

Est Nulla Via Invia Virtuti **(The Martin Andrews Story)**

Est Nulla Via Invia Virtuti - No Way Is Impassable to Courage.

The Wartime Experiences of Lieutenant Martin Andrews (USAAF),
B-17 Pilot and Commander Downed in September 1943 Over Switzerland



Lt. Martin Andrews, December 1943, Switzerland

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TIMELINE: MARTIN ANDREWS' MILITARY SERVICE

1941

September 2, 1941	Enlisted as Aviation Cadet
September	Pre-Flight Training, Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama
October – December	Primary Flying School, Carlstrom Field, Arcadia, Florida

1941 - 1942

December – February	Basic Flight Training, Shaw Field, Sumter, South Carolina
March – April	Advanced Flight Training, Moody Field, Valdosta, Georgia
April 29, 1942	Commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant
May – December	Instructor, Advanced Flying School, Columbus Army Air Base in Miss.
November 19, 1942	Promoted to 1st Lieutenant

1943

January – February	Transition training in flying the B-17, Hendricks Field, Sebring, Florida
February – March	2nd Air Force bomber crew assembly, Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho
April – May	Bomber crew transition training, Army Air Base, Walla Walla, WA
May 30, 1943	Departed on flight to England and assignment to 423rd Squadron, 306th Bomb Group, U.S. 8th Air Force, Thurleigh, England
June – September	Combat duty with 8th Air Force
September 6, 1943	Forced landing in Magadino, Switzerland
September – October	First internment camp, Macolin-sur-Bienne, Switzerland

1943 - 1944

November – February	Second internment camp, Adelboden, Switzerland
March 3 – 11	Traveled from Basel, Switz., to Washington DC, in prisoner exchange
March – April	Home leave; reported back to flying duty at Berry Field, Nashville, Tennessee, with Air Transport Command

1944 - 1945

April 15 – December 12	Ferry Pilot with the 7th Ferrying Group, Gore Field, Great Falls, MT
October 16, 1944	Promoted to Captain
December 19, 1945	Honorably discharged.

Part I: The Skies Over the Reich

After Pearl Harbor, America's young men swarmed to recruiting stations across the country. Boundless outrage at the unprovoked attack turned quickly to war fever and swept up every sector of society, including the entertainment industry. Celebrities such as bandleaders Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman, screen actors Ronald Reagan and Clark Gable and feature directors Frank Capra and John Ford (to name only a few) enlisted themselves and their talents to entertain troops in the field and make patriotic newsreels and heroic films to boost morale, both military and civilian.

Hollywood Enlists

Younger celebrities, however, often enlisted for combat duty in the field. Among the most famous of these was Hollywood idol Jimmy Stewart. Brought up in a typical American small town, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Stewart had come to embody upright American manhood for millions of Americans in such popular films as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *The Philadelphia Story*. Stewart joined the Army Air Force and soon was involved in the most hazardous duty of all as a bomber pilot making runs over Germany in the American daylight precision bombing campaign.

One of the unsung men who trained alongside Stewart was Lt. Martin Andrews, a native of Wisconsin. Stewart and Andrews, both of whom had enlisted before Pearl Harbor, flew B-17 bombers — the famous Flying Fortresses — while they trained together at Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho, and at the Walla Walla, Washington air base in early 1943. (Stewart would later switch to flying the B-24 Liberator in combat duty in England.) At Gowen Field, Andrews bunked two doors down from the film star.

Reveille Sounds for Andrews

While Andrews was no film star himself, he looked the part. A classic American type, blond, blue-eyed, and rugged at six feet tall, Andrews was a gentleman scholar who had pursued his studies in math and philosophy with great passion at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

A Bookish Youth

Once he arrived in England, he paid homage to his alma mater by inscribing the school's old motto in small letters below the pilot's window of his big Fortress: *Est Nulla Via Invia Virtuti* — "No Way Is Impassable to Courage." "The crew planned to put on something more colorful," Andrews recalls. "They'd planned some 'nose-art,' such as you saw on other planes. But they never got the chance." As it turned out, before his crew could paint Betty Grable or another film star on the nose of their B-17, it would fall from the skies after a bombing raid over Germany.

The U.S. Army's air campaign against Germany had begun modestly in August, 1942, with a few raids on the northern coast of occupied France and the Netherlands. The U.S. 8th Air Force, based in England, supported by a small number of fighters loaned by the R.A.F., could not attempt deeper penetration into German airspace because of fuel limitations and German fighter air supremacy.

U.S. 8th Air Force, England

This first phase of the 8th Air Force's campaign ended in December, 1942, when the increasing number of American and British fighters — and the improving sophistication of the Allied air commanders — permitted the American forces to begin attacking Paris, Bremen and Kiel. This marked the second phase of the American air war in Europe.

By July, 1943, Allied bombers were ranging deep into Germany, with support from P-47 fighters — whose range had been extended, though not as far as Germany, by the addition of "belly

tanks” holding extra fuel. The third phase of the air war saw Allied attacks focusing on the following target areas, according to military historian Carroll W. Glind: “northwest German ports; the vicinity of Hamm and Münster, north of the Ruhr; Hanover-Brunswick; Frankfurt-Schweinfurt, and Paris.”

The heavy B-17 bombers carried just enough fuel on deeper German penetrations to make their runs and return home flying on fumes. Although fuel was heavy, Allied Air Commanders wanted planes to carry the maximum weight of bombs. This calculation put the lives of airmen at risk. However, U.S. and British commanders reasoned that the destruction of German planes, munitions, long-distance rockets (such as the city-busting V-1s and V-2s), and war industry plants would save more lives in the long run.

Combat in the Skies

Andrews knew what he, Stewart and all other American bomber pilots would face after their training was completed: high odds of dying in fierce air combat over Germany. In 1943, the Germans menaced England and occupied France as well as most of central Europe — from the western Russian steppes to the Atlantic Ocean. The only outpost of freedom in the continental core was tiny, neutral (but heavily armed) Switzerland.

The Luftwaffe had not yet been broken — the air over France and Germany still bristled with Focke-Wulf and Messerschmitt fighters — while on the ground important military targets from Brest to the Ploesti oil fields were protected by thousands of deadly 88 mm anti-aircraft guns.

These air defenses took a heavy toll on American bombers, which flew from English bases in broad daylight — in the teeth of warnings from the British, who preferred mass bombing of German cities by night — to achieve maximum precision against submarine bases, airfields, factories, bridges and railroad facilities. Those airmen whose planes were critically damaged — and who survived an emergency landing or escape in a parachute — could expect one of two fates: imprisonment in a German prisoner of war camp, or escape to a neutral country, such as Sweden, Switzerland or faraway Spain.

Pilots shot down over Axis territory were doomed to spend the remaining war years in POW camps — rat holes later depicted all too accurately in such popular films as *Stalag 17*, *The Great Escape* and *Von Ryan's Express*. Of course, the Wehrmacht treated Anglo-American prisoners much better than captured Russians — who were routinely starved and worked to death, as were the captured Germans Stalin held. Nevertheless, the prospect of spending years behind barbed wire in Hitler's Germany was chilling to any American. Discipline was harsh. Camp fare, although supplemented by Red Cross donations, was short rations in 1943 — and decreased dramatically as the German economy collapsed under the Allied air bombardment, in particular the U.S. 8th Air Force's precision bombing campaign from English airfields.

Prisoners who attempted to escape were shot on sight. Many attempted escape out of a sense of duty — the desire to get back into the war. Others were impatient for home. Still others could not bear the grim conditions in German camps. One of ten prisoners held by the Germans on the Western front died in captivity. (Things were still worse in Japanese camps, where one in three captured Americans died before the end of the war.)

On September 6, 1943, Lt. Andrews faced the prospect of exactly such imprisonment — for on that day, on his thirteenth mission, his B-17 left England as part of a “maximum effort” mission to attack the Bosch Magneto works in Stuttgart in southeastern Germany — a mission from which it would not return.

One Mission Too Many?

To prepare himself for the dangerous mission ahead, Andrews stayed up until midnight, reading and thinking.

"As they went through their quota of combat missions, guys would do things for luck. Being a bookish type, I always liked to be in the middle of reading something, so I could tell myself 'I have to get home alive — to finish the book.' Before my mission over Stuttgart, I was 40 pages from the end of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*."

"I guess I was reconciled to dying. I figured I had lived to be 24 years old, which was more than many people. With so many airmen getting killed, it was accepted that it could happen to you. What air crews feared most was getting trapped in a falling plane and being unable to parachute out. On nights before missions, I sat up reading Tennyson's 'Choric Song of the Lotus Eaters,' which is all about easeful sleep, and ultimately the blissful sleep of death."

What Pleasure Can We Have to War with Evil?

The next words Andrews heard were: "Wake up, Lieutenant! Wake up!" The corporal shook Andrews' shoulder. It was 2 a.m. — time to get up. Andrews felt as if he'd never slept.

Dressing in a groggy haze, Lt. Andrews set out for breakfast determined to eat a full meal. "It would be a long day, and flying at the high altitudes we did in open, unpressurized planes increased one's hunger."

The weather for that day's maximum effort looked good. But the omens seemed bad. As the officers and enlisted men of Andrews' B-17 set out for the plane in Jeeps, one of the vehicles cornered too sharply, causing the unstable vehicle to lurch. Two of Andrews' men, top turret gunner Leo Liewer and ball turret gunner Kenneth Rood, were thrown from the Jeep and badly injured. The rest of the crew tried to comfort them until help arrived. Then, with the blood of their friends still on their flight gear, and with the gloomy gut feeling that accompanies the presence of serious injury, the crew went on to the bomber to await replacements. When Sergeants Ralph Biggs and Guido DiPietro arrived, they were readily accepted. Even in war, accidents happened. As it turned out, the injured men may have been the lucky ones.

Andrews, as part of the 306th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, lifted off from Thurleigh, England, with a fuel supply that was barely adequate for the round-trip to Stuttgart. This was beyond the range of the P-47 fighter. In effect, the bombers would be exposed to attack almost from the moment they entered the airspace of occupied France.

On their way into Germany, as the Americans expected, Luftwaffe fighters rose from one air field after another to attack the B-17s. The 306th Bomb Group was positioned in a box formation to the left and rear of the lead group. Andrews flew on the low left corner of this formation, the so-called coffin corner. When the Messerschmitt Bf-109s came in that day — wave after wave — they did so with the sun at their backs, heading obliquely at the noses of the B-17s from their right. Lt. Andrews was in a bad spot.

Soon, his plane was hit.

Well into German airspace, Andrews lost his #2 engine to incoming fire from Luftwaffe fighters and had to feather the propeller to keep it from spinning out of control. He considered turning back to England, but kept telling himself, "It's not long to Stuttgart." He decided to stick it out, again telling himself: "I will drop my bombs dive as fast as I can for the deck, then skim over the tree tops across Germany, across France, and across the water to England."

But that was not to be, as Andrews recounts: "A brigadier general sat in the lead plane. . . . When he couldn't see the target under the cover of clouds and a smoke screen, he elected to make a second pass. This could be considered a brave and determined act, but unfortunately it triggered a disaster for the bomb groups coming behind him.

"It upset the meticulous flight plans that had been decided upon back in England, and the inability of the on-coming air crews to see alternate target objectives compounded the confusion. Big bomber formations move ponderously. They have to make relatively slow turns in order that the inside planes of the inside groups won't lose too much speed and stall out.

"It seemed to us, as just a lone cipher in that great mass of orbiting airplanes, that we had been sucked into a kind of giant maelstrom flying aimlessly over southern Germany. All this was wasting time and burning up fuel. The 8th Air Force was to lose 45 bombers that day, almost half of which went down from a lack of gasoline."

Running his three good engines hard, to keep pace with the other planes, Andrews soon faced that prospect. Co-pilot Lt. Keith Rich — who'd been monitoring the fuel gauges — announced that there wasn't enough gas to reach the coast of France, much less that of England. Lt. Andrews now had two options. He could fly until he ran out of fuel -- hopefully over French air space, where his crew could bail out with some hope of escape -- or he could try to reach neutral Switzerland, which lay only 40 miles to the south.

For an American pilot whose plane had been crippled in a bombing raid over Axis territory, the only alternative to captivity was escape to a neutral country. Sweden, while a safe haven, lay far away to the north; that left only Spain, far to the southwest, and Switzerland — a multi-ethnic democracy directly between Germany and France, with known sympathies for the Allies, but surrounded geographically by the Axis.

Andrews decided against going to Switzerland "because that seemed like quitting. Rich and I agreed we would fly as far as we could into France before being forced to abandon the plane."

After dropping his bombs, Andrews pointed the nose of the B-17 toward France. As he made the turn to the west, Sgt. Henry Hucker called on the intercom from his tail gunner's seat to report that #4 engine was on fire. Andrews looked out past co-pilot Rich to check it out. "It wasn't really on fire, though from Hucker's point of view, it must have looked that way. The engine had simply overheated, causing pre-ignition in the cylinders and black smoke to pour out of the cowl flaps. There was nothing to do but throttle back on it."

Alone in the sky, with the last of the American bombers flying fast away from them, their plane had now become a two-engine cripple, an irresistible target for German fighter pilots eager to add to their list of heavy bomber kills. This called for a change of plan. Andrews told his crew that he would try to get to Switzerland while they still had a chance to do so. Navigator Gordon Bowers gave him a heading and he swung the plane to the south.

Just after doing this, they faced a head-on attack by four Focke-Wulfe 190s. Together, the fighters boasted sixteen 20mm forward cannon and eight 7.92 forward machine guns, against the B-17's four 50-caliber forward-firing machine guns. Andrews was massively outgunned. If it came to a fight, this was certainly the end for everyone on his plane.

The enemy pilots fired as they passed the B-17, but without doing serious damage. And, fortunately, they made only one pass. "I've often wondered about the pilots of those four planes," Andrews recalled. "Maybe they didn't realize that they had such an easy kill. Maybe they were just beginners. Or maybe they were headed for the American bombers behind us and were saving their ammunition for a bigger shoot."

The officers of the crippled B-17 moved on to their next problem. "We carried no maps of Switzerland, but [navigator Lt. Gordon] Bowers had found a substitute. Each member of the crew had a little escape kit in the knee-pocket of his flight suit. It contained, besides such things as a knife, a small compass, some concentrated chocolate and some foreign currency, a handkerchief. On this handkerchief was printed a map of Europe. Since it included all of Europe, Switzerland made up only a small part of it. Still, this was something, and it was all Bowers had to go by."

Passing over Friedrichshaven, just north of the Swiss border at 10,000 feet and evading a flak barrage, Andrews identified Lake Constance whose southern border lies in Switzerland. He called to Bowers over the intercom, "Let's make a right turn south of that lake. I think the most level part of Switzerland lies over to the right." Andrews was right, but he was only guessing.

Bowers disagreed, "If we go right, we may still be in Germany or wind up over France." France was still under Axis control, of course; either route would land them in a POW camp for the rest of the war — if they survived a hostile landing, surrounded by German fighters and dogged by anti-aircraft fire.

So they held course due south, with the massive Alps looming directly ahead. The mountains rose menacingly to meet the plane, as it continued to lose altitude. The crewmen found their nerves beginning to fray.

On board the plane was one of the most treasured secrets of the Allied Air Force, the Norden bombsight — which the Allies boasted could "put a bomb into a pickle barrel from 25,000 feet" ("Bomber Offensive Against Germany," p. 90). It was vital that this piece of technology not fall into German hands. Lt. Robert Huisinga, the bombardier, did his job and destroyed their bombsight. This was the equivalent of turning out the lights on the plane before leaving.

Radio operator Sgt. Venton Scott asked over the intercom if the men should get ready to bail out.

"Oh! No!" Andrews told the crew. "There's no need to jump. You could kill yourselves trying to parachute into those mountains. We've still got two good engines — I'm going to land this airplane somewhere, and soon!"

Part II: A Sky Full of Americans

Geoffrey von Meiss learned to fly in 1931 at the Pilot School of the Swiss Air Force. Later, at age 27, he finished a doctorate in economics at the University of Zurich in 1936. After taking his degree, he entered the Swiss Air Force as one of its few career officers and by 1938 was Commander of his own Air Division. In 1941 he joined the General Staff of the Swiss Air Force, later taking charge of the Normal Aviation Intelligence Service. Tall, erect, with a brilliant memory, von Meiss was a natural leader of men. On this day he was commanding a squadron of French-built Morane fighters based in the town of Magadino, in the south of Switzerland, defending the Swiss air border against the regular intrusions of Axis and Allied planes into the neutral country's air space.

At 11:30 am, Captain (later Colonel) von Meiss had just completed a practice flight. As he rolled his Morane off the smooth grass runway, a non-commissioned officer from the ground crew jumped onto his wing and shouted over the engine's rattle: "Captain, an American bomber swung around from here minutes ago and seems to be looking for a place to land." Von Meiss checked his fuel and weapons, and took off again to find the American bomber.

Meanwhile, inside the stricken B-17, after they'd crossed the Alpine divide, Lt. Andrews noticed airfields on the piedmont ahead, "lots of airfields with lots of planes parked on them." A flat place to land, all right - but one full of German planes. "There were swastikas everywhere!" he recalls. Andrews realized they had overshot Switzerland and were over Italy. Navigator Bowers brought his handkerchief map to Andrews, who found on it what looked like a lake between Italy and Switzerland. This was Lago Maggiore. Quickly he scanned the area. A lake over to the right was configured something like the one on the map. It was worth a try. They turned to their right and headed for the northern tip of the lake.

As they did so, Captain von Meiss came up beside them in his Morane. The American crew spotted the white cross on a red field and breathed a collective sigh of relief. Von Meiss pointed down, indicating a grass field directly below them at the edge of the lake. They prepared to land. They had been instructed that should they ever have to land in an enemy or neutral country they should destroy their plane - to preserve any secret technology which even they might not know about.

Andrews quickly planned the landing of the over-sized, 75-foot-long Fortress. He would come in low across Lago Maggiore and drop right onto the grass runway. Over the intercom he instructed the crew to prepare to discharge four RAF incendiary bombs upon landing. The bombs were like big soda cans filled with thermite and would destroy the plane after the crew exited.

Andrews told the bombardier to set one off in the nose, the radio operator to place one just behind the bomb bay, and the co-pilot to do so in the cockpit. Andrews would handle the fourth one himself. He would, on landing, crawl out on the wing and set it behind the #2 engine, above an empty gas tank.

As he made his final approach, Andrews noticed that armed men ringed the airfield. Again, he got on the intercom, "We're landing in Switzerland but go out of this plane with your hands in the air! I see soldiers everywhere I look and they all have guns. I don't want anyone hurt! . . . Go out with your hands in the air!"

The B-17 came down gently and rolled to the end of the field, where several Swiss soldiers stood ready to meet them. Before they came to a stop, two trucks filled with troops raced up to the plane. The crew began to follow their instructions, preparing the incendiaries. But as Andrews started to crawl out his side window, he heard a Swiss soldier yelling at him. He understood nothing of Swiss German, a dialect even Germans find nearly incomprehensible, but he thought to himself, "I'll look silly if not hostile trying to set off a bomb on the wing while he's pointing his gun at me at point blank range." So he set his bomb in the cockpit, too, and left the plane through

the bottom escape hatch. Not one of the British incendiaries worked and the B-17 sat there in safe repose, for the Swiss to inspect at leisure.

The pleasant and urbane von Meiss met Lt. Andrews and his crew on the field and took them to the officers' club where the exhausted airmen sat down to sandwiches and coffee. The atmosphere established by von Meiss and his officers was friendly and relaxed. All of the officers were cordial to the Americans. Nevertheless, Lt. Andrews followed protocol, even though it ran against his grain to do so. In response to questions from the Swiss, he repeated, as if by rote: "I can tell you nothing about our plane or our mission until I've spoken to a U. S. military attaché."

Part of the initial questioning was carried out by a Swiss Territorial officer speaking in a dialect from the Italian part of Switzerland, the Ticino. Despite the seriousness of the situation, Lt. Bowers couldn't help laughing a little at his accent and manner. The Swiss officers were equally amused that the crew members kept insisting, with a smile, they were merely "tourists."

After the initial talks, the Swiss moved the airmen under guard to the small town of Bellinzona, where they spent the night on the third floor of an empty school. The following morning the crew was put on a train to Dübendorf, the small military airfield outside of Zürich that served as headquarters for the Swiss Air Force. There they underwent further questioning by the Swiss officers, who continued in a friendly manner, respecting the Americans' "reluctance to talk about their experiences."

Andrews' long ride from Bellinzona to Zürich ought to have been uneventful, the sort of seemingly pointless shifting from place to place to which soldiers quickly become inured. Instead, it marked his rendezvous with history.

Not long after leaving the station, a middle-aged civilian in elegant, rumpled clothes slipped into the Americans' compartment. "May I speak to the pilot of the U.S. plane that landed yesterday in Magadino?" he asked. Lt. Andrews cautiously introduced himself to the civilian, whom for some obscure reason he suspected might be a spy.

The man was, Andrews quickly discovered, a master of spies. Allen Dulles reached out a friendly hand and greeted the airman, identifying himself by name and profession. He was head of the OSS (U.S. Office of Strategic Services) intelligence network in Europe, he explained. He used neutral Switzerland as an operational base, to learn what he could about German troop movements and diplomatic initiatives on the continent. Fascinated but still cautious, Andrews followed Dulles back to his compartment where they could speak privately. On the way, Andrews spoke up: "Look, Mr. Dulles, I'm sure you're for real and I've heard of your brother [John Foster Dulles], but until I meet the Military Attaché here in Switzerland, I can't tell you anything about what I was doing yesterday. I'm perfectly willing to talk about my boyhood in Wisconsin or about my days in college, but about what I did yesterday, nothing." Dulles seemed impressed by Andrews' caution - as if he'd made a mental note. This young officer was clearly discreet and reliable - and therefore eligible for a secret errand, such as Dulles would someday assign him.

But for now it was just conversation, on safe topics. The two men talked at length, Dulles telling stories "of his childhood in Auburn, New York, and his student days at Princeton." He also told the pilot he was returning to Bern from a clandestine meeting in Locarno. The two exchanged a vigorous handshake and parted respectfully. That, it seemed to Andrews, was that. He little suspected Dulles would, within the year, summon him for a mission as important as any he'd flown over Germany.

After breakfast on the morning of September 8th, three Swiss Air Force officers escorted Lt. Andrews out to the tarmac at Dübendorf. The long, grass airstrip stretched lengthwise in front of the hangar, which faced outward toward a small town marked by a church whose gleaming steeple towered over them, as if pointing to higher laws often forgotten in times of war.

On the tarmac that morning stood two relatively undamaged B-17s. The three officers took Andrews inside one of the bombers and asked him to show them how to start it. Believing this was against his orders, Andrews politely informed them that this was not possible. He admits he felt "ridiculous when they started the engines themselves" without his help. Fearing now that someone might get hurt, the lieutenant did tell his Swiss counterparts about the stalling speeds and flight characteristics of the big planes.

The Americans had no notion yet of what it meant to be "internees" on neutral soil. (Technically, they were prisoners of war in a neutral country.) The Swiss wondered how to handle these new, brash American strangers who were dropping in from the heavens. How and where should they be interned? How much freedom could they be granted, given the legal obligations imposed on Swiss policy by the neutral status? How extensively should they be questioned? What would the Germans think? Given that Swiss public opinion was mostly pro-Allied, how could the authorities avoid crossing the line that would invite German reprisals, or invasion?

Captain von Meiss began to answer some of these questions in his own mind and to prepare a routine for interrogation of the Americans by Swiss Air Force personnel. This routine, which involved having English-speaking officers talk casually with the Americans, was formally adopted a short while later, when von Meiss took his position as chief of Air Force intelligence.

But von Meiss was not yet setting policy, and it was in the interrogation process that Lt. Andrews had the only untoward incident of his stay in Switzerland. He was taken from Zürich to Bern for further questioning.

In Bern he was summoned to meet the head of Swiss intelligence, an army colonel who seemed distinctly unfriendly to the American flier. (Andrews was told later the colonel had relatives in Italy who'd been killed by Allied bombs.)

Tall and austere, the intelligence chief motioned Lt. Andrews to a chair in front of his desk.

"Describe to me your mission to Stuttgart, Lieutenant."

"I'm sorry, sir, but until I meet an American officer here in Switzerland, I can tell you nothing about . . ."

At this the colonel flew into a rage. Picking up a sheaf of Swiss newspapers from his desk, he shouted, "What do you mean you can't tell our Swiss military intelligence anything about your mission?" Gesturing with the newspapers, he went on, "It seems your people are perfectly willing to talk to our journalists!"

On September 6, four other American bombers on the mission to bomb Stuttgart had ended up in Switzerland. One had ditched in the Lake of Constance and three had landed in Dubendorf. Evidently, some crew members of those planes had spoken with Swiss reporters. The colonel was infuriated he had been scooped. Andrews' refusal to talk simply added insult to injury.

"I am very sorry, Colonel" Andrews added, "but I can only tell you I am not yet at liberty to say anything connected with U.S. military matters."

The colonel brusquely dismissed the American aviator with a parting shot, "Let me give you one more bit of advice, Lieutenant Andrews. I advise you and your crew members not to try to escape from Switzerland. Our soldiers all have guns and they are very good shots."

The advice about escaping, in light of Switzerland's strict adherence to the rules of neutrality, was good advice. Fortunately, most of those "good shots" - and the Swiss are noted for their marksmanship - did not actually shoot very many of the hundreds of Americans who escaped in the next year and a half. Perhaps they were turning a blind eye.

However, Andrews' was concerned less about escape at that moment and more about whether his parents and friends knew he was safe and in Switzerland.

From Zürich, Martin Andrews and his crew were taken to Macolin-sur-Bienne, the first internment camp for Americans, in the Jura Mountains near the French border. Not much later, Andrews began a correspondence with Captain von Meiss.

The Swiss sought to maintain discipline among the internees by making each pilot also responsible for the actions of his own crew. At Macolin, Andrews continued to command his own men. Over the course of the next six months, throughout his stay in Switzerland, he would work hard to keep up morale among the other officers and enlisted men. His efforts along these lines would become more intensive as the internees found themselves shuffled to different villages around Switzerland, as the long air war dragged on.

Part III: Fighting to Keep Up Moral

Most Americans interned in Switzerland during the war spent time in one of three places: Adelboden, Wengen or Davos. These were a far cry from the POW camps in which the Germans kept thousands of U.S. soldiers and airmen, just a few hundred miles away. Indeed, each major Swiss internment facility was a converted ski resort or tourist hotel, emptied of visitors by the war and re-populated with American internees and their Swiss guards. (The reader might recognize Davos as the favored winter resort of the British royal family.) Most enlisted men - and some officers such as Andrews - were kept at Adelboden. Later, in a concession to hierarchical military custom, many of the officers were sent to Davos, and enlisted men to Wengen.

Adelboden, where Lt. Andrews spent most of his internment, lies in the open sunny meadows at the upper end of the Engstligen Valley in the Bernese Oberland. At an altitude of 4,339 feet, Adelboden looks up at the craggy, glowering face of the Bernese Alps, including their highest summit, Wildstrubel, which stands 10,378 feet. Looking out of the bus windows, the new arrivals noticed not only the hotels that would be their new homes but numerous small chalets, churches, shops, and barns snuggled into the mountainsides. The village was ringed by a ragged circle of high terrain evergreens. Beyond them the meadows rose steadily to meet steep mountain walls. Higher up, at the head of the valley, ran the awe-inspiring Engstligen cascade, a manageable hike from town. Today, Adelboden is still a small village of about 3,500 people; it has served since 1932 as headquarters of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

Adelboden was chosen by the Swiss as an internment camp for several reasons. It served the purpose of placing the internees away from large population centers where they might mingle too extensively with the civilian population and become a source of trouble. Also, it was a good, safe distance from the German border - protecting it from cross-border raids or "accidental" shootings by the German army, which even then was making contingency plans for invading Switzerland if Hitler should find it convenient. The Swiss kept careful vigilance on all borders of their democratic enclave, to avoid giving any belligerent the provocation for an attack.

Since Switzerland as an armed neutral believed itself bound to keep internees from escaping, Adelboden was ideal: there was only one gap in the mountains that ringed and guarded the place. Ever since the war had begun, Adelboden's tourist activities had dried up. Most who came to visit were Swiss fearing a German invasion. No tourists, no income. Having internees made a big difference to the local economy, since the U.S. Government would at least pay the hoteliers for the internees' room and board. The Americans' presence was something of a bonanza for the stricken local economy: The fliers had money and little to spend it on.

The local merchants understood this keenly. Knowing, for example, that because gasoline was scarce there would be insufficient transportation to get everyone up the valley to the Geils-Hahnenmoos ski area, the merchants decided to build a smaller ski slope, Kuonisbergli, which was reachable by walking. This decision helped everyone - since much of the economy, at least in winter, was tied to skiing.

Adelboden in the summer of 1943 had 23 hotels, ranging in size from 10 to 175 beds. The 125-bed Nevada Palace became the first home for the incoming American fliers. Rooms at that time listed from 15.50 to 19 Swiss francs per day - the most expensive in town.

The seven story Nevada Palace was built stoutly, a solid late 19th century spa. The first two stories ran wider than the rest and the open area atop the second floor served as a large patio. The rooms on stories four and five were each fitted with a small metal balcony. The top story consisted of dormers projecting out of the sloping roof. Down below, in front of the hotel, a large skating area extended beyond the end of the hotel itself. Up behind the hotel were solitary pine trees and houses built against the hill that rose toward the mountains. In good weather tables and wicker chairs were set out on an esplanade behind the hotel for dining and visiting.

The ceiling borders of the restaurant that became the dining room were neatly stenciled, and chandeliers hung from ornate patterns on the high ceilings. The "Ladies Room" fitted out with a piano did double duty as a library and a mechanical drawing classroom. Down the hall the expansive veranda with large windows became the N.C.O. Club Room, where the boys "stood retreat" every Saturday night.

Although the hotel arrangements were basically good and the citizens of Adelboden friendly, that did not change the fundamental situation. The young American airmen were interned. Although they had the freedom to roam the town and the immediate vicinity, they were guarded and not free to travel outside of their resort town without special permission and a signed parole - their promise not to try to escape. If they missed evening curfew, they were punished by being given guard duty or house arrest for a few days.

More serious problems could result in a trip to the jail in the nearby village of Frütigen. At first there was little incentive to escape because France was still occupied by the Nazis. Moreover, as the men would come to learn, those caught escaping were sent to Wauwilermoos - a harsh Swiss punishment camp for disorderly, violent or insubordinate internees, which was (unhappily) commanded by an Axis sympathizer, Captain Beguin.

For those who remained, sheer boredom was an enemy - undermining morale and provoking needless conflicts and half-baked escape attempts. Between them, the Swiss and American soldiers tried to find ways to fight the tedium. The Salvation Army and Red Cross assisted in some specific ways, providing foods, books, sporting goods and teaching materials when possible. The officers established classes and started sports teams. The Swiss and the Red Cross encouraged the men to take up hobbies - and started a library for those who would rather read.

For the less ambitious G.I.'s, shopping for sporting equipment and handicrafts was another diversion. Lts. Martin Andrews and Floyd MacSpadden worked with the Swiss to establish a variety of classes for the men. But most of the burden rested on the men themselves. Those who adapted to the situation did reasonably well; those who could not accept it often remained unhappy. For many of the young men, sports kept up their health and energy; athletic contests were a familiar and welcome distraction. For many others, skiing during wartime was more infuriating than diverting; these men would become chronic escape risks - and some would find themselves behind barbed wire at Wauwilermoos.

The Americans chose to give their place of internment a name - as if it were a regular military base. They called it "Camp Moloney," in memory of ball-turret gunner Sgt. Joseph P. Moloney, the first American airman to die in action over Switzerland. His bomber, "Raunchy," had been badly damaged on the mission to Stuttgart, and ditched on September 6, 1943 in Lake Constance. He went to the bottom of the lake with the aircraft. His body was recovered by the Swiss on October 5th and buried with military honors.

Within six months, Lt. Andrews would have the opportunity to save the lives of countless such American soldiers and airmen, by smuggling information vital to the Normandy invasion through occupied France into neutral Spain - thanks to the benevolent scheming of the well-dressed, rumpiled gentleman he'd met on the train - Allen Dulles. But first, he had to help the American internees to keep up their morale.

Part IV: Slow Train to Madrid

Martin Andrews and his crew had joined the rest of the American internees in the move of some 50 miles from Macolin to Adelboden on November 1st. At Adelboden, the Swiss commandant, Captain Kramer, called Andrews to his office and made a proposition, "It would be useful for camp morale and discipline if we could organize some educational programs for the men. I was hoping you might be willing to undertake such a project." Martin Andrews was willing and able, and got the names of some Swiss citizens who might be helpful.

Thus Martin Andrews, whom his fellow officers, both Swiss and American, came to know as "Andy," went to work with "Mac" MacSpadden and others to establish the classes the internees would attend. His own academic interests, which had been nurtured by the strong liberal arts program at St. John's College of Annapolis, made the task enjoyable. Andrews taught courses in English literature, history, and geometry. With the help of Captain Lloyd Free of the American Legation in Bern, he was able to enlist several Swiss to teach languages and to introduce courses on European history and culture.

Professor Villemain, a retired interpreter from the League of Nations, came from Geneva to teach Swiss history and provide lectures on the origins of the archaic Romansch language - an ancient dialect of Latin that has survived on Swiss soil since the fall of the Roman Empire. The local pastor, an avid collector of Dürer wood cuts, lectured on his favorite 15th century artist. Others among the internees joined the make-shift faculty. Lt. MacSpadden taught some classes and became the audio-visual specialist, setting up slide shows and running the 16mm. movie projector. One of the radio operators taught internees how to read Morse code.

While they were setting up classes, Andrews and Captain Free also worked with the Swiss to enroll qualified internees in Swiss schools.

As a result, several went to study in Geneva and Bern. For those who already had some specific abilities, Andrews looked around for other opportunities - arranging, for example, for three members of his own crew to work at the Legation in Bern, which represented American interests in Switzerland. Andrews noted, "My bombardier, Bob Huisinga, became Executive Officer for General Bernard R. Legge, who was the senior military officer assigned to the American Legation."

A small private school operated in Adelboden; after getting to know some of the teachers, Andrews spent his "afternoons teaching English to Swiss school children." There was a shortage of texts in English, so Andrews undertook to write several stories for the children to read. Taking inspiration from his natural surroundings and his status as an internee, Andrews crafted simple tales of skiing through the woods, exploring nature - under the shadow of the mighty mountains which confined the Americans. "Ever since that experience in Switzerland, I've been of two minds about mountains," Andrews said. "I find them beautiful, but also a little bit oppressive."

By December, Lt. Andrews had also discovered some of the usual distractions, especially hiking and skating. He continued his correspondence with Captain von Meiss and also received a letter from a young Swiss pilot, Lt. Bruno Zaugg-Lupi, asking if they might become "pen pals." Andrews readily agreed and invariably closed his letters to the young pilot with a "breezy 'Good luck and good flying.'" Their correspondence lasted for several years, although they never met - and came to a sad end, as Andrews recalls: "Months after the war, in answer to one of my letters, I got a note that Bruno had died in a military air crash. I never wished anybody 'good flying' again."

For all the tedium and frustration that accompanied a long enforced time-out in the midst of a shooting war, Andrews believed that his time in Switzerland was not ill-spent. He had particular reason to be proud of the manner in which he left Switzerland - as a secret courier for Allied war information.

The American master-spy Allen Dulles, the chief OSS operative in Europe, remembered the discreet, well-educated young lieutenant with whom he had spoken on the train many months before. In February, 1944, Dulles called Andrews down to Bern to his flat on the ground floor at 23 Herrengasse, in the old part of town overlooking the Aare River. It was from this unassuming building that Dulles would send out thousands of classified messages that would prove essential to Allied war efforts. (For instance, he would notify the Allies in advance of the 1944 attempt on Hitler's life and attempted coup d'état by von Stauffenberg and other German anti-Nazis - in the hope of gaining U.S. support for the conspirators. The Allies turned a deaf ear.)

As Andrews arrived and as he left, Dulles escorted him through an avenue of tall linden trees, which partially obscured them from view. "I am being watched constantly," Dulles confided to him. The Germans knew well that Dulles was far more than a "diplomatic observer."

Once they were inside, in the spacious parlor, Dulles asked Lt. Andrews to take part in an important operation. Dulles had arranged for the direct exchange of seven German officers interned in Switzerland for seven interned American airmen. If he agreed, Martin Andrews would be one of them. However, Dulles had bigger plans than just trying to free a few Americans. For months, he had been patiently gathering military information to pass on to Washington to help with the upcoming invasion at Normandy - and now he planned to pass it out of Switzerland, by confiding it to some of the internees to be released.

Andrews was astonished by what Dulles had been able to learn: the placement of every German division in France, details of fortifications on the French coast, German production figures, and much more. "Code names of Germans who were spying for the Allies, reports on which Allied diplomats Dulles didn't trust, and a lot of things I just didn't understand," Andrews recalls.

For the next week, Andrews and Lt. Robert Titus, who had also been selected for the exchange, visited Dulles' office and memorized intelligence information. Andrews and Titus did their memorizing independently; neither one knew what the other was up to. By Dulles' design, each one thought that he was the sole courier of secrets. Soon they met the other internees who were to be exchanged: Lts. Cantwell, Oakes, Geron, Turner, and Rapport.

In one of their meetings, Dulles sought some technical advice from Andrews. Dulles needed to send some items clandestinely out of Switzerland - what it was, Andrews never found out for sure. "I think that one of the Germans who was working on our side had written a book," he recalls.

Dulles wanted to know if it was possible to fly a seaplane into Lago Maggiore from an aircraft carrier in the Adriatic Sea - the closest the Allied navy could come. It was possible, Andrews allowed, but it was also very risky. "Seaplanes are slow, I told him," Andrews recalls, "and they make easy targets. I thought any sea-plane they sent would get shot down." Dulles seemed disappointed but instructed Lt. Andrews to raise the subject again with a particular admiral who worked with OSS, someone Dulles wanted him to meet in Washington.

The Germans would take the internees through France - which was now fully occupied - to Spain, another neutral country. From there they could be directly repatriated. The internees were instructed to wear civilian clothes -to preclude any unwanted interference on the part of the French Underground. Of course, this also meant that - as soldiers out of uniform - any German officer could legally regard them as spies. (Spies were routinely shot on sight!) For the seven men - and for thousands of American troops who would soon land at Normandy - it was vital that nothing go wrong.

The American officers were taken to the railroad station in Basel on March 3, 1944. The station straddled the border and had been conveniently evacuated by the Swiss officials overseeing the exchange. The men were led to the vast main waiting area. The German end of the station was

decorated in a manner to inspire fear: "The Germans had festooned the walls of their side of this vast chamber with big banners and swastikas."

The scene was surreal. The Americans felt uneasy in their guts. Two Swiss officials walked them across the station in the cavernous silence. As they approached their destination, they noticed that the German officer preparing to take charge of them "wore the black uniform of Himmler's sinister SS." Andrews caught his breath. "I suddenly remembered what Dulles had told me - 'They are always watching me.' What if one of these SS men had seen me coming and going? Surely they'd been photographing Dulles and his visitors. Would one of them pull out a photo, spot me and accuse me of being a spy? The thought stayed with me throughout the trip."

Outwardly, Andrews and the rest stayed calm, putting on a good show of confidence. The SS major wore a dagger at his side, lending him a fierce and sinister look. Suddenly, he gave a stiff-armed salute and shattered the silence "with a loud cry of 'Heil Hitler!'" Its effect was haunting in the empty station. The Americans, like the Swiss diplomats who accompanied them, simply nodded their heads and did not honor the salute.

The die was cast. Seven Americans would cross through enemy territory with a German escort in the middle of the war. The Swiss had arranged to release the German captives only after receiving official word that the Americans were safely in Madrid, the only form of insurance the young officers had.

Three other SS men approached and escorted the American officers to a waiting German train. There they handed them over to a three-man guard squad of regular Wehrmacht soldiers, a captain, sergeant, and corporal. As the latter climbed up into the railcar, their loud footsteps rang out in the cavernous station. However, the tension level dropped considerably at the completion of this exchange; the Wehrmacht soldiers, being much less committed to Nazi ideology than the fanatical SS, seemed somewhat less threatening.

Now, Andy's gift for languages came in handy. The German captain spoke a bit of French, and he let Lt. Andrews know that he and the other officers would share two compartments. They shuffled, half sideways, down the narrow passage, and one of the guards opened the first compartment door. The Americans took their seats with an uneasy feeling. They had made it through the first stage of "one of the eeriest rail journeys" they would ever make.

The Americans soon learned that they were on the "local." It "seemed to stop at every station along the Rhine Valley." On long curves, they could see the ends of the train: There were anti-aircraft guns mounted fore and aft. They prayed that no American fighter pilots would get lucky and take out this train, something Allied fighters had been having more and more success in doing.

There was no leaving the train, but the men were allowed to lean out the window for fresh air and scenery. In the stations they watched the German people milling about, going through their daily rituals. In one small town, a young woman walked the platform beside the train "pleading for donations to the German Red Cross." For Lt. Andrews humanity was humanity; he reached into his pants' pocket and dropped his last Swiss ten franc note into the basket the young woman extended toward the compartment window. Sometimes charity crosses the front lines on battle maps.

In Switzerland, the officers had suffered and enjoyed the distinction of being among the "crazy Americans" whom the Swiss people found so intriguing. Their status as "curiosities" followed them on their journey to Madrid. Word spread quickly through the train that there were two compartments holding American officers. German soldiers returning to France from leaves or other duties packed the train; many of the officers among them were curious to see flesh-and-blood specimens of their counterparts. What did they really look and sound like? German radio had persistently portrayed them as gangsters from Chicago - was this the case? Those who had

influence or power of rank arranged through the captain of the guard squad to speak with the Americans.

Some of the Germans they encountered were blunt and arrogant. One Luftwaffe fighter pilot accosted Martin Andrews. In accented English, he said: "You American bomber pilots are terrorists and barbarians." A Knight's Cross hung from his neck, and he treated his enemy as an enemy. "We Germans do not at all like your President Roosevelt," he growled.

Martin Andrews replied in kind: "That is nothing compared to how much we Americans hate Adolf Hitler." The well-indoctrinated German flier merely shrugged his shoulders and stalked off down the corridor.

Most encounters were less strained. The Americans had each brought several cartons of Swiss cigarettes with them - these were inferior to Luckies, Camels, and Old Golds, to be sure, but were vastly superior to German smokes. When word got around, German officers would stop by simply to weasel a cigarette. Albert, the Wehrmacht sergeant accompanying the crew of internees, smoked incessantly. "Albert," Lt. Andrews said, "you're going to have a very sore throat by the time you leave us."

"Ah, yes," he replied haltingly, "but it will be the first sore throat I've had from smoking in five years."

At one point, after they had crossed the Rhine into France, an infantry colonel who "very likely commanded a German unit along the Normandy coast" talked with the Americans. He imparted to them his conviction, shared by most of his comrades, that the German defenses on the French coast were impregnable. His was the very sort of overconfidence that helped to make the D-Day invasion successful. But he also recognized the power of the U.S. "Look," he said, "we Germans cannot defeat you. But neither can you Americans defeat us. Why don't we get together and fight the Russians?" The Americans had other hopes.

The train finally pulled into Paris. The Americans' guards handed them over to two Wehrmacht majors, who led them out of the station to two waiting Dodge station wagons with swastikas painted on their sides. The journey remained surreal and eerie. A quick tour of the city followed past no military sites, to be sure, but past scores of public buildings festooned with hundreds of swastikas and Nazi banners plastered on every wall, hanging from every place conceivable.

One of the German officers spoke beautiful English, with a mild Scottish burr. He had been a lawyer prior to the war with a number of clients in Edinburgh. He impressed Andrews with his knowledge of Wordsworth and French history as they made their trip around the city. "They seemed anxious to impress us," Andrews recalls. "They served us a lavish dinner, and made each one of us take away a bottle of champagne. I don't know what their motive was - except perhaps to ingratiate themselves."

The final destination in Paris was another train station. There they began the last leg of their trip. They passed through Bordeaux on the way south and from the train they watched both commercial and naval activity along the docks. "I saw quite a bit that was of potential military interest," Andrews remembers. "I later found out that the very fact I'd seen and reported on such things made me vulnerable to execution as a spy, if I should ever fly on the Western Front again. In fact, I learned, that was why no airman who escaped captivity was eligible to serve in combat on the same front again."

The train eventually stopped in the French town of Hendaye on the border with Spain. Here in 1940 Hitler had come to meet Franco - and plead in vain for the Spanish leader to join him against the Allies. The Americans stretched as they came off the train. They were told to walk across the little bridge that spanned the Bidasoa River into Irun near the Bay of Biscay. The tension was palpable, Andrews relates:

Some 40 members of the Spanish "Blue Division," which had been fighting with the Germans in Russia, crossed the bridge the same time we did. They happened to be violently anti-American and yelled and screamed at us. But this came only to shouting, for a Swiss diplomatic courier soon joined us and took us by car to San Sebastian.

The Swiss diplomat accompanied the officers to Madrid, where they were delivered to the U.S. Embassy. After a rest, they headed home via Gibraltar, Casablanca, New York City, and Washington. In Washington each of the officers was debriefed, and then Andrews and Titus were taken to the OSS "farm" for separate questioning.

Much of what Dulles had asked Andrews to memorize was directed specifically to a U.S. admiral who worked within the OSS. This officer took Andrews aside when his debriefings there were over. He thanked him for his service to the country.

"And now, Lieutenant, I want you to do something else," he said. "I want you to forget. I want you never to mention to anyone that you ever met or talked with Allen Dulles. Believe me, Lieutenant, it's just as easy to forget as it is to remember."

Andrews followed the admiral's orders. He never mentioned Mr. Dulles to fellow officers, to hometown newspapers and not even to members of his own family. When he briefly met Mr. Dulles a dozen years after the war, he was flattered that the spy chief even remembered him.

For the remainder of the war, Lt. Martin Andrews was assigned to the Air Transport Command. Based with the 7th Ferrying Group in Great Falls, Montana, he flew hundreds of hours, ferrying planes from U.S. factories to bases overseas and to (then-ally) Russia.

After the war, Andrews became a documentary filmmaker, beginning by making newsreels for Paramount News and, over the years, having a hand as writer, director, producer or narrator of more than 300 motion pictures. He continued to fly planes - including gliders, his favorite craft - well into his 60s. Now retired, Martin "Andy" Andrews lives with his wife Jean in Long Island, New York.

"And I still haven't finished War and Peace," he says, summing up. "But the last 40 pages are just Tolstoy's reflections on war - and I guess I have enough such reflections of my own."

Est nulla via in via virtuti.

Summing Up

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3. [Andrews and Col. Robert Johnson, 1979](#)
4. [Reunion at Magadino](#)
5. [Last letter to von Meiss, November 15, 2000](#)
6. [Death notice of Geoffrey von Meiss](#)
7. [Letter to the von Meiss family](#)
8. [Jean and Martin Andrews, August 25, 2002](#)