



Sgt Arthur Cooper was a member of the Robert Jacobs crew, assigned to the 710th Squadron on the 15th of June, 1944. After each member of the crew had flown at least one combat orientation mission, the crew flew its first mission together on July 11, 1944 to Munich.



Near the target area, 42-37873 was hit by flak. Unable to return to England, Jacobs headed for the relative safety of Switzerland, where the crew was interned. The following local newspaper article describes Cooper's escape from Switzerland and return home to Mount Holly, New Jersey.

Contributed by Bob and Randy Scott

MOUNT HOLLY, N.J., FRIDAY MARCH 9, 1945

Local Flyer Is Back After Escape From Internment and Life With the Maquis



A modern Odysseus, home from the war after experiencing a series of prison breaks and privations, is Sgt. Arthur Cooper, son of Charles Cooper of 142 Cherry Street, Mount Holly.

Waist gunner on a Flying Fortress, Cooper and his crew members caught a burst of flak over Munich, Germany, last July 11. The Fortress made a crash landing in neutral Switzerland, where the crew was interned by the Swiss Government in accordance with international law. Although they received excellent treatment, the Americans were anxious to bet back in the fight, and four of them, including Cooper, succeeded in obtaining civilian clothes in which to make an escape to France in

September. One of them was recaptured.

Food for their long trek over the mountainous regions of Switzerland was their main concern. They managed to carry enough bread with them from their internment camp to avoid starvation, and were able to purchase a few tins of salmon and tuna fish. Fresh drinking water was easily obtained from numerous waterfalls dotting the countryside. For eight days and nights, the intrepid party continued their 150-mile march toward the ever-nearing border of France.

Jail and Escape

In a state of exhaustion, they finally arrived in a little border town. Their first thought was food, and they stopped in a café. Unable to speak either German or French, they were trying to make their needs understood to a bewildered waiter when a member of the police interrupted. Through signs, they tried to make the official understand that they were escaped American fliers, but his suspicions were not so easily lulled, and the trio was marched to the local jail, where they were politely invited to remain overnight at the

charge of one franc each.

Determined that they hadn't gone this far only to be blocked by official red tape, Cooper and his companions waited until nightfall, removed screws from the prison door, took off their cleated mountain boots and started out once more. They decided that from there on in it should be every man for himself, and the party split up.

Obtains Map

Cooper wandered around for three days without food, then struck a small village. A Sympathetic woman gave him fresh clothing and food, later drawing a crude map directing him to the French border. According to her sign language calculations, it should have taken about two hours, but the Sergeant, leaving at 6 p.m., again became lost, slept that night in the chill mountains and started backtracking to get his bearings with the new day.

Within sight of France, this lone wanderer was spotted by Swiss guards, who immediately gave chase. In spite of his exhausted condition, Cooper managed to streak across the border with inches to spare, where he calmly sat down, lighted a cigarette and waved nonchalantly to the enraged guard. After a brief rest, the footsore American trudged forth once more, and his nest in an amazing series of adventures began when he was picked up by a party of Maquis, who took him to the French Underground.

Through underground channels again, Cooper finally caught up with the Seventh Army, and was sent by plane to Naples, which he described as the "dirtiest city imaginable." A barefoot, ragged population was existing on the most meager diet, scrambling like made for a dropped cigarette butt. From Naples, Cooper traveled to Algiers, and then to Casablanca, finally arriving via Iceland in London, from where he was flown to the U.S.A., arriving at La Guardia Field, N.Y., last October.

After a furlough, Cooper was sent to the Air Corps Redistribution Center at Atlantic City, and from there to Fitzsimmons Hospital, Denver. He arrived home in Mount Holly last Friday, after receiving a C.D.D. (medical discharge). He had been at the hospital since February 27.

The Mount Holly gunner, aged 22, served in the Navy in '42, was inducted into the Army in April 1943, after which he trained at Miami Beach, Fla., and Armorer's School, Denver, Col. He was sent overseas in May, 1944.

A graduate of Mount Holly High School, Cooper says he has no immediate plans for the resumption of civilian life, although photography, to which he devoted much of his pre-service leisure as a hobby, intrigues him as a business. "I want to get my bearings – think my future over before I make any definite plans," he said. "I like Colorado very much – maybe I'll go back there. In the meantime, I'm just coasting."



The Jacobs crew

Lt Robert M. Jacobs
Lt Frank B. Pollard
Lt James F. Burkhart
Lt Thomas B. Winborne
S/Sgt Granville Newton
S/Sgt John W. Tennant
Sgt Edward N. Wellnitz Jr
Sgt Arthur Cooper
Sgt Louis Joseph
Sgt Robert C. Scott



42-37873, photographed at Dubendorf Switzerland on July 12, 1944.