

# Camille Heimburger

## French Air Force and British Royal Air Force



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### Escaping the Gestapo

I was born and raised in Haguenau Alsace, France. At the beginning of World War II, Nazi, Germany invaded and occupied my country. When I was 17 1/2 years old I received a draft notice to report for a work detail that was really a six month training march and maneuvers with a shovel. We all knew that after six months you were automatically in the "Wehrmacht," the German Army and they exchanged your shovel for a rifle. With the help of my father and brother, I planned to escape to the northern corner of France. Along the way many kind railroad men hid me out and kept me hidden from the Gestapo. For the next year I worked as a translator. Then one day my brother called and told me that the Gestapo was still looking for me. I headed to Southern France where I joined the French Air Force in Lyon on May 20, 1942. I was sent to Algeria and on to the United States. At Tyndall Air Force Base,

Florida, I was trained at a gunnery school and then sent on to Scott Air force Base, Illinois to the Operator and Mechanic Radio School. While studying there, I met a young lady who would later become my wife. I was shipped out to England to join the "Lorraine Squadron" made up of B25's and attached to the British Royal Air Force. I flew 18 missions to destroy German anti-aircraft batteries, troop concentrations in Holland and the German railroad yards to disrupt their supply lines. We did not worry too much about German fighters because we always had a fighter escort. The anti-aircraft was sometimes a problem. We were based in Gilze Rijen, Holland at the end of the war and I eventually returned to France.

I could not correspond with my family during the four years I was gone. At the end of my enlistment on May 20, 1946, I spent thirty days with my widowed mother. My father had died in 1943. After that the French Air Force shipped me back to the United States where I became an American citizen, married the young lady who was waiting for me and we raised three children. I am an active member of Catholic War Veterans and St. Theresa's Church in Swansea, IL.

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