

MEHITABEL'S ODYSSEY

TESTIMONIES

Louis and Philippe CHARTIER

This article is to complete those previously published in issues #24 and #28 of Belle-Isle Histoire Magazine relating the crashes of two Flying Fortresses on Belle-Isle on June 28, 1943, one in Bourdouluc and the other in the Grands-Sables Bay.

Mehitabel, a one-eyed cat

At first sight, the name of Mehitabel, with its strange ring, will mean nothing to you. It was the one given by the first crew to the B-17F #42-29887, marked TU-K, that crashed on Belle-Isle in June of 1943.



Mehitabel's tail

Only known picture of the plane. It was given to Tom Costello by Wesley Clendenning, a ground crew member (shown above).

Lieutenant Carraway's crew received the plane in April 1943 at Pueblo, AFB, Colorado to take it to Polebrook in England via Nebraska, Michigan, Maine, Newfoundland and Scotland.

Before departure, it was traditional in the US Army Air Corps to ask the crew to choose a name for the plane. This name was then prominently

displayed with the other markings on the plane. Fletcher Cupp explains how the name Mehitabel was chosen :

"The choice was a difficult one. Many names were offered by the crew members on request of the pilot, John B. Carraway, names which were either hooted down or given groans. Finally, I suggested "Mehitabel." Those four syllables must have sounded pleasant to my crewmates' ears because they immediately shouted in unison, "Mehitabel ! Mehitabel ! Where in the world did you get that one?" Obviously they were unfamiliar with the writings of Don Marquis, a newspaper columnist of the '30's. He imagined two characters in his column, a cockroach and a battered alley cat named Archie and Mehitabel, respectively. This one was an animal who scrounged a living out of the trash bins of the neighborhood, fought with other cats which left her scarred and with one eye permanently damaged, but who had an indomitable spirit reflected in the chorus of her song:

"Whotthehell! Watthehell! Watthehell!"

After giving my explanation, the crew members thought that the name represented well the B-17 and its crew's state of mind".

The B-17 “Flying Fortress”



**B-17 assembly line in Seattle in
December 1943
(Boeing Photo)**

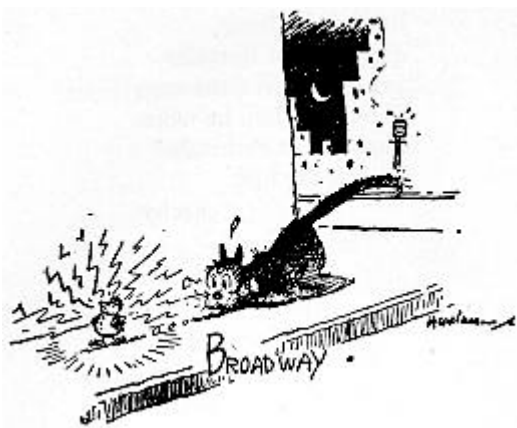
The prototype Boeing 299 was introduced in July 1935. Because its performance exceeded US Army Air Corps expectations, the government ordered a pilot production of 13 planes named YB-40.

Its thick armor and amazing capacity to withstand the punishment inflicted by German fighters and ground flak, earned it the name of “Flying Fortress”.

12,731 B-17s were produced between 1935 and June 1945 at a rate that reached sixteen planes a day during the summer of 1944! Alone, Boeing couldn’t manufacture the number of B-17s ordered by the USAAC. Production contracts had to be shared with rivals Douglas and Lockheed. Douglas produced 3000 B-17s, Models F and G, in its plant in Long Beach, California, and Lockheed produced 2750, Models F and G, in the Vega Plant in Burbank, California.

The B-17F, #42-29887, was built by Boeing in 1942, as indicated by its number. It was produced in the Seattle, Washington plant and delivered to the US Army Air Corps in Denver, Colorado on March 2, 1943. It cost the American Government \$316,426, a figure that represents about \$3,100,000 in today’s monetary terms¹¹.

The 351sts artist was asked to set about his work. Though he specialized in tantalizing, scantily-dressed women, he applied himself to paint on the plane’s nose a big alley cat with a blinded eye, glaring balefully at the world out of its one good eye.



**Archie and Mehitabel Ó
Don Marquis –Doubleday Publishing**

Across the ocean

“The crew was proud of our new plane. Unbidden, we took pains to keep her as clean as possible. She became a sort of second home to us. We flew an 11- hour shakedown in her and, after our pre-overseas furloughs, loaded her down for the trip overseas, via Kearney, Nebraska; Selfridge Field, Michigan; and Presque Isle, Maine. Here we were grounded for eight days by snow. Each night, members of the crew took turns guarding the plane, although we were certain there were no German spies. Finally, we moved on to Gander Lake, Newfoundland. After a final loading with gasoline we took off into the night on the flight to Prestwick, Scotland, and then on to Polebrook, where we landed on April 15, 1943.”¹

Mehitabel had only 75 days remaining before her fatal crash in Bourdouluc on June 28, 1943.

Lt. Carraway’s crew hadn’t been able to enjoy Mehitabel for a long time because, once in England, all the planes

were “pooled” and assigned daily to various crews.

Once at Polebrook, the airmen met a new member of the Bomb Group, Clark Gable. He had been sent to England as a gunner to produce action shots for a propaganda film called “Combat America”. The veterans of the 351st Bomb Group still remember the astonished looks of young English girls when they went to the Polebrook pub and found themselves in the company of Clark Gable^{IV}.

Target St Nazaire

On that fateful June 28th, Mehitabel was assigned for the fourth time to 1st Lt. Derward Copeland. He had under his command a crew comprised of Lieutenants D. Parker, copilot, R. Reback, navigator, and C. Shanley, bombardier. The plane’s guns were manned by Sergeants V. Klanka, J. Costello, F. Hanan, E. Tuminski, R. Wood and M. Ranum. The last four were substitutes for crew members grounded due to illness or injury.



**Position of the 2 waist gunners in a B-17
(USAAF Photo)**

When the crews learned that their mission for that day was St. Nazaire, nobody showed any reaction, but inside they knew that this Monday

wouldn’t be a simple walk in the park¹. They knew well the reputation of St. Nazaire, a highly fortified target crews nicknamed “Flak Alley”. Shortly after crossing the English Channel, the P-47 fighter escort turned back, and the airmen sensed that serious matters were about to begin. As the B-17 formations approached the target, they were detected by the German Messerschmitt 109 and Focke-Wulf 190 fighters. Soon Mehitabel was hit by piercing rounds from 20mm guns.

At this moment, Lt. Shanley was struck on both hands and one arm. A few minutes later, three flak explosions ripped into the body of the B-17.



**1st Lt. and Pilot Derward Copeland
photographed by the German services at the
beginning of his imprisonment**

Copeland remembers only one hit; Shanley is sure that three explosions shook the plane.^{III}

¹ Plans called for 191 B-17s, representing 10 Bomb Groups, to participate in the mission. Of that number, 158 actually took part in the raid on St. Nazaire. Among them, 8 were lost: 1 from the 91st, 3 from the 95th and 4 from the 351st (2 went down on Belle Isle). (Mighty Eighth War Diary, Roger A. Freeman, Jane’s Publishing Company).



**Lt. Charles W. Shanley
The Bombardier**

Before reaching the target, three airmen were killed, all substitute crew members for that day: S/Sgt. Frank Hanan, the right waist gunner, S/Sgt. Edward Tuminski, the left waist gunner, and Sgt. Merwyn Ranum, the ball turret gunner.²



Sgt. Merwyn A. Ranum, whose burned body was found in Bourdouluc in the wreck of Mehitabel, together with those of Sgts Hanan and Tuminski

The ungovernable aircraft

The impact of the explosion damaged the controls of Mehitabel. The plane went into a loop and began to veer sharply to the right. Pilot Copeland used all his strength to turn the plane to the left and to put it back in the formation^{IV}. Copilot Parker had both feet braced against the steering column in a desperate attempt to control the

² "Chuck" Shanley remembered that Ranum had come up out of the ball to reload his guns, "*Had he been in the turret, he might have escaped*"^{III}.

plane. Copeland switched on the autopilot, but to no avail. The flak shell probably cut the cables to the elevator in the tail. After a hard fight with the controls, Mehitabel was finally leveled off, but was now out of formation. On orders from Copeland, Lt. Shanley, the bombardier, dropped the bomb payload into the open sea.



**Frank W. Hanan when he enlisted
(Walla Walla Union Bulletin Photo)**

S/Sgt. John Costello, the tail gunner, and T/Sgt. Vincent Klanka, the radio operator, begin firing the waist guns abandoned by Hanan and Tuminski, whose bodies lay on the floor close to Ranum. They tried to drive off the German ME109 and FW190 fighter planes as they quickly moved in for the kill.

Belle-Isle on the horizon

Two engines of the plane were now on fire and the pilot knew it would be impossible to get back to England. He decided to head for land where they could bale out and increase their chances for survival. An island appeared in the distance. The pilot headed for it; it was Belle-Isle,³ about 10 miles off the French Coast. The plane approached the island from the South East End. German guns on Belle-Isle directed their fire against Mehitabel, already attacked by fighters. The 75mm anti-aircraft guns from Port Cotter were fired, followed by the others from Gouastin, Kerlan, Le

³ The crew didn't know that it was Belle-Isle; they learned this later.

Gouerc'h, La Sirène and Kervellan. Gun nests continued to shoot at the plane, even when it was out of range. It was unusual for the Germans on Belle-Isle to have a chance to use their guns, so they gleefully welcomed the opportunity.



Lt. Ralph Reback, navigator

Aboard Mehitabel, the 7 surviving crew members sensed that the end was near. Lt. Copeland gave the order to bale out. When the aircraft was above Kervilahouen-Le Petit Cosquet, five men jumped, one after the other, all in a few seconds. Navigator Reback was the first out, closely followed by Shanley, Costello, Wood and Klanka⁴.



Sgt. Edward T. Tuminski

After their capture, the Germans told their American prisoners that one of the three airmen, whom they thought was dead, had baled out and his

⁴ Vincent Klanka, before baling out, saw Sgt. Hanan standing with such a bad stomach wound that he was holding his guts in his hands. He hadn't been killed by the flak shell but was severely injured and, in a last effort, got up to take his gun to shoot at the German fighters.

parachute had failed to open. Our American airmen were fairly sure that it was Frank Hanan. The death certificate, written on June 29, 1943, is clear: "...in the debris of an American plane was found the half-charred body" It is possible that the Germans, who had no command of the English language, were actually referring to Hans Jajonz, pilot of a German Focke Wulf 190, downed at the same time in Kergallic. Jajonz was, in fact, a victim of a parachute that didn't open.



Sgt. Robert L. Wood during his training in the United States

The last two, Copeland and Parker, jumped out through the open bomb bay. Copeland's parachute caught on one of the doors and he had to pull his shroud lines to move away from the burning plane. His descent to the ground was delayed long enough to enable him to see Mehitabel crash and explode below. He had just touched down and rolled up his parachute when he was captured by the Germans, following a ringing command of, "*Hands up!*" He recalls being placed in a yellow bus, where he joined the gunner, Sgt. Robert Wood, who had serious leg injuries⁵.

Blood on the moor

Copeland may have landed near the village of Bedex and Wood in the valley of Bedex. Wood was bleeding

⁵ Belle-Isle Histoire #28, p34.

⁶ On the train to Germany, the crew helped Robert Wood remove shrapnel from his legs. These injuries would lead to life-long problems with arthritis^{IV}.

heavily, according to Copeland. Dried blood remained on the moor in the valley for a long time afterward, as recalled by an inhabitant of the village at the time.

Costello and Shanley landed a few yards from each other near a German gun nest, close to the hotel at the Donnant beach. Costello injured his leg while landing.⁷ From the shore near Anter, Mr. Désiré R. remembers seeing parachutists landing. They were then escorted by the Germans across the village of Donnant⁸.



John Costello at the age of 18 when he entered the USAAC

Navigator Ralph Reback fell into the sea a short distance from the shore and managed to swim to safety⁹. It has proven impossible to locate precisely the place where he made it to the coast. On the rocks? On a beach? Donnant? Vazen? None of the longstanding locals remember it.

Another airman, possibly Vincent Klanka, the radio operator, landed near the village of Ty Neué.

The plane crashed near Bourdoulic, about 300 meters from the present-day airfield runway, which didn't exist at the time. Jean P., from

⁷ He walked with a pronounced limp for his entire life.

⁸ Mrs. A. saw them passing in the village of Donnant, surrounded by Germans and waving to the inhabitants of the village. She remembers that one of them had a leg injury, probably John Costello.

⁹ A few minutes later, Leonard Bigelow, the copilot from another aircraft, reached the inner coast of Belle-Isle. (Belle Isle Histoire #28, page 32)

the valley near Le Goelan, remembers seeing the burning plane pass and hearing the engines sputtering. After the crash, the plane burned, leaving only the shape of its tail intact.

Donald Parker on the run

Copilot Donald Parker landed near the village of Vazen (according to Mr. Louis L.). He hid in the undergrowth and managed to elude the German search teams, with the intent to escape from Belle-Isle by boat. He waited until nightfall and tried to grab a small boat he found on a beach (probably Goulphar), but it was locked and he was unable to open the padlock¹⁰. Hunger and thirst gnawed at him as he headed for a cluster of buildings close to a lighthouse visible in the night¹⁰.



Donald Parker in Ohio in August 1945

Arriving at a crossroads, he hugged walls to avoid detection and could see a roof-covered well in the center of the village¹¹. When he heard the sound of an approaching bicycle, he moved away from the well and hunched against a nearby wall. When he was spotted by the man on the bicycle, Parker quickly said to him, "Amerikaner!" The tall Frenchman removed his cap, wiped his brow and instructed him to follow him into a house. He offered him a seat and gave him something to eat and drink (likely bread, sliced meat and wine). After

¹⁰For reasons of civil defense, the lighthouse remained dark during the night.

¹¹The reader recognized the well as the one in the village of Kervilahouen.



In the photo above, taken during Army Air Corps Training, there are two crew members who survived the crash of *Mehitabel*:

- 1- T/Sgt. Vincent Klanka, radio operator
- 2- S/Sgt John Costello, tail gunner

some gesturing back and forth, the man offered Parker a large sandwich, which he promptly stuffed into the pocket of his flight jacket. He thanked his host and went off into the night.

Tête à tête in the Kervilahouen's pub

Reading Parker's account¹², and the details he provides (including, the well in the square and the lighthouse), one is certain the story was not the fruit of his imagination, but happened as he described it. A search of Kervilahouen for witnesses from that period has led to the identification of a man named Louis L., who welcomed and fed Donald Parker. Despite his advanced age, he retains an amazing memory. When shown a photograph of Parker, taken just after the war, he immediately recognized the airman he met 58 years

earlier. His personal recollection of the nighttime encounter closely parallels Parker's:

"During the night, following the plane's crash in Bourdouluc, I was coming back from Goulphar¹³. As I am a fisherman, I had in my pocket an ausweiss, which allowed me to find my way during the night. Arriving in Kervilahouen, I could see a man hidden in a doorway. He introduced himself as a crew member of the plane that had crashed the day before. He kept repeating, "American airman," and I asked him to come into my house, which, at that time, was a pub, and I gave him something to eat. He was thirsty, so I opened a bottle of wine. Because of the war, there was rationing. After he ate, he gestured to tell me that he wished to leave the island by boat. He kept saying, "Boat!"

¹² Parker's story, deliberately simplified here, is very precise and detailed. He remembered, among other things, a bar, bottles on shelves, lined-up cups, a wood-burning stove, and even a chopping block. All of these details were confirmed by the owner of the building.

¹³ Earlier that night, when Mr Louis L. left his wife to go to Goulphar, he told her, *"Maybe I'm going to meet an American airman"*. A premonition ?



Kervilahouen's Pub as Donald Parker saw it in June 1943

Boat!" He spread a silk scarf on the table, on which was printed a map of the area. With my finger on Belle-Isle, I showed him how difficult it was to reach the mainland by boat. We stayed together for about one or two hours, trying to communicate using gestures. At one point, he opened his flight suit and showed me his stripes. He was probably an officer. After serving him a glass of wine, he went out into the night.

I felt guilty for not being able to help him, but there was no means on Belle-Isle to help Allied airmen escape the island¹⁴. Furthermore, the next day, the Germans searched houses in the village. They stuck their bayonets into a woodpile in the shed, searching for U.S. airmen. Two days later, I saw him pass the house surrounded by German soldiers. With a finger over his mouth, he signaled to me "not to breathe a word."

After leaving Kervilahouen's Pub, Donald Parker disappeared in the darkness, wandered until morning and entered a cowshed. A farmer silently watched him. The next day, he hid in some trees near a road. From there, he could see an entire family walking by.

They were all well dressed and may have been going to a ceremony. He remembered how the lighthouse walls sparkled in the bright morning sun. He then decided to surrender to the German patrol on guard duty at the lighthouse. A German sergeant approached him and, in a voice tinged with envy, according to Parker, said, "For you der var ist ovah!" He then directed him to proceed down the path to the lighthouse.

Only close relatives of Mr. Louis L. have been told of his encounter with the American airman.

AVIS

Toute personne du sexe masculin qui aiderait, directement ou indirectement, les équipages d'avions ennemis descendus en parachute, ou ayant fait un atterrissage forcé, favoriserait leur fuite, les cacherait ou leur viendrait en aide de quelque façon que ce soit, sera fusillée sur le champ.

Les femmes qui se rendraient coupables du même délit seront envoyées dans des camps de concentration situés en Allemagne.

Les personnes qui s'empareront d'équipages contrainits à atterrir, ou de parachutistes, ou qui auront contribué, par leur attitude, à leur capture, recevront une prime pouvant aller jusqu'à 10.000 francs. Dans certains cas particuliers, cette récompense sera encore augmentée.

Paris, le 22 Septembre 1944.

Le Militärbefehlshaber zu Paris.
Signé : von STOLPNAGEL
Général d'Armée.

¹⁴ Contrary to what has been written by some local "historians" after the war.

The Germans were merciless toward those who aided an Allied airman, as shown in the above document¹⁵. It was posted in city halls and was regularly published in newspapers.

Guest for dinner

Pilot Copeland, whom we left in a van in the company of Sgt. Wood, remembers that he was quite well treated¹⁶. He was taken to a two-storied building in a small city near the sea, probably the "Hôtel de Bretagne" in Le Palais. A short time later, T/Sgt. Klanka, wounded in the arm and head, was brought to him by the Germans. They asked Copeland to identify him as a member of his crew. Copeland refused and asked them to give him medical treatment. Then Copeland was led into the first floor of the building, where he was invited for dinner in the company of several German officers. Despite his hunger, he would not eat or drink, fearful of being drugged or poisoned. Only after one of the Germans tasted his food did he decide it was safe to eat the dinner offered. Copeland spent one night in this house. The next day, he was taken to a rat-infested building he

¹⁵ NOTICE : Any man who helps, directly or indirectly, crew members of enemy airplanes who are grounded with a parachute or conduct an emergency landing, aid their escape, hide them, or help them in any way, will be shot at once.

Women found guilty of the same offense will be sent to concentration camps located in Germany.

People who capture crew members forced to land or parachute, or who aid in their capture, will receive a reward of a maximum of 10,000 Francs. In some cases, this reward will be increased.

Paris, September 22, 1941

The Militerbefehlshaber in France

Signed : von STULPNAGEL

¹⁶ Derward Copeland seems to have been given preferential treatment, unlike the other officers who were taken prisoner that day. Did they receive medical care at the hospital? Pilot John Moss was recovered from the sea in the Grands-Sables Bay the same day (Belle-Isle Histoire #28, page 32). Perhaps it was a ploy designed to win Copeland's trust so he would give them information.

described as looking like a "stone castle" (most likely the Citadelle) where he was locked in a small cell. He soon realized he could communicate with some of his crew by tapping on the walls of the cell. A few days later, they were taken to the mainland by boat, then boarded a train to be transported to various prison camps in Germany.

Copeland's wife, Margie, was soon informed by Army telegram that her husband was missing-in-action, but she had to wait until July 30th to receive International Red Cross confirmation that he was a prisoner of the German Government. Merwyn Ranum's parents were not informed of their son's death until December 22, 1943, six months after his plane was shot down.

Prisoners of war

After transit to Lorient, in Brittany, the prisoners were taken to Dulag Luft, the Luftwaffe Interrogation Center in Oberursel, near Frankfurt, Germany.

"Until we arrived there," Shanley^{III} said, 'we had undergone little questioning. Now it really began. First we were put into solitary confinement and then taken out one at a time for questioning.' Shanley was aware that the Germans had a great deal of information about the Eighth Air Force¹⁷. After all, only a day or two after the Bomb Group's arrival at Polebrook, Lord Haw Haw, the British turncoat, had said over German radio, "Welcome to England members of the 351st Bomb Group and its commander, Lt. Col. William H. Hatcher. We'll be waiting for you."

"But this was much more detailed," Shanley said of his interrogation. "The officer spoke perfect English and he had quite a large file. He told me that the group had trained at El Paso, Biggs Field and at Pueblo, Colorado, Army Air Base. He gave other facts and then said, in effect, it was no good refusing to answer questions since they knew most of the answers anyway."

¹⁷ The 351st Bomb Group was part of the U.S. Eighth Air Force based in England.



40th Anniversary of the liberation of Stalag Luft III, Denver, Colorado, May 1985.

Attending the reunion of ex-POWs were: Derward Copeland (4th from the left), with his wife, Margie, to his left; Donald Parker (3rd from the right); and Chuck Shanley (5th from the right), and his wife, Betty, to his left.

Copeland was also surprised to hear the German officer tell him the date and place of his marriage, the name of his wife and the date he finished his Cadet training and received his wings ^{IV}. Shanley said he adhered to Army instructions, giving only his name, rank and serial number in reply to the German officer's questions. One question, however, puzzled him. *"He wanted to know how it was that crews did not always fly with their assigned squadrons. I still fail to see how that information could have been of value to them."*

The questioning wasn't pursued at length, Shanley said, and after a day or so, he was released from solitary confinement, allowed to bathe and shave and join other prisoners, including the other officers of his crew. *"Then we were shipped out to Stalag Luft III at Sagan, about 50 miles south of Berlin, and our real imprisonment began."*

Derward Copeland, also imprisoned at Stalag Luft III, remembers helping to dig a tunnel for a collective escape. The operation came to a sudden halt when the tunnel was discovered by the Germans. ^{IV}

All of these airmen were imprisoned for 22 months and

eventually freed by General Patton's 3rd Army on April 29th, 1945.

After the war

In 1950, a monument was erected in Bourdouluc to commemorate the three airmen killed aboard Mehitabel. The monument was initiated by Mr. Raglois and financed with his own funds. It contains the following inscription:

*"A la mémoire des trois aviateurs alliés tombés en ce lieu pour la défense de nos libertés le 28 juin 1943. Passant O mon Frère Recueille-toi et prie"*¹⁸

This monument was moved in front of the airfield in 1994, where it now stands. In 2000, a plaque was added bearing the names of the 3 airmen killed:

*"B-17 – 42-29887
MEHITABEL 351 GB – 510 EB
Frank W. Hanan
Merwyn A. Ranum
Edward R. Tuminiski"*

¹⁸ *"In memory of the three Allied airmen fallen in this place for the defense of our freedom. Passing by, O brother, please meditate and pray."*



The monument at the airfield

Derward Copeland left the Army and worked for many years as a sales representative for a building materials company. Today he is retired in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with his wife, Margie. In 2002, Derward hopes to return to Belle-Isle for the first time in 59 years. He is the last living crew member of the seven to survive the mission to St. Nazaire.

Donald Parker stayed in the Army and later retired as a USAAF Major. He died in 1997.

Chuck Shanley left the Army and returned to his job in the advertising department of The Chicago Tribune. He died in 1990.

Ralph Reback died in Miami, Florida in July 2001. Like many WWII veterans, he preferred not to talk about his war experiences.

John Costello left the Army, married and raised five children in Scranton, PA, together with his wife, Doris. He was a salesman for a magazine publishing house. He died in 1974.



John Costello's grave in Scranton, Pennsylvania

Robert Wood left the Army and worked for many years as a foreman for an Akron, Ohio tire company. He and his wife, Ethel, a WAC¹² Sergeant during WWII, raised six children. He died in 1991.

Vincent Klanka died in Westbury, Ohio on November 15, 2001. He was born on January 28, 1922.

In 1943, the bodies of Frank Hanan, Merwyn Ranum and Edward Tuminski were buried in Bangor's cemetery and were exhumed several years after the war. Frank Hanan's body was identified by American services after this exhumation. When he was buried in 1943 he had no identification mark.

Research in the Morbihan Departmental Archives^{VI} failed to uncover the exact dates of their exhumations.

Tuminski and Hanan were temporarily interred in European cemeteries. Edward T. Tuminski was buried in Blosville, near Carentan^{IX}.

Merwyn A. Ranum is permanently buried in the American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, just above Omaha Beach¹⁹ (plot C, row 26, grave #9). He came from Austin, Minnesota.



**Merwyn Ranum's grave
(Jan 31, 1923 – June 28, 1943)^{VII}**

The bodies of Frank Hanan and Edward Tuminski were later claimed by their families and buried in the United States.

¹² Women's Army Corps

¹⁹ And not in Saint-James, as I wrote in Issue #28 of Belle-Isle Histoire, p. 40.

Frank W. Hanan was buried on April 26, 1948 in the Mountain View Cemetery, Walla Walla County, Washington (plot #86). He rests beside his parents ^{VIII}.



**Frank W. Hanan's grave
(Oct 8, 1920 - June 28, 1943)**

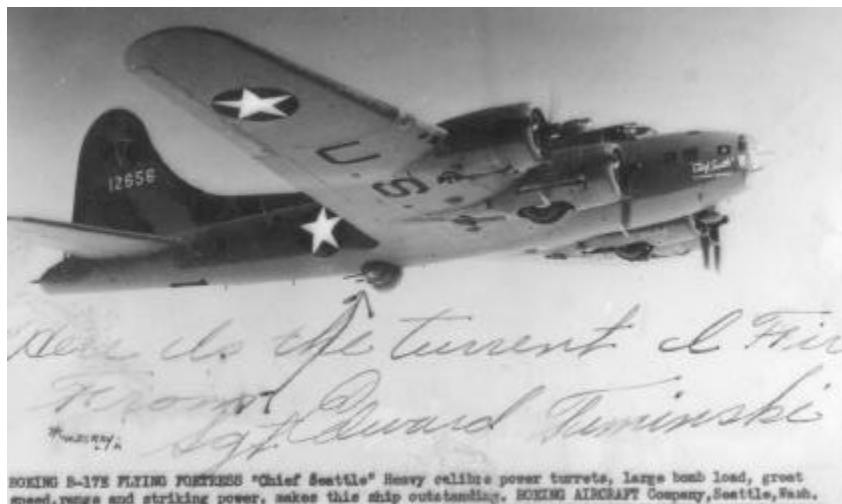
Edward T. Tuminski was buried April 21, 1948 in the Long Island National Cemetery, Farmingdale, New York (plot H, grave #8408). He was born on

April 20, 1920 in Stamford, Connecticut ^{IX}.



**Edward T. Tuminski's grave
(April 20, 1920 - June 28, 1943)**

DOCUMENTS :



**Post Card sent to his family by Edward Tuminski
showing his initial position of ball turret gunner**

TELETYPE SERVICE		WESTERN UNION		TELEPHONE SERVICE	
Check the class of service desired otherwise this message will be sent as a full rate telegram.		JOSEPH L. RYAN, President		Check the class of service desired otherwise this message will be sent at the full rate.	
FULL RATE TELEGRAM	DEFERRED			TELEPHONE	DEFERRED
DAY LETTER	NIGHT LETTER			CODE	NIGHT LETTER
NO. WORDS, SIG. OR CHG.	PR. CHARGE	CARRIER	CLASS TO THE SERVICE OF		TYPE FILED
Send the following message, subject to the price or both, subject, which are hereby agreed to:					
MAY 17 50 5 HETRA- WIX WASHINGTON DC 21 VIA AUSTIN MINN 22					
MRS ANNA E. RANUM- 1943 Dec 22 PM 6 35					
GARE TED BATES 1010 EAST 14 ST DES MOINES IOWA-					
REPORT RECEIVED FROM THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES YOUR SON SERGEANT MERWYN A. RANUM WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON TWENTY EIGHT JUNE IN EUROPEAN AREA THE SECRETARY OF WAR EXTENDS HIS DEEP SYMPATHY LETTER FOLLOWS-					
ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL					
 ATTEST: A TRUE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL					
FRANK E. DUNSMORE Notary Public, Mount County, Minn. My Commission Expires Aug. 3, 1945.					

**Telegram received on December 22 1943 by Merwyn Ranum's family
informing them that their son, previously declared MIA, was Killed-in-Action**



Air medal awarded posthumously to Sgt Merwyn Ranum, being presented to his parents on October 11, 1944

STANDARD TIME INDICATED RECEIVED AT 111 N. WASHINGTON AVE. SCRANTON, PA. TEL. 4-5881 TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAM TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH	Postal Telegraph All America Cables Canadian Pacific Telegraphs	THIS IS A FULL RATE TELEGRAM. RADIO-GRAM OR RADIOGRAM CABLES OTHERWISE INDICATED BY SYMBOL, IN THE MESSAGE OR IN THE ADDRESS OF THE MESSAGE. SYMBOLS DESIGNATING SERVICE SELECTED ARE LISTED IN THE COMPANY'S TARIFFS. SEE PAGE 17 OF EACH OFFICE AND ON FILE WITH REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.
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11. N. WA25C WMUA47 42 GOVT WMU WASHINGTONDC JULY 5= JUL 6 4 3 00
 MRS ANNA COSTELLO
 536 FIG ST SCRANTON PENN=

I REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT THE COMMANDING GENERAL EUROPEAN AREA REPORTS YOUR SON STAFF SERGEANT JOHN J COSTELLO MISSING IN ACTION SINCE TWENTY EIGHT JUNE IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION OF HIS STATUS ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED=

ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

Telegram received by Mrs Anna Costello, mother of John Costello, on July 5, 1943 telling her that her son was Missing in Action since June, 28 1943

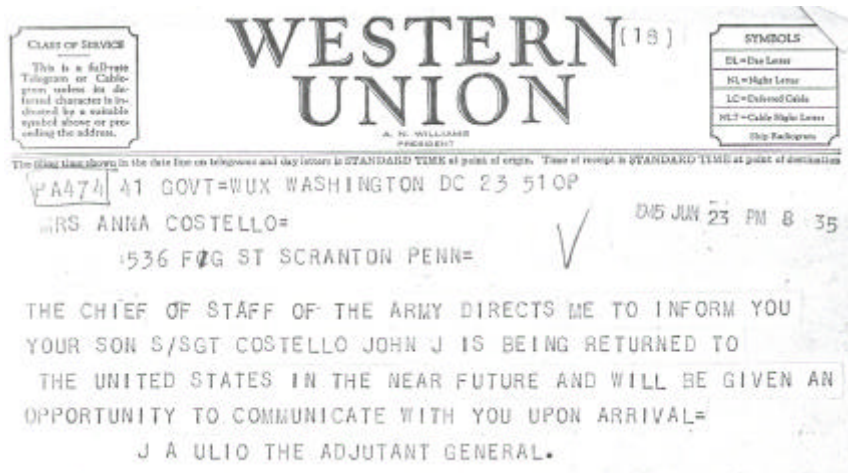
STANDARD TIME INDICATED RECEIVED AT 111 N. WASHINGTON AVE. SCRANTON, PA. TEL. 4-5881 TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAM TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH	Postal Telegraph (20) Radio All America Cables Canadian Pacific Telegraphs	THIS IS A FULL RATE TELEGRAM. RADIO-GRAM OR RADIOGRAM CABLES OTHERWISE INDICATED BY SYMBOL, IN THE MESSAGE OR IN THE ADDRESS OF THE MESSAGE. SYMBOLS DESIGNATING SERVICE SELECTED ARE LISTED IN THE COMPANY'S TARIFFS. SEE PAGE 17 OF EACH OFFICE AND ON FILE WITH REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.
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N63 N. F135 W2197 LB231W (TWO) 33 GOVT=PXXWMUR WASHINGTON DC 31 JUL 31 1 07
 MRS ANNA COSTELLO= 536 FIG ST (SCRANTON PENN)=

REPORT RECEIVED THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES THAT YOUR SON STAFF SERGEANT JOHN J COSTELLO IS A PRISONER OF WAR OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT LETTER OF INFORMATION FOLLOWS FROM PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL=

ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

Telegram received by Mrs Anna Costello, mother of John Costello, on July 31, 1943 telling her that her son was a POW



**Telegram received by Mrs Anna Costello, mother of John Costello, on June 23, 1945
telling her that her son was coming back home**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS :

- Mr. Derward Copeland, Mehitabel's pilot, for answering our many questions.
- Dr. Dana Copeland, son of Derward, for all his help.
- Mr. Tom Costello, son of John Costello, tail gunner, for compiling all the documents concerning Mehitabel and its history and providing us with copies and photographs.
- Mr. Donald Parker, Mehitabel's copilot, Mr. Chuck Shanley, bombardier, and Mr. Fletcher Cupp, radio operator on John Carraway's crew, for having taken the time to write their memoirs.
- Mr. Robert Wood's children for providing photos of their father.
- Messrs. Andrew and Frank Tuminski for providing a photo of their uncle.
- Mr. Lawrence L. Dodd, Archivist, Penrose Memorial Library, Walla Walla County, Washington, for his research concerning FW Hanan.
- Residents of Belle-Isle, Mrs. Odile A., Mrs. Odile D., Mrs. Anaïs T. and, also, Messrs. Louis L., Jean P., Désiré R. and Serge V., for their testimonies.
- Ms. Courtney Traub for her help in translating this article.

SOURCES:

- I** Article entitled, "*The Short Life of Mehitabel*", by Clarence "Fletcher" Cupp, radio operator of Mehitabel's first crew, published in *The Polebrook Post* in September 1987.
- II** Individual Aircraft Record Card 42-29887 – National Air and Space Museum - Archives Division – Room 3100 – Washington, DC 20560-0322
- III** "*One POW's Story*", written by Clarence "Fletcher" Cupp, recounting the story of Chuck Shanley.
- IV** Derward Copeland's story of his war years.
- V** Story by Donald Parker, "*For You der Var ist Ovah!*" In 1991, Donald Parker related the story of his escape to Tom Costello, son of gunner John Costello.
- VI** Morbihan Departmental Archives: airmen bodies transport authorizations, classification marks M11132 to 11135, 11137, 11278 and 11295, years 1944 to 1951.
- VII** Minnesota Historical Society Archives, 3AM340, roll 2 - 345, Kellogg Bd West – Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55102-1906.
- VIII** April 24, 1948 issue of the *Walla Walla Union Bulletin* - 112 S. First Ave, Walla Walla, Washington, 99362
- IX** Long Island National Cemetery records – Farmingdale, New York