

Virginia Aviation History Project



Arthur Seder

by Linda Burdette

The second half of 1944 was the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. The D-Day invasion had turned the tide of war and the lines of ground combat were moving ever eastward back toward Germany. A major factor in this development was the bombing campaign operated by British and American forces from England and one of the major contributors to that effort was the 401st Bomb Group, Deenethorpe, England.

One of the young men assigned to the 401st was Arthur Seder. Born in 1920 in Minnesota, he attended Northwestern University where he played basketball and married co-ed Marion Heltzel. In the fall of 1941, Art left college to join the Army Air Corps and became an aerial navigator. He later transferred to pilot training, received his wings in 1943, and transitioned to fly the B-17. The Boeing B-17 Flying



The B-17 was the workhorse bomber of World War II, dropping more bombs than any other U.S. aircraft during the war. Used primarily for daylight precision strategic bombing raids, its nickname was coined by Richard Williams, a reporter for The Seattle Times when, upon seeing its armaments, he commented “Why, it’s a flying fortress!”

Fortress was a four-engine high-flying, long-range heavy bomber aircraft able to withstand extensive battle damage and keep flying. With a service ceiling

greater than any of its Allied contemporaries, the B-17 was an extremely effective weapons system, dropping more bombs than any other U.S. aircraft in World War II. Of the 1.5 million metric tons of bombs dropped on Germany and its occupied territories by U.S. aircraft, 640,000 tons were dropped from B-17s.

Upon completion of combat crew training at Gulfport, Mississippi, Seder and his crew went to Hunter

Army Air Field near Savannah, Georgia, a staging base for B-17 crews flying to Great Britain. There, the crew underwent medical exams, attended briefings, and drew their flight gear. As the senior officer on the crew, Seder was a little surprised when the Army required that he sign for a brand new B-17 Flying Fortress. He still wonders if the Army thought he might steal or lose it!

Finally they were ready for departure and on the first day, they flew up the east coast, over New York



One of Seder's prized possessions is an early picture of his crew, taken before departure to England. Seder is standing at left, with left to right, Lawrence Genauer, waist gunner; Cecil Harris, ball turret gunner; Rickard Affel, waist gunner; and Joe Dubray, navigator. Kneeling are Allen Crawford, bombardier; Clarence Antil, engineer and top turret gunner; John Backlin, radio operator; Carl Allison, tail gunner; and Lou Rubinoff, co-pilot.

City, to Grenier Field near Manchester, New Hampshire. Over a hundred B-17's were lined up along the taxiways of Grenier Field, all awaiting flight to England. After several days at Grenier, they departed for the Air Base at Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada. The air field there is truly remote, in a beautiful site, surrounded by forests. Although they arrived in winter, the weather was unseasonably mild and the crew was able to play touch football after dinner.

Unfortunately flight over the northern route to Europe involves an area of very dicey weather and Seder and his crew waited for several days for better weather before they could set out for Iceland. Prior to departure, their safety briefing included information on a landing strip in Greenland known as Bluie West 1 which they were to find if they ran into trouble. However the field was located at the end of a narrow fjord with little chance of a "go-around" if they missed the approach. Not exactly a situation to make the crew totally comfortable! Although the entire route to Iceland was covered in rain and heavy clouds, the only problem was that the weather

precluded celestial navigation and they had to rely solely on their radio compass. Under those circumstances, all were very relieved to land at Reykavik.

The final leg of the journey was to an RAF base on the coast of Wales where their shiny new B-17 was promptly taken from the crew and flown to a facility to be modified and equipped for the European Theater. The crew was surprised at this – they had even been discussing names for "their" plane. So the poor air crew ignominiously boarded a train destined for Stoke-on-Trent where they spent several days in a replacement depot for new air crews. In his first letter home, Seder told Marion: "As you probably know by now, I am somewhere in England, just where I'm not even sure myself although I can't tell you anyway To date I like England very well – it is more picturesque than I had imagined. The little towns all look just like they stepped out of Dickens' books, and the fields are all so green and pretty, surrounded by their stone fences."

At Stoke-on-Trent Seder was introduced to that bastion of English culture – the village pub. In that letter



Nissen huts outfitted with G.I. cots and Army blankets were not the most luxurious of accommodations and bicycles certainly not the most prestigious of transportation methods, but both served the men of the 401st Bomb Group very well.

to Marion, he continued: “Last night I went into town for the first time. The little English town is certainly different from what we’re used to. The center of things – and the only places to go – are the ‘pubs.’ They are certainly much different from the beer parlors back home. The people all come and sit and talk while some of the old fellows throw darts – and they really take the game seriously! Then someone started to play the piano, and everyone sang; almost all the songs were familiar ones, which we Americans joined in.”

On October 11, the crew were sent to the 401st Bombardment Group at Deenethorpe, near the town of Kettering. After getting off the train at the Kettering Station, they were taken in the back of an army truck to the airfield, about 9 miles away, near the huge steel mills of the town of Corby. The Air Base was a large, unfenced area with a country road running through it. The village of Upper Benefield lay just beyond one gate to the airfield, and the even smaller village of Deenethorpe was located toward the end of the longest runway. Seder and his crew were assigned to the 614th Squadron of the 401st Bomb Group.



Huddling around the stove, talking and reading mail from home was the entertainment of many an evening although the flyers did enjoy going to the local pub.

That first night in Deenethorpe, he wrote to Marion: “We moved into barracks called Nissen huts, which are half-round steel buildings – long open affairs with room for about sixteen men. The showers and sinks are about three blocks away, so the fellows heat water on a little stove in the barracks and shave out of their “tin” helmets. The stove throws out just enough heat that everyone has to gather right around it to stay warm.” A day later, he continued “The fellows are all sitting on the beds and chairs around the stove just like in a country store. There’s a lot of talk going around – the war’s being fought all up and down the continent and all over the sky. I guess every fellow has his own version of what happens on every mission, and all of them are anxious to tell about it.”

Later, adapting to the rigors of life in England, where the war was taking its toll on the populace, he wrote “I am now the owner of a bicycle. Most of the fellows have them and it’s almost necessary because of the distance between places and the scarcity of other transportation. It cost £7, which means \$28, which is plenty, but I expect to get lots of use out of it. Incidentally, my clothes are really taking a beating over here. Between the rain and mud and riding my bike,



One of the most complicated parts of any mission was assembling up to 1,000 aircraft into formation to begin the flights to Germany. This diagram illustrates the complicated nature of that effort.

my trousers are in bad shape.”

Seder’s first task was learning all the procedures inherent in combat missions, quite a different process from flying the airplane. The first lesson was in formation flying for bombing raids. The Group regularly launched a three squadron formation of 36 airplanes. The 8th Air Force missions involved dozens of bomber groups, often 1,000 aircraft or more. Assembling a force of that size in the air was a complicated and dangerous procedure involving precise timing and adherence to altitude and direction orders. Each

group was assigned its own assembly area, using a radio station called a “buncher” and the Deenethorpe beacon was known as the Cottessmore Buncher. The three squadron leaders would depart first and begin flying around

the buncher, using radio compasses to maintain position. The other 33 airplanes would follow and find their way into the formation. The newer crews were normally assigned to the “tail end Charley” positions in the formation, which were the most vulnerable and difficult to fly. When the formation made a change of course, it was like playing “crack the whip”. As the crew gained seniority, it worked its way up in the formation. The Group formation had a lead squadron, a low squadron, and a high squadron to take maximum advantage of the firepower of the machine guns on the Fortresses. These squadrons had to be constantly aware of the other’s locations but in the fog of war were sometimes separated and had to be self-sufficient enough to make independent decisions.

A Group Air Commander would lead the formation toward the coast of England. Once en route, the Group took its position in the bomber stream, the long column of bomb groups heading out over the North Sea. The formations would then climb from the assembly altitude of 6,000 feet to over 20,000 feet, strapping on oxygen masks and turning on electric flying suits in the meantime.

Seder’s first mission was on October 25, 1944, a bombing raid on oil plant and motor transport works in Hamburg, Germany. Seder was in the low squadron

flying a B-17 called “Gambler’s Choice.” Departing at 9:35 a.m. the 39 aircraft returned at 4:24 p.m. The raid consisted of three squadrons of 12 aircraft each and three spares. Most of the European continent was covered by

heavy clouds, so the targeting was conducted by radar. As a result, the crews could not verify that their bombs had hit the target, but did report seeing heavy black smoke come up through the clouds. Seder noticed the sporadic flak as they crossed the coast but the serious flak hit as they were turning to do their bombing run. He still remembers the red flashes as the shells exploded nearby. Seven aircraft sustained damage – one serious and six minor – but all aircraft made it back to base. The return was highlighted by the use of special landing procedures which required the Low and High Squadrons to circle Cottessmore Buncher upon return until the Lead Squadron landed, and then the other squadrons landed one behind the other. The pilots were very pleased with their landings, especially considering that the low visibility had continued to dog them all

My Operational Missions

1. October 25, 1944	Hamburg	14 January 21, 1945	Aschaffenberg
2. October 26, 1944	Biefeld	15 February 1, 1945	Ludwigshaven
3. November 4, 1944	Hamburg	16 February 9, 1945	Lutzendorf
4. November 8, 1944	Merseburg	17 February 15, 1945	Dresden5
November 25, 1944	Merseburg	18 February 16, 1945	Gelsenkirchen
6. December 4, 1944	Kassel	19 February 22, 1945	Ludwigslust
7. December 6, 1944	Merseburg	20 March 7, 1945	Siegen
8. December 19, 1944	Koblenz	21 March 11, 1945	Bremen
9. December 24, 1944	Darmstadt	22 March 15, 1945	Zossen/Berlin
10. January 1, 1945	Kassell	23 April 8, 1945	Halberstadt
11. January 7, 1945	Bitburg	24 April 10, 1945	Oraneinburg
12. January 10, 1945	Euskirchen	25 April 14, 1945	Royan
13. January 17, 1945	Paderborn		

Art Seder completed 25 missions during his time with the 401st.

the way back to Deenethorpe.

After a few missions, Seder was able to take some leave and travel to London. Standing on the very crowded train, he finally arrived at St. Pancras Station about two hours later. He and his buddies stayed at one of the Red Cross facilities, the Jules Club, on Jermyn Street near Picadilly Circus. He was most impressed with the bed stating “they were the softest beds, with the cleanest sheets I think I’ve ever slept in....it was really something to sleep in a bed like that after a month on a G.I. cot with army blankets and no sheets.” During the trip, they toured the city in a limousine (a Rolls Royce!) for the grand cost of 8 shillings each (about \$1.60) and saw St. Paul’s Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, London Bridge, Tower of London, and the Houses of Parliament. He was shocked to see the amount of destruction in London. The oldest church in London, All Hallows, near the Tower of London, built in 678 A.D. was just a shell. The area around St. Paul’s was heavily damaged and the Cathedral had a large hole in the floor where a German bomb came through the roof but didn’t explode. He later wrote to Marion “a buzz bomb went overhead last night, and that is really a terrible sensation! It passed



Flak and German fighters were a constant source of danger for the aircraft and crew. Seder still remembers the red flashes as the shells exploded nearby.

by okay, though, and exploded some distance away.” The buzz bomb, or V-1, was essentially an unmanned jet airplane armed with a bomb. It was called a buzz bomb because of the particular whine of its engine. When it ran out of fuel, the engine would stop and the bomb glided silently to earth. Everyone knew that the silence preceded the explosion and would duck for cover when the buzz stopped.



The devastation in London was particularly shocking to the young American newly come to the war zone. But the friendliness and resilience of the British people, even in the face of these harsh circumstances, made a real impression on Seder.

In a later trip to London, Seder had a very unique experience. While attempting to enter Westminster Palace to see a session of the House of Commons (which was actually meeting in the House of Lords, the Commons chamber having been destroyed in 1941 by German bombs), he was refused entry unless he had an appointment with a member of the House. Then a friendly Bobby suggested that he join a group of soldiers who had an appointment with Baron Fermoy, a member of the Commons. Fermoy showed them around Westminster Palace, explaining the various rooms and buildings, and making fun of all its traditions, apparently neglecting to explain that his mother had been an American and he had been educated at Harvard. He supplied tickets to the visitors’ gallery where the soldiers had the opportunity to hear Winston

Churchill give several short speeches. Seder particularly mentions “Old Winnie’s” wit and how he had the whole House roaring with laughter at some of his comments. Many years later, Seder learned that Baron Fermoy was Princess Diana’s maternal grandfather.

After his sixth mission, Seder was asked to begin training to become the pilot of a lead crew, the crew designated to lead squadron or Group formation. Eager for the challenge, Seder began training his navigation and bombing missions with new vigor. One practice exercise was to fly to the Isle of Man, located in the Irish Sea, and drop practice bombs on a bombing range there.

On November 8, Seder flew a raid on the I.G. Farben synthetic oil plant in Merseberg, Germany. There were 41 aircraft on this raid, although one ship was unable to take off; one spare returned early; and one aborted the mission after receiving flak damage. Departing at 7:41 a.m., the flight again encountered heavy cloud cover necessitating bomb targeting via radar. They were lucky that they didn’t encounter any enemy fighters, but the flak was a different story. This time it was accurate and intense and a total of 26 aircraft were damaged. The official record reflects that two received major damage but made it back to England, but it doesn’t specify that one of those injured aircraft was the inaptly named “Mister Completely” piloted by Art Seder. Just after dropping his bombs, the two starboard engines lost power and Seder faced the possibility of flying across German-held territory on two engines, with German jets in the area. However he was able to bring one engine back on

line and, with full throttle to the three good engines, was able to make his way home to the base. While this was happening, one of his fellow pilots was forced to make an emergency landing in Belgium. This aircraft, “Little Pedro”, was hit by flak just before dropping its bombs, and the flak knocked out two engines, wounded several crewmembers and caused a fire in the cockpit. The pilot, Lt. Richard Steele, was

able to bring the aircraft down at an RAF airfield near Brussels and, although the ship was a total loss, the crew safely returned to Deenethorpe.

One area of particular concern to Seder and the rest of the 401st was the weather. British weather is questionable at all times and in the winter, can be absolutely foul. On more than one occasion he had to land with visibility so bad, he couldn’t

see the runway until he was directly over it. With other airplanes in the pattern, that is a distinctly dangerous undertaking. He pointed out that the 401st flew all the time in weather that would ground every plane on the field back in the States. This situation was never as obvious as in December 1944.

On 16 December 1944, the Germans launched an offensive campaign through the densely forested Ardennes region of Belgium, France, and Luxembourg with the goal of recapturing the vital port of Antwerp. Called the Ardennes Offensive at the time and now more popularly known as the Battle of the Bulge, it involved around 610,000 American forces, resulting in 89,000 casualties, including 19,000 killed. It was the largest and bloodiest battle fought by the United States in World War II. Those forces included



On December 24, during the raid on Darmstadt, Seder was witness to a Flying Fortress going down close to his aircraft. This mission, in support of the Battle of the Bulge, was a large raid on the transportation hubs used by the German Army for resupply and reinforcement to their troops in the Ardennes.

the 401st Bomb Group. On December 19, the Group was assigned a bombing mission with the German town of Schleiden as primary target and Koblenz as secondary. The load for the aircraft was twelve 500-pound bombs and 2,300 gallons of gas. Although the plan was for 40 aircraft to depart, visibility was very poor and one aircraft ran off the runway forcing the last four to remain



The destruction in Dusseldorf was extreme. Seder estimated that 75% of the buildings were merely empty burned-out shells.

on the ground. So 36 aircraft departed at 9:45 a.m. and headed for Germany. The weather was officially listed as unflyable but the 401st was determined to help the troops in the Ardennes by taking out the German Army's transportation hubs. However with such poor visibility, the squadrons became separated as they neared the target area. The Lead Squadron arrived over Schleiden but did not have the equipment to identify the target without assistance from the High Squadron. They held in place awhile waiting for the others, but finally decided to divert to the secondary target about 30 miles away (Koblenz) which they could locate with ground scanning radar. The Lead Squadron did not see the High Squadron who must have arrived soon after the Lead Squadron departed. They later reported that their targeting equipment was inoperative and they also couldn't locate the target at first, but just as they were deciding to divert to the secondary target, the targeting equipment began to work and they were able to drop the bombs at Schleiden. The Low Squadron fared the worst since their altitude made visibility almost impossible, but they did see another group dropping smoke on Stadtkyll, a target of opportunity, and proceeded to drop their bombs there. Between the weather and the status of the German aviation assets, there was no flak or enemy air opposition, so the

airplanes suffered no battle damage. However the situation became more difficult when the aircraft tried to return to England. The weather had deteriorated so much that the lead squadron found it necessary to fly 500 feet over the English Channel. None of the aircraft were able to return to Deenethorpe and portions of the unit ended up at Predannack in southwest

England; at Benson, south of Oxford; and at Tangmere, near London. Seder and his crew ended up at Predannack, specifically at the RAF Base on Lizard's Point, which is one of the most southern points in Cornwall. They were stuck there for 5 days because of the weather and very frustrated because the Battle of the Bulge continued unabated and they wanted to support the ground troops. Besides, there was little to do at the RAF base, although they did come to enjoy the British habits of coffee in mid-morning and a hearty tea in the afternoon, followed by supper in the evening. You can imagine their relief when on December 24, Christmas Eve, they received orders to fly a new mission to attack a German airfield at Darmstadt, Germany.

On December 24, with aircraft scattered across England, the 401st was part of a very complicated mission against Darmstadt and Koblenz. Airplanes departed all bases and linked up at Cottesmore Buncher. There they were joined by others in the 452nd Bomb Group of the 3rd Air Division. The 401st alone fielded 46 aircraft for this mission. The weather had cleared up markedly and visual targeting of the bombing was possible. One squadron was able to score hits directly in the vicinity of Koblenz, but the aircraft experienced about 27 minutes of light but very accurate flak and 22 aircraft were damaged in the run.

Seder's airplane was one of those which joined the formation of the 452nd Bomb Group and followed them to the Darmstadt target. While flak was only moderate, he was dismayed to see a Fortress go down close by, the first time he had personally witnessed such a loss. Once again, weather had deteriorated over England upon return and all but three of the aircraft were diverted to other bases. The majority landed at the 487th Bomb Group base at Lavenham, where the crews spent Christmas Eve night in make-shift quarters or on chairs and benches. Seder wrote home to Marion: "I am still wearing the clothes I put on a week ago and have had only one shower and one shave since then. So right now I'm finding it a little hard to live with myself.... I spent Christmas Eve in front of a big wood fireplace in the Officer's Club and slept there in a chair all night. It was warm, however, and quite comfortable, so I don't mind. This hasn't seemed much like Christmas though."



On his return trip to the U.S. Seder was flying the airplane as it passed over the tip of Greenland about midnight and, in the Arctic light, had a memorable view of the Arctic continent below.

Most of the aircraft returned to Deenethorpe on December 26 and 27.

Realizing that the news might be unsettling to Marion, who was expecting the couple's first child, he later wrote "I have been quite fortunate so far, with no serious troubles on my missions. I've had a couple of engines knocked out on different occasions, but the old Fortress goes along almost as well

on three engines as on four, particularly if we have delivered our bomb load and used some of the fuel."

On March 15, 1945, 38 aircraft took part in a raid on the German Army Headquarters in Zossen near Berlin. The ships were loaded with six 500 pound bombs, four incendiary bombs, and 2,780 gallons of gas. Like most missions, the briefing preceded departure by a few hours, at 6:36 a.m. Then the flights were delayed by 30 minutes and the aircraft departed by 10:40 a.m. The apparent cause of the delay was that one plane inadvertently taxied into the mud and the left main wheel stuck badly. The Flying Control's official comment, "Pilot appeared to have his head up...!", stuck with the unit and has provided amusement ever since. Another aircraft blew a tire on takeoff and veered off the runway, coming to rest 30 feet clear of the landing runway. The weather allowed a visual bombing run but previous

groups had dropped both smoke and bombs and the resulting haze obscured the target at the last moment. Nevertheless, the bombing run was successful, but with the long flight to Berlin, the aircraft didn't return until 7:16 p.m. After a grueling 13-hour day, Seder wrote "This is going to have to be a rather short note because I am so tired I can hardly hold my head up. Although it is only 7:00 p.m., I have already been up seventeen hours today, and about eleven of that was spent sitting in one position." He points out that the most difficult part of the mission was having to fly close formation for hours, manipulating the controls and throttles constantly, while wrestling thirty tons of metal around the sky for eight or nine hours.

In February, 1945, Seder was appointed Assistant Group Operations Officer, which required that he man the Group Operations Center, assist in planning of missions, and supervise the training of replacement crews. Thus, on April 14, Seder was the Air Commander (or Group Leader) on a unique mission which turned out to be his last, a raid on gun emplacements and submarine works in Royan, France. Royan was considered one of the "Atlantic Pockets", areas to which the Germans held on after

they had lost most other footholds in Western Europe and after the impetus of ground combat had switched to Germany. Despite the German setbacks, the submarine works were still in full operation by the Nazi's and the gun emplacements near Royan were about to be attacked by French troops with the bombing raid in support. Departing at 5:30 a.m., an aircraft blew a tire on taxiway, blocking three other ships behind it. These aircraft had to be towed back to a different runway, but were able to take part in the mission. A second aircraft was forced to abort the mission after take-off, returning to Deenethorpe at 9:40 a.m. Weather was clear and visual bombing was possible; there were no enemy fighters and little flak and 90 percent of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the target. All aircraft were back at Deenethorpe by 3:08 p.m.

Toward the end of April, Seder and several over members of the Group staff flew over Germany to observe the bomb damage. They circled Cologne at low altitude and then landed near the Rhine River city of Dusseldorf. Seder reports that he walked across the Rhine River on a pontoon bridge and saw more devastation that he thought possible. His estimate was that three-fourths of the buildings were burned-out shells and the rubble from the bombing was heaped on the sidewalks higher than his head for block after block.

Seder was still at Deenethorpe on VE Day, May 6, 1945. The Group celebrated the day with a fly-by over the field and with religious and military ceremonies. He was particularly distressed that on that day, of all days, a ground crewman was killed when he walked into the path of a taxiing B-17. The Group's last fatality occurred on the day the war was over.

Finally in June, Seder started home, appropriately enough piloting a B-17 loaded with eight or nine Group Staff officers and enlisted men. The route home was the reverse of the one he'd taken almost a year before and they finally landed on American soil at Bradley Field, Connecticut, where Colonel Delwyn Silver (aka "Hi-Yo" Silver) had the privilege of bringing it down for the last time. Unfortunately Seder's beloved B-17 was left in Connecticut and the 401st Bomb Group, like all other 8th Air Force Bomb Groups, was immediately deactivated. The B-17's were eventually parked outdoors at Monthan Field, in Tucson, Arizona, where they weathered for years and were ultimately scrapped.



Art and Marion Seder

After his discharge from active duty in 1945, Seder returned to Northwestern and graduated from law school there. He was chosen to serve for two years as a Law Clerk to Supreme Court Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson, a very singular honor. He continued in the practice of law in Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, DC. After retirement, he and Marion moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, where he regularly mentors young children and teaches a course for adults on Constitutional Law as part of a program sponsored by the College of William and Mary.

Unfortunately he hadn't continued flying but returned to it in September, 2013, when he flew as a pilot one again in a single engine Cessna, with an instructor pilot in the right seat. He happily reports that, like riding a bicycle, piloting an airplane is never truly forgotten!

Sources:

There are two main sources for this article. The first is an excellent presentation by Art Seder, filled with pictures and anecdotes of his time with the 401st

Bomb Group. This article hasn't even scratched the surface of all the information so if you get the chance to attend one of his presentations, by all means, do so! The second is the web site of the 401st Bomb Group Association, <http://www.401bg.org>, which is one of the most complete, informative, educational, and interesting web sites this author has seen. It even has scanned copies of the actual now-declassified mission orders and briefings from the 401st! Again this article doesn't do justice to the history of this amazing unit, so I encourage you to dig into this web site for more information.



Today's News is Tomorrow's History

Help your Society's effort to record and preserve the history of aviation in the Commonwealth. You can help by clipping and sending any newspaper articles relating to your local airport, aviators or related events to the VAHS office. Also welcome are any photos of Virginia airports or anything concerning Virginia aviation history. We will file and scan the information so it will be available on our website.

The Bombers

Whenever I see them ride on high
 Gleaming and proud in the morning sky
 Or lying awake in bed at night
 I hear them pass on their outward flight
 I feel the mass of metal and guns
 Delicate instruments, deadweight tons
 Awkward, slow, bomb racks full
 Straining away from downward pull
 Straining away from home and base
 And try to see the pilot's face
 I imagine a boy who's just left school
 On whose quick-learned skill and courage cool
 Depend the lives of the men in his crew
 And success of the job they have to do.
 And something happens to me inside
 That is deeper than grief, greater than pride
 And though there is nothing I can say
 I always look up as they go their way
 And care and pray for every one,
 And steel my heart to say,
 "Thy will be done."
 — Sarah Churchill, daughter of Sir Winston.

The War in the Air

For a saving grace, we didn't see our dead,
 Who rarely bothered coming home to die
 But simply stayed away out there
 In the clean war, the war in the air.
 Seldom the ghosts came back bearing their tales
 Of hitting the earth, the incompressible sea,
 But stayed up there in the relative wind,
 Shades fading in the mind,
 Who had no graves but only epitaphs
 Where never so many spoke for never so few:
 'Per ardua,' said the partisans of Mars,
 'Per aspera,' to the stars.
 That was the good war, the war we won
 As if there were no death, for goodness' sake,
 With the help of the losers we left out there
 In the air, in the empty air.
 — Howard Nemerov