

# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

See Ken’s live interview by Williamsville HS at <http://ilvets.ltc.k12.il.us/ilvets/VideoGallery/VideoPlayer/tabid/136/VideoId/58/Default.aspx>



**Ken Belton,**  
Pilot of B-17 Flying Fortress in WWII

Cecil K. Belton enlisted in the Army Air Corps in Peoria, Illinois in August 1942 at the age of 20.

I was working for Western Electric Company when I enlisted in the Army Air Corps. It was August, 1942. I received two years of training in Texas, Colorado, and California. I graduated as a twin engine 2nd Lt. pilot in the class of 1944-E at Stockton, California. After further training in New Mexico and Dyersburg, Tennessee our crew was sent to England as a replacement crew in the 452nd Bomber Group, 8th Air Force, at Deopham Green, England.

Our first mission was to bomb Frankfort, Germany’s submarine pens. We lost several planes on this mission and we had 47 holes in our plane including the loss of the right wing flap and a 3 foot hole in our tail assembly. On our 5th mission over Rheine, Germany we lost our # 2 engine, had a fire in the oxygen tank, had a bomb hung up in our bomb bay, and a leak in our hydraulic system. Moments later our plane exploded and I was blown out of the plane and was the only survivor.

I was fortunate to be rescued by the Dutch underground in North Holland. They nursed me back to health and I spent the next three months <sup>C</sup> | <sup>C</sup> | hiding, evading and fighting the Germans who occupied Holland. After many narrow escapes and encounters with the Germans, mostly due to being dressed as a civilian and wearing a doof-stam badge—“doofstam” means deaf and dumb— and due to some very brave men in the Dutch underground, we finally made it to South Holland.

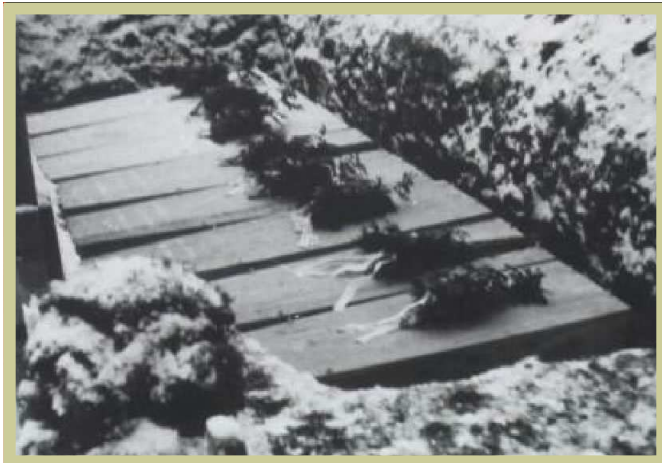
### **Lucky Lady B-17 Flying Fortress in WWII**



# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

In South Holland we met a Dutch guide, 3 English soldiers, and 2 Dutch women. We tried to connect with an escape launch. Having no luck, and after having a harrowing night, we decided to go inland close to Antwerp, where we were confronted by French Canadians. After several days, I made it to Brussels and on to Paris. I arrived back in the States in May 1945.



A memorial of our crew has been built in Midwoud, Holland, where our plane went down. There is also a museum in Midwoud which houses over 500 parts of our plane, The Lucky Lady. Virginia, my wife and I have been married 61 years and have two great daughters and five grandchildren. We have been fortunate to have visited Holland several times and have continued our friendship with many of the people who were with the Dutch underground.

I have served on the WWII Illinois Veterans Committee, on the executive board, director and assistant treasurer. I feel blessed to be able to see the completion of the Illinois WWII Memorial.

**Submitted by Ken Belton  
Springfield Illinois in 2005**

(Additional information added to Ken’s story by the WWII Illinois Veterans Memorial Board.)

Sadly we lost Ken on January 15, 2014. Below are additional memories and facts that we felt should be preserved.



**Ken Belton & Flight Crew  
Mission: Jan 20, 1945, Rheime  
Crew: 3B A/C 602 SQD B Group High  
Flight Crew of the Lucky Lady**

2LT Cecil K. Belton -Pilot—EVD -3 missions

2LT Andrew B. Shanks -Co-Pilot -KIA -2 missions

2LT Carl F. Chillberg—Navigator - KIA—2 missions

F/O Claude H. Bogert —Bombardier—KIA—2 missions

TSGT Thomas A. Rogan—Radioman—KIA—2 missions

SGT Warren F. Nielsen—BT Gunner—KIA—2 missions

SGT Sylvester Solomons—Engineer—KIA—2 missions

SGT Melvin D. Williams—Tail Gunner—KIA—2 missions

SGT William L. Monroe—Waist Gunner—KIA—2 missions

# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

Posted 04 February 2011 - 12:46 AM  
Eyewitness account - B-17's

### **Eyewitness account**

My parents lived in the small village of Midwood, Holland during World War II. On the 20th of January 1945, during a snowstorm, they heard the sound of a plane coming over. Now, for people in occupied Holland this was nothing new, as American and English planes were flying over from England to bomb targets in Germany every day and night; but during the five years of German occupation, they got to know the sound of those planes and also if they were in trouble or not just by the sound of the engines.

On that day a plane broke through the clouds and it sounded like it was in trouble. It barely missed the farm where my parents were living at the time. My Mom, who was seven months pregnant with my eldest brother, rushed out to see what was going on and saw a plane crash into a field opposite of the farm.

My dad, making sure my mom went back into the house as he didn't want her to be upset in her condition, rushed to the crash site along with some of the neighbors.

For as long as I can remember, our parents have always told us about the American B17 that crashed just opposite their home and about the brave airmen that lost their lives. They also told us that one of them was blown out of the plane and was attended to by our local doctor and was helped by the underground in order to get him to safety.

On the 4th of May in Holland—the day when we remember all those who lost their lives during WWII—we always went to the memorial where a propeller from that B17 is and placed a bouquet of field flowers to honor the young men that fought to free us from the Germans and gave their lives so that we may live in freedom now.

Lately I've searched the Internet to find more information about that B17 that crashed in Midwood, its crew, where they were based in England,

which USAAF bomber group it belonged, etc.

It does me the world of good to read that Mr. Belton made it back stateside safely, married his wife Virginia and had a family. I don't know if he is alive today, but if he is would, you please send him my warmest regards and tell him my story on behalf of my parents.

Will you please tell the veterans that somewhere in the north of Holland during WWII there once was a young girl that looked up at the sky and saw all those vapor trails and prayed: please God, let them come home safely... Will you please tell them that we are still thankful and that we still commemorate all those that fought and died.

From me to the veterans: thank you all so very, very much for the help you gave to my country! Thanks to you I had the opportunity to grow up in freedom! And know that many people looked up at the sky and saw you guys go on a mission into Germany and prayed for you! Every vapor trail, every bit of info on their wireless was a world of hope to them...

Sincerely yours,

Sylvia Stetekee

<http://www.6thcorpscombatengineers.com/engforum/index.php?showtopic=6854>

(NOTE: *Sylvia and Ken did reconnect.....and she was able to thank him personally.*)

# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

### **Downed Over Holland, WW2 Vet Tuck Belton Helped the Dutch Underground**

*Copied from Lutheran Senior Living*

As we approach the 4th of July, here’s a story of one American serviceman’s incredible journey during World War II. Concordia Village resident Tuck Belton has a unique perspective on the patriotism we celebrate on Independence Day, because he is one of the brave who fought so our country can remain the land of the free.

Tuck enlisted in 1942 and was sent to England in the 452nd Bomber Group. Part of the Army Air Force, he served on the crew of a B-17 Flying Fortress. His plane, “The Lucky Lady,” carried out numerous bombing raids in Germany.

On his fifth mission, the plane was hit, and as a result, an oxygen tank caught fire, an explosive was stuck in the plane’s bomb bay, and hydraulic fluids began gushing wildly. “Our plane exploded in the air and blew everyone out,” he recalls. “I was the only one who made it. The blast knocked me unconscious. When I came to, I was falling, and I realized I had to get my chute open.”

As Tuck fell to earth in Holland, he struggled his way into the straps of his parachute; by the time it was on his back, he was too close to the ground for his chute to fully inflate. Severely wounded from the fall, he was rescued from the snow by members of the Dutch underground, who hid him away in a chicken coop for weeks, with little more than tulip bulbs to eat.

“I’m just grateful they picked me up or I would’ve been a prisoner of war,” Tuck says.

Being stranded in Nazi-occupied territory, Tuck was unable to rejoin his unit, so he spent three months assisting the Dutch resistance cell who nursed him back to health. He went on numerous dangerous missions striking at German forces, and

spent the rest of his time hiding with his newfound comrades. Disguised as a deaf-mute bookbinder, Tuck hid from the SS in plain sight. “I had to be careful when I spoke,” he says. “If I didn’t speak in Dutch, I’d give myself away.”

He wasn’t the only Allied operative in the area with a secret. Tuck tells stories of working with a British Army operative who had snuck into Holland to play a part in England’s efforts there, and a Dutch double agent posing as a member of the German Gestapo.

**Tuck Belton, June 2012**

Today, the Dutch continue to honor Tuck’s



service. A memorial stands in Midwoud, Holland, the town where the plane went down. The residents also erected a museum which houses over 500 parts of Tuck’s downed plane, named “The Lucky Lady”. Tuck and wife Virginia visited both several times and continued a friendship with many of the people there, including Tuck’s former comrades in the Dutch underground.



# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

Tuck moved to Concordia Village after doing a lot of research. At Concordia, he found many familiar faces. “There are six people here whose friends of mine who lived on the same street I lived on,” he says. “It wasn’t like moving in where everyone was strange. Moving here was like old home week.”

Tuck enjoys the community’s weekly men’s discussion group. “In this group there are school teachers, engineers, a wide group of knowledge,” he says. But the group only has only one member who fought with the Dutch in World War

<http://lssliving.org/blog/2012/06/24/downed-over-holland-ww2-vet-tuck-belton-helped-the-dutch-underground/>

### Account of Crash from

<http://www.6thcorpscombatengineers.com/engforum/index.php?showtopic=6854>

Lucky Lady was shot down by AAA (anti-aircraft artillery) Jan 20, 1945 over Sterkrade and crashed near Midwoud, Holland. Flak over the target damaged the #2 engine and fragments from the flak cut the hydraulic lines. Fluid was leaking and the B-17 fell out of the formation, losing altitude. LT Belton headed for home, but a fire broke out in the Cockpit and he ordered the crew to bail out. Before they could do so, there was a large explosion which probably blew off part of the cockpit. The plane plummeted out of control and crashed in the meadows north of the village of Midwoud, about 45km north of Amsterdam. Two chutes were reported seen from observers on the ground; one chute got tangled on the tail section. LT Belton survived most likely because he was blown clear of the plane. He could not recall pulling his ripcord. Members of the Dutch re-

sistance took care of him and told him the fate of his crew. LT Belton could not believe they had perished. During the night of January 20-21, Dutchmen guided him through the frozen fields to the church at Midwoud where the dead crewmen were lying in state. An emotional Belton paid his respects. In March, the Resistance transferred him via Amsterdam to the Biesbosch, a marshy area with hundreds of waterways south of Rotterdam and rowed him in a boat to Allied territory. The crew members were buried in the cemetery at Midwoud. They were reinterred January 21, 1946 in the Netherlands American Cemetery.

=====  
Pictures of the Memorial Site in Midwoud, Holland can be found at:

<http://en.tracesofwar.com/article/5006/Memorial-B-17G-Midwoud.htm>

### Propeller from the Lucky Lady At Midwoud, Holland Memorial



# Cecil K. “Tuck” Belton

## Army Air Force—B17 Pilot Lucky Lady “Flying Fortress”

### Illinois Veteran & Community Classroom Project ‘s Interview with Tuck Belton

Tuck was video interviewed  
by Williamsville High School, Mr. Jay Martens  
History Students  
in June , 2008

The raw footage from that interview was submitted and accepted to the US Library of Congress—Veterans History Project archives.

Students from Williamsville High School then created a documentary showcasing Tuck’s personal memories.

That digital documentary can be found at the Illinois Veterans & Community Classroom Project website at <http://ilvets.ltc.k12.il.us/ilvets/VideoGallery/VideoPlayer/tabid/136/VideoId/58/Default.aspx>.

***Among the stories that Tuck related to the students from Williamsville is the following moving story:***

### **The “Old Black Dog” Related by C.K. Belton (Paraphrased by V. C. DeWitt)**

During one of our Dutch Underground missions, one of the members of our team was wounded and captured by the Germans. Our Dutch team made the decision to try and rescue him from the hospital in which he was held.

I was stationed at the front of the hospital entrance and told to shoot to kill any German that



came near the entrance.

Shortly after I was stationed there, two German officers came around the corner....and I shot them both. At that time all hell broke loose and I took off running into the night’s darkness.

When I stopped running, I realized I was lost. Lost in a strange country in the freezing snow where I didn’t speak the language nor knew who to trust. After wandering around a bit, I came to the decision I was most likely going to freeze to death. As I lay in the snow contemplating the end to my life....out of no where came an old, large black dog. He willingly climbed inside my coat and kept me warm all night. That old black dog saved my life that night.....