

BEHIND THE LINES

An "original" of the Bluenose squadron, rangy, red-haired Flying Officer Bill Cooke looks back on a tour of bombing operations which saw him serve with three different squadrons, fly with five different skippers and log more than 30 trips to enemy targets, a story from an R.C.A.F. bomber group overseas discloses.

The 22-year-old navigator, whose home is at 89 Francis street, Hamilton, is proud of the 26 major targets in his logbook. Four of his trips were to Berlin, two to Mannheim and two to Stuttgart. He was also in a crew which made the long, ten-hour "stooge"—as the bombers boys call it—over the Alps to bomb Milan last summer.

"The one that I really remember was Dortmund in June, 1943," he recalls. "We went there the night after the dam busters knocked out the Hohne and Elder dams and weren't expecting too much opposition. They surprised us, and for seven minutes our Halifax was coned while the ground defences

(Continued)

threw up flak. It was really a good show on the skipper's part to get us out of that one."

His pilot on that occasion was Squadron Leader Johnny Tyler, D.F.C., a member of the R.A.F., who was commanding a flight of the Bluenose squadron. Prior to joining the Bluenoses, F.O. Cooke did seven trips with the famed Moose squadron, and after his skipper finished a tour, moved to the Porcupine squadron. He is slated for instructional duties during his rest period.

During most of his tour he flew with another lad from the Hamilton district, Pilot Officer Harry Ridley, Oakville, the crew's mid-upper gunner.

Before joining the R.C.A.F., the quiet-spoken young navigator was a draftsman with the Canadian Westinghouse Company. He won his wing at Ancienne Lorette, Que., and went overseas as a sergeant. His mother resides in Hamilton.

V V V

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Harrod, Grimsby, received word on Saturday that their son, Robert Harrod, believed to be the sole survivor of a bomber explosion overseas, has been commissioned as a pilot officer and posted to instructional duties.

According to information previously received by the parents, their son—then a flight-sergeant navigator—was one of the crew of eight on a bomber of the Bison Squadron which took fire and exploded over the English Channel last month. The plane was flying at a height of 18,000 feet when one engine took fire and the flames spread to the rest of the plane. Before the crew could bail out the plane exploded. Flight-Sgt. Harrod lost consciousness and estimates that he fell 13,000 feet before coming to his senses enough to pull the rip cord of his parachute. The chute opened and he landed on the water safely to be picked up a few minutes later by the crew of a patrol ship in the vicinity. Bodies of four other members of the bomber crew, apparently killed in the explosion, were taken from the sea, their chutes unopened. Three others are still reported "missing."

V V V



Pte. Downs

Pte. Jukes

Pte. Clifford G. Downs, youngest son of Mrs. E. M. Downs and the late John Downs, 192 Hughson street north, has been serving in France where he has been located for the last month. He enlisted three years ago and was formerly employed at the Steel Company of Canada.

Pte. Elsie Jukes, C.W.A.C., of 155 Burlington street east, is serving in France. She is a former employee of Canadian Cottons, Limited.

V V V

In Saturday's paper, there appeared a story of a badly-damaged Halifax bomber, which limped home after discharging its bombs over France, and on which Sgt. R. E. Budd, of Hamilton, was an air-gunner.

The navigator of this bomber was F.O. Ronald Woodhouse, who resided with his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Foulkes, 335 Cope street north. F.O. Woodhouse is a former employee of the T. Eaton Company. He received his commission at Crumlin and arrived overseas in 1943.

V V V

The first fall meeting of the Hamilton Women's Volunteer Naval Aid Corps and the Women's Auxiliary Defence Corps will be held in Centenary United Church auditorium at 8 o'clock to-morrow evening.

V V V

The monthly tea of the wives and mothers of the men of the R.H.L.I. (W.R.) overseas, will be held in Centenary United Church auditorium at 2.30 o'clock on Friday afternoon.

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Behind-the-Lines

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