louise Michael Collection.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. This passage is drawn from Edward Michael's personal account, "A Tale of Two Missions," n.d., Louise Michael Collection, photocopy in my possession courtesy of Louise Michael; Hal Bamford, "Last Mission for the Bertie Lee"; John L. Frisbee, "Gauntlet of Fire."

6. Richard G. Davis, *Bombing the European Axis Powers: A Historical Digest of the Combined Bomber Offensive, 1939–1945*, 42.

7. Roger A. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 126.

8. Davis, *Bombing the European Axis Powers*, 11, 20.

9. Ibid., 42.

10. Louise Michael, telephone interview by Sherman Fleek, September 19, 2009.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Edward Michael, Official Military Records. in Louise Michael Collection.

15. Frederick A. Johnsen, *B–17 Flying Fortress: The Symbol of Second World War Air Power*, 35–40.

16. Bill Gunston, *Aircraft of World War 2*, 23; Johnsen, *B–17 Flying Fortress*, 59.

17. Johnsen, *B–17 Flying Fortress*, 66–72.

18. Ibid., 70–74.

19. Martin Bowman, *B–17 Flying Fortress Units of the Eighth Air Force (Part 1)*, 14–15, 100.

20. Ibid., 76–77.

21. Johnsen, *B–17 Flying Fortress*, 58–59.

22. *Target: Germany, The Army Air Forces' Official Story of the VIII Bomber Command's First Year over Europe*, 115–16.

23. Bowman, *B–17 Flying Fortress Units*, 49.

24. Edward Michael, January 22, 1944, Official Military Records.

25. Johnsen, *B–17 Flying Fortress*, 90–92.

26. Hogg, *Antiaircraft Artillery*, 113–15.

27. *Target: Germany*, 34.

28. Bowman, *B–17 Flying Fortress Units*, 69–70; Roger A. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth: Units, Men and Machines*, 108–10.

29. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth*, 184.

30. Ibid., 214.

31. U.S. military slang for "situation normal: all f——d up."

32. Edward Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 3; and his "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 3. He did not identify Staff Sergeant Luce's hometown.

33. Freeman, *The Mighty Eighth War Diary*, 217.

34. Bowman, *B–17 Flying Fortress Units*, 9, 11–12.

35. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 4; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 5.

36. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 4; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 5.

37. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 4; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 5.

38. Lt. Franklin Westberg, Statement, June 5, 1944, Medal of Honor Nomination, in Edward Michael, Official Military Records.

39. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 4; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 5.

40. Westberg, Statement, June 5, 1944.

41. According to the Geneva Convention, to which Germany was a signatory, escaping airmen were protected from enemy gunfire both aloft and on the ground until they landed. Then they could be engaged. Airborne troops, however, were not afforded the same protections.

42. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 6; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 7.

43. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 6.

44. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 7 ; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 7.

45. "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 8.

46. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 9 ; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 10

47. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 9.

48. Michael, "A Tale of Two Missions," 8; "Lt. Michael's Own Story," 9.

49. Edward Michael, Medal of Honor Citation, G.O. 5, January 15 1945, Michael, Official Military Records. The order for the citation,

the best primary source, is housed at the Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

50. War Department, telegram to Bertie Lee Michael, May 25, 1944; in Edward Michael, Official Military Records.

51. Edward Michael, Letter to Michael Family, April 17, 1944, Louise Michael Collection.

52. Arthur Koscino, Interviewed by Sherman Fleek, July 14, 2009. Koscino was an aircrew member and later a prisoner of war.

53. The Medal of Honor presented to airmen of the Army Air Forces was the 1904 Gillespie version used by the U.S. Army. The U.S. Air Force developed and sanctioned its own design of the Medal of Honor in 1963. In 1966, LDS recipient Bernard Fisher was the first Air Force person to receive the new-minted design.

54. AF Form 11, Michael Official Military Records; comment in item block 48, "Not to be asgd [assigned] in active combat area under provisions of AFR [Air Force Regulation] 35–30." Some recipients from World War II did, in fact, serve either in Korea or Vietnam. George Wahlen, Mormon recipient during World War II, also served in Vietnam. (See Chapter 6.)

55. Louise Michael, interview, September 19, 2009.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Edward Michael, Application for Pearl Harbor Commemorative Medal, February 25, 1992, Michael Official Military Records.

Glossary

ACS	Air Command Squadron: An U.S. Army Air Forces unit that acts as a headquarters for larger units.
AEF	American Expeditionary Force.
AGL	Above Ground Level: altitude above the ground.
AGOS	Air Ground Operation Support: non-aircrew support units or missions.
AOR	Area of Responsibility: usually a geographical area, or a task, for which a commander and unit are responsible.
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnamese Army).
Battalion	An organization of several companies in the Army or Marine Corps commanded normally by a lieutenant colonel (a major during World War I) of some 800–1,200 men.
Brigade	A large ground unit consisting of two or more regiments, commanded by a brigadier general (one star), especially during World War I.
CAP	Combined Action Program: A U.S. Marine program in Vietnam that provided civil affairs and civil works projects and programs. — Combat Air Patrol.

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Index

Note: Makes and models of weapons are not indexed. For military units, see the individual country.

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

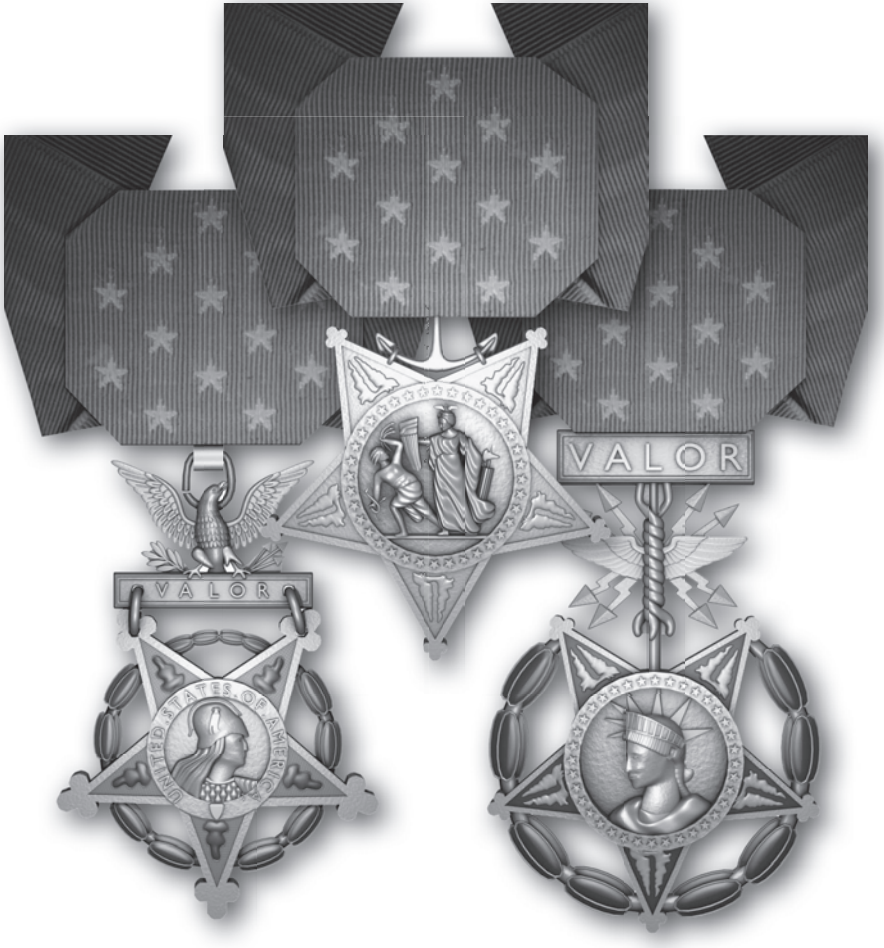
W

Y–Z

About the Author

Sherman L. Fleek is a retired US Army lieutenant colonel and serves as the Command Historian at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He has several books and dozens of articles published on military, frontier army, Civil War, Mexican War, and Mormon military history including two historical novels based on the Mormon Battalion and the Army of the West. He previously served as command historian for Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C, and his last assignment on active duty was Chief Historian, National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Virginia. His son, Hyrum H. Fleek, is a budding graphic artist who designed the awards and decorations for this book and also most of the maps.

Decorations of Mormon Medal of Honor Recipients



Lieutenant Colonel Edward S. Michael U.S. Army / USAF

Medal of Honor

Distinguished Flying Cross

Purple Heart

Air Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

Good Conduct Medal

American Defense Medal

American Campaign Medal

Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal

European-Africa-Mediterranean Campaign Medal

World War II Victory Medal

National Defense Service Medal

Command Pilot Badge (US Air Force)