



A FLYER'S DIARY: Joe White, WW II

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The first time that I heard of Joe White was in 1946, when I was on the day shift as a ground radio operator at Sydney Nova Scotia. This was before the days of VHF (very high frequency) and its limited range, and all radio communications were on HF (high frequency) making it quite common to hear aircraft and ground stations from coast to coast whenever the skip conditions were right.

The Torbay (St John) TCA operator came on and gave a flight enroute to their station, a weather report saying that a fog bank had moved across the airport and visibility was near zero. This flight had departed Gander, Nfld with a fuel sufficient to return to Gander as an alternate - the Captain was R.S.White.

The flight advised that it was returning to Gander and asked for its weather. It was well below alternate limits and deteriorating. The tone of transmissions between the station, flight dispatch and Joe made me listen to this operation very closely and remember how relieved we were when we heard that the flight had landed at Gander.

Knowing now what I did not know then, makes me realize that in comparison with Joe's previous experiences, this was child's play. The extent of his wartime experiences came to light a few months ago. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Joe had found his personal RCAF diary and had given me permission to read it. Joe informed us that he has not read this diary since leaving the Air Force. I know that after reading it, you will agree with me when I say that Joe White is an extraordinary airman who deserves much recognition.

- Phil Pawsey

back. Sgt. Richardson second pilot. something wrong with spotter kite for we never find convoy which was pretty important. Pretty well lost but Dick did some good nav and we got a pin point on SE coast of Sicily so got home ok and landed with bombs on. Time 5 hrs.

Nov 23

Air test in "Q" which was shot up pretty bad when machine gunning Castle Benet drome with W\Com Beaver and the boys. Revs wouldn't come down on starboard engine so we took A for ops. Went to Benghazi with PO Haydon and the boys. 8/500's dropped in two sticks from 8000'. Rather a long sea crossing, 410 miles but got there ok.

Searchlights were poor and light flak only. Got a good hit on warehouses on Cathedral Mole. Squadron from Middle East must have been on Benghazi also. Weather OK on way home. Des went in hospital next day with appendicitis - what a coincidence. Time 5:25.

Nov 24

Ops to Naples with Red Murray as 2nd. pilot. 1/1000 3/500 S.A.P [semi armour piercing] 3/500 GP [general purpose bombs] in three sticks from 8000'. Target Royal Arsenal. Best night bombing we have ever done. On target 20 mins before anyone else. Our 1000 pounders landed on oil tanks and started a whaling big fire. 2nd. stick in round house in railway yards. Third stick a hit on Royal Arsenal with some nice green explosions following. Dropped seven flares. Target easy searchlights and flak poor. Circling around looking at the fires we were attacked by Cu42s two U.M.G. Funny red tracer went over my head so I turned in, Mickey poured 500 rds at him but didn't claim him. Very dark beneath. Near Mt. Vesuvius. Going back ran into 10/10 cloud at Sicily and had a job finding Malta, managed to without a QDM [magnetic heading to base with zero wind] however. Nearly had it again when instruments went in turn in cloud at 1500'. Time 5:00 hrs.

Nov 29

Ops to Benghazi with Sgt. Richardson 2nd pilot. 1/1000 3/500 SUP 2/250 GP 2/250 Three sticks from 8000' and 7000'. Heavy cloud on way out and a lot at target. Same target on Cathedral Mole. Searchlights very accurate evidently radio location with a master beam. Heavy flak accurate and lots of light flak. Pretty hot there but dropped bombs and Mickey claimed all three near target. Made over 200 mph going back - heavy cloud. Intercom U/S but only one hole in kite, Time 5:20. PO Doherty in K came back on one engine - crashed landing but all OK. Kite wrecked.

Dec 5

Operation to Naples 1/1000 3/500 SAP 2/500 GP 2/250 SAP. Bomber Royal Arsenal in one stick from 6500'. Second Pilot George Hasfaud. Time 5:05 pretty easy trip out. Got a good pin point at Sicily and came up to Naples on track. Very clear moonlit night. We had some difficulty finding Naples city as we thought a big fire burning on the target was Mt. Vesuvius and so steered away from it. Found the target finally and dropped several flares. Dick dropped all the bombs on one stick and Mickey claimed they exploded in

the target area. Just leaving when Dick and Mick claimed to have seen two fighters but nothing happened. Flew above cloud as far as Sicily then entered low cloud. Flew in this till out ETA was and we were at 1000' called for a QDM and went in. Air raid on and some Ju88's hanging about but we got in OK. Dick Gee got his commission the other day and seemed pretty nervous on this trip. Am seeing about mine soon.

Dec 10

In "Q" Ops to Tripoli with PO Pope second pilot. Target was a transport dump about 10 miles south of the town. Ran into bad weather with plenty of cloud and rain. Over the target the cloud base was about 1000' but lifting with rain. We had a job finding the dump but finally did after dropping most of our flares from 1000'. We got in our first stick of 18/40 pounders. from 1000' by the light of our flares and got a hit on the dump but started no fires. We were the first to find it and soon other kites dropped some incendiaries but missed dump. Finally ran out of flares and beamed in two sticks from 2000' and 1500'. This was just on guesswork though and not sure we hit the dump.

Both squadrons (ours and 40 Sqdn) on target now and we had a couple of near collisions and on one occasion I read BL.- B, the identity letters on a 40 Sqd kite.

The searchlights were put on us from Tripoli and several times I went down to 200' and below to escape. Several near misses from Bueda flak and we had heavy flak at 2000' which is a record I think. Both gunners machine gunned the dump, searchlights and everything else. Believe soldiers fired at us from beach as a rifle bullet came up near Robbie. Both Mick and Ray gave the beach some long bursts. We left for home just before dawn. Old "Q" was badly holed in about six places and tail all shot up and U/S for a week or so -worse luck. Time 2:45

Dec 11

Ops to Benghazi with "O". PO Palmer second pilot, 1/4000 bomb. Easy trip out - Palmer slept most of way. Found "O" pretty poor and couldn't climb her over 8500' - dam slow in the bargain. Found only intermittent flak and a few searchlights. Dick dropped the 4000 in centre of the town. I bet the Arabs ducked - height 8500'. Took some star sights on the way home Time 5:40. Saw one fighter over target.

Dec 14

Ops to Benghazi again - blast it. Sgt. Richardson second pilot. 1/4000 "Z". We took off in daylight and we were first off - cross wind at that. Stb engine 2850 rev and 8 boost - phew. Nice trip out - took some snaps of sun and clouds also one of Red Murrays kite. Found "Z" very hard to climb. Ran into a little icing which may have caused trouble. Very little flak over target - think night fighters up. Found that the 4000 pd hung up. I made three dummy runs over target but no use - selector firing tit, jettison bar, and my jettison switch failed. Believe that the electrical system failed altho we turned off IFF (identification friend or foe), radio etc. and no use. Finally went out to sea to try and get rid of it. Everyone had visions of parachute horrors. Finally Richie chopped it off with the axe. Big sigh of relief bomb went off in sea with a huge flash. Set course and hit island dead on. Time 5:55.