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Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Newspaper and Journal Articles: General

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Dawn Thunder
One was a boy, the other an 8th Air Force pilot
By Richard Enwright

Someone once said, "Wars don't decide anything." Americans have known otherwise, for they have entered many battles in defense of freedom since the first salvos were fired at Lexington, Mass.

And of all the battles in American history, none was more bitter than the conflict encountered by members of the 8th Air Force in the titanic sky area over Germany.

Almost daily, from late 1942 until the summer of 1945, they assaulted Germany and Occupied Europe in B-17 Flying Fortresses, B-24 Liberators, B-25s and B-26s. The fighter pilots flew P-38 Lightnings, P-47 Thunderbolts and P-51 Mustangs. The 8th even borrowed Spitfire and Hurricane fighters and Mosquito bombers from their British allies. Without their accomplishments, achieved at terrible cost in suffering and life, there could have been no Normandy invasion or reconquest of Europe. The Luftwaffe, Germany's air force, had to be decimated. German industry reduced to rubble, and Germany's will to resist destroyed. . . .

This is a story of part of that battle, told by two men who lived through it. One was an English schoolboy at the time, the other a young Air Force bomber pilot. Their stories are about the 94th Bomber group based at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England. But it speaks for every unit and all the men of the "Mighty Eighth"

Clifford Hall, who lives in Bury St. Edmunds, remembers:

The impact was a bit impressive, you know. Here came thousands of young Americans, some of whom had never been out of their own county, much less to a foreign nation. They had come from every state, and they were a bit brash, to be certain. . . .

In very short order, we learned an entirely new vocabulary. Lorries, we found, were really "trucks," flicks were "movies," and every child in Bury came to love those Butterfinger, Babe Ruth and Spearmint sweets the GIs called "candy bars" and "chewing gum." We also found out that Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey played the only music worth listening to. Here were our pretty English girls, who had known only the ballroom music of Victor Silvester, twirling like mad dervishes to "jive" and "jazz." Here they came, garbed in impressive mufti, the officers wearing, incredibly, pink trousers. Americans of all ranks could be seen walking or bicycling on every road and country lane. Their "jeeps" and "trucks" dashed madly about the countryside. They filled our pubs, God love them all, and when it was over, 80,000 young English women had married them and left for the States.

Those were agonizing years, filled with high,
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