

ML.78.The Untold Battle of Brize-Norton

Bill and I go back to Hondo Air Base, TX in 1954 and primary pilot training in the T-6 plus ten years as pilots in the RB-47's at Forbes. We were tight friends who had been in the 'arena' in all areas flown by the 55th – Eielson, Yokota, Thule, England, Turkey – and shared many professional and personal experiences together. He had a lengthy scar on his right arm as a result of an evening in the Officer's Mess at Brize Norton after we had sprayed a gathering of our comrades with red fire extinguisher liquids in their room on the third deck of our quarters, dropping the extinguisher and retreating hurriedly to safety (or so we thought), the room down the hall we were sharing.

After retreating to what we thought was the safety of our room down-the-hall protected by a very substantial Brit door and reflecting on how we had 'surprised' our comrades who had been continuing the party, we were preparing for bed when we heard an argument outside our door. The argument (or heavily alcohol-influenced discussion) was about "which club should we use to break the glass" after which a golf club (it was an iron, I don't remember which, I think a seven) broke the glass in the transom above the door, followed by a spray of the remnants of the fire extinguisher through the hole against the ceiling, deflecting the contents down on the scoundrels residing within.

This came as quite a surprise to Bill and me, and in our somewhat(?) alcohol inspired attempt to deflect the stream striking the ceiling, we both reached up thinking(?) we could deflect it back on the agitators who were denying us our crew rest. WRONG! The glass was shattered and as we both reached up, Bill's hand preceded mine and, in my attempt to assist his efforts, drew his hand/arm down onto the shards of glass remaining in the transom. Blood flowed copiously and a 'time-out' (surrender) was initiated, the door unlocked, and his combat wound examined. It was confirmed to be somewhat severe, to the extent that he was transported to the USAF Hospital at Burderop Park near Swindon, where it was reported he needed no pain killing anesthetic prior to having some twenty plus stitches.

In spite of this unfortunate set of circumstances we remain very close friends.

- Reg Urschler