

World War II Experiences
"Timeless Voices" Oral History Project

Interview with

Lt. Edward Jordan, 398th Bomb Group Pilot
603rd Squadron, Eighth Air Force

Interviewer: Jordan Family

Interview conducted at
Charles J. Jordan's Home
Santa Fe Springs, CA., October 19, 1944

Background

The 398th has been interviewing its members as part of the Timeless Voices of Aviation project. More information about the project and a current list of video interviews can be found at 398th Timeless Voices Interviews. In addition to the video interviews, some of the interviews have been transcribed to text.

A Note from his son, Dave Jordan

On October 19, 1944, 1st Lt. Edward C. Jordan was on furlough after completing 28 B-17 missions with the 398th Bomb Group during WWII. He had begun flight training in Texas as an air cadet in March 1943 and received his wings at Lubbock, Texas on January 7, 1944. In February 1944, he was assigned to the 398th as a new co-pilot with the Lt. Bob Hopkins' Crew. And in April 1944, that crew and the entire 398th flew to their overseas base in Nuthampstead, England from Rapid City. During the summer of 1944 Ed became a 1st pilot and received his own crew.

After Ed's return to the States in late September 1944 he first went to Chicago to see his wife and her family for a few weeks. They then traveled by train to California for requested R&R in Santa Monica. However, before reporting to Santa Monica, Ed and Jeanne visited his mom and dad in North Hollywood and celebrated their previous wedding with many Jordan relatives who were unable to attend. One relative, his Uncle Chuck Jordan had his own phonograph record-making machine, one of the few ways to make home recordings in the days before tape recorders. On October 19, 1944, the family interviewed Ed about some of his war experiences.

Although the recording is a bit scratchy and hard to hear in parts, as follows is a transcription of the phonograph record made that day. Included are extended periods for passages that could not be understood and occasional questions marks "?" after some guessed words. I have also provided some commentary or interpretation in brackets [...]. It should be recognize that

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like most of us, when we talk the result is not always grammatically correct, in complete sentences or as organized as if we sat down to write it out.

This recording is one of the earliest 398th audio records and it has been included in our 398th Timeless Voices Project to provide as complete an oral history as possible of our 398th veterans.

Dave Jordan

May 2007, updated July 2009

Transcription of Lt. Edward C. Jordan's Phonograph Record Recording

Time: 0:0

(Return from England and off to R&R)

This is Lt. Eddie Jordan. The date is October the 19th, 1944. This is my aunt with my lovely little wife Jeanne. Just got back from England.

On a 27-day furlough. Finished 28 missions over there. Left on September 21st. Back in the States since the 24th. Flew back by plane, the C-54. Saw quite a bit over there. Oh yes, I got a Distinguished Flying Cross. In fact I have two of them.

Spent 2 1/2 weeks in Chicago. Went around and saw all the sites. Then we had to change and came out to California. Spent another week with my mom and dad in North Hollywood. And we were taken all over out in California, the "Land of Golden Opportunity" they say. Still looking for the gold. On this map, that Chuck's house right now. What's the name of this place. Santa Fe Springs. Lots of oil wells around. He doesn't own any though. Well tomorrow we're going to Santa Monica, a little rest for about two or three weeks. ... the same. ... looking yourself at the B-17? ... You hope.

Time: 2:21

(Ed begins talking more about being overseas)

Well it's pretty rough over there. Well around the first mission, but after that, wish I hadn't been over there. repeat?? They try to hit you too.

Time: 2:32

(audio becoming easier to understand)

Roughest mission I had over there was on August the 8th. [There are numerous articles and entries about this famous mission on the 398th web site]

I had thirty holes in my plane. Got hit myself at 6 o'clock. [Ed was hit in the bottom of his boot that day with a piece of fast moving flak that penetrated the aluminum skin of his aircraft.]

And the crew I went over with got shot down that day. [This was the Bob Hopkins' Crew.]

Well we got down to southern France one day. I saw Spain, the Pyrenees, been over Berlin twice, past Sweden, over Denmark, all the way to Poland, Czechoslovakia, flew over Paris, saw the Eiffel Tower.

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Well I got 5th stockings? or sightings?, for a total [I had trouble understanding what this was about, and there were several words I couldn't understand.]

Went up to Scotland for a 7-day leave in July. Very nice up there. Saw two little feautres?
[Also I believe he said something about arches.]

So you can thank the Americans again. [Seems like something must be missing before he said this.]

Visited London. Saw the Piccadilly Circus. Saw Westminster Abbey, the Red Lion Inn where Charles Dickens wrote Tale of Two Cities. Saw Big Ben.

Time: 3:44

(other side of the record, sound is much clearer)

Here we are on the other side now [They flipped the phonograph record over to record on the flip side.]

Probably his wife Jeanne: Eddie, what was your most challenging experience while you were fighting? Lt. Edward Jordan: Now, I'll tell you now.

Lt. Edward Jordan: Now, I'll tell you now.

Well one day [thought to be 26 August 1944 on a mission to Gelsenkirchen - see below] we were over Northern Germany. Up pretty high there and two engines quit on me. Had to turn around and come back. Dropped our bombs out there. And tried to hold our altitude. Wasn't much good. Lost about 10,000 feet right away. Got on the radio and called up a couple of fighter pilots. Got P-51s over there. They circled high around us. Looked us over good. Finally they came on and said: "Big Friend, this is you Little Friend calling you. You in much trouble down there."

Lt. Edward Jordan: "Yeah, I am". Told them to [come] along with us, watch us, see if we had to ditch in the North Sea. So they stayed around with us until about 20 minutes from the coast. And they dropped the tanks and left us. Well, we were in pretty bad shape. Losing altitude all the time. Down to 7000 feet and we came over our home field [Nuthampstead].

It was covered with fog. Didn't have any instruments. We let down through the fog [pretty risky without instruments] and we moved? to circle right out and came right in on the runway. Let our wheels down while? in the final approach and land?

Wife: Are you glad to be home?

Ed: Sure enough you know it.

Mother: I have to tell you ??? My little boy, my Hero

Wife: Aren't we all though.

Mother: Glad to be home?

Ed: You can say that again.

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Time: 05:29

End of recording related to the War

Editor's Note:

I'm not sure on what day or mission, Ed's lost two engines story occurred. However, there are several clues that may help in a more in-depth analysis. First, he states it was a mission to Northern Germany. Second, Ed was the pilot, so probably it was after August 1, 1944. Because of the ambiguous wording on whether he dropped the bombs at the target it is not clear if it would be an official mission for him, but for working purposes I will assume it is on his mission list. He probably landed late, so it might be useful to check the 398th Flight Log landing times for Ed's missions to Northern Germany in August and September. In addition, his situation might have been referred to in a 603rd Mission Day Overview Report.

I also recall that Charles King, a fellow 398th pilot who wrote in one of his letters to me that Ed brought home a plane with one engine out, then next time two engines out, then three engines out and kidded him about what he would do with 4 engines out. Ed's answer was he'd glide in. 1st Lt. Edward C. Jordan's August 6th mission appears to be the one with one engine out. So if the sequence is correct, the story probably occurred after August 6, 1944.

The Gelsenkirchen Mission In 2009, in going through 398th records, I found that Lt. Ed Jordan lost two engines before the target on the 26 August 26 1944 398th mission to Gelsenkirchen, Germany. Gelsenkirchen is in Northern Germany and is about 80 miles southeast of Amsterdam and 80 miles south west of Bremen. The 398th records show that Lt. Jordan dropped his bombs at 51° 30' N and 08° 00' E. This is on the north coast of Germany near Wilhelmshafen and Jadebusen (Jade Bay) near the North Sea.

The 398th formation that day came in north of the target and turned around to the south. Lt Jordan's bomb location on a Target of Opportunity is north of the flight track so it appears he turned north after he lost the two engines. The records do not indicate but it is possible that with two engines out, Ed could not keep up with the formation and turned north to the North Sea to be away from enemy fighters and flak and not over occupied land.

Records do show that he landed first at Nuthampstead, 15 minutes before the first aircraft in his 603rd Squadron and 3 minutes before any aircraft in the 398th Lead Group. It is likely he let off flares and came in first with emergency equipment waiting on the ground. Once he was out of the way, the other 398th aircraft then began landing at about one minute intervals. Some weather information does indicate there were low cirrus clouds but details on fog and ceiling were not found.

It is likely that this August 26th mission to Gelsenkirchen is the one he referred to in the interview above given that he had two engines out, it was over northern Germany and he did return over the North Sea.

Dave Jordan
May 2007, updated July 2009

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Notes

The audio is from an original phonograph record made on October 19, 1944 shortly after Ed's return to the USA. The first 3m 45s are scratchy and may be difficult to understand. After that the recording is clearer.

1. Lt. Edward Jordan was initially a Co-pilot with Robert Hopkins' 603rd Crew and later Pilot of his own 603rd Squadron crew.
2. The above transcription was provided by Dave Jordan, son of Edward Jordan, 603rd Squadron in May 2007.
3. The transcription was obtained from an audio file.
4. Punctuation, grammar and minor word changes may have been made to improve readability.
5. Additional information may be shown in brackets [].