

# The combat stories of **VERLE MAXWELL** (and insights from Betty Goss Maxwell)

**Dates in Service:** February 1943-July 1945  
**Branch of Service:** Air Force  
**Unit:** Tail gunner, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group  
**Location:** England  
**Wounded:** February 24, 1944 (17 months in the hospital)

Verle Maxwell describes a close call during his time flying missions over France and Germany. His wife Betty tells of what it was like being at home while her husband was overseas.

These stories were compiled by an interviewer, who prefers to remain anonymous, and goes by the nickname 'Kilroy Was Here.' These stories are posted through a partnership between 'Kilroy Was Here' and the Witness to War Foundation. Permission to use any of these materials must be granted by 'Kilroy Was Here,' which can be obtained through the Witness to War Foundation.



I graduated in the spring before Pearl Harbor took place and at the time of the news, I was over at my girlfriend Betty Goss's house with our other friends. When we heard the news of the attack, we knew then that our lives would be changed.

I had grown up on a farm in Martinsville, Indiana and when I was drafted I could have gotten a deferment but I decided to enlist. After finishing my training I went home on a furlough and married my lifelong girl girlfriend Betty before leaving for overseas.

My story is a short one, but nevertheless one that should be told. Unlike others who had flown a number of missions, I flew but only three and found out that I was a very lucky guy, as you will read at the end.

My story starts with us landing in England just days before Christmas in 1943 and after doing so, we found ourselves placed in the 303<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group. The base that became home was the Molesworth Airbase, which was located about 70 miles north of London but I never got the chance to see for sure. The base had a number of huts that housed two crews to a hut and as far as the weather went, most of the time it was overcast.

By the time our first mission came, we hadn't given our plane a name, and it was a mission that took us within 25 miles of Berlin. The fighters were all over us as we neared the target, and they came in so thick and fast that you couldn't even count them. Then the flak came and started hitting all around with pieces of



shrapnel hitting the plane that reminded me of rocks hitting a tin roof. I was scared, to say the least.

Our second mission's target was Hamm, Germany and it turned out to be a milk run for us. Mission number three was to Augsburg, Germany and it started out as always, with us being woken early to eat and after eating making our way to the briefing room. As we passed over an airfield in France, we came under heavy flak from the anti-aircraft guns with one of the bursts hitting near the tail of our plane and some of the shrapnel hitting me. The captain called back to me and when I didn't answer he sent one of the waist gunners back to check on me, who reported I had been hit. He dragged me to the radio room and lay me on the floor where my wounds were treated, gave me a shot for the pain, and wrapped me in a blanket to keep me warm. One of the waist gunners then took my place in the tail, leaving one guy to man both of the waist guns as the plane flew on to the target of Augsburg, Germany. For the following six and a half hours I laid there on the floor still bleeding from my wounds as our plane completed the missions, with me only coming to at times from hearing the gunners fighting off German fighters before blacking out again.

After returning to base, I was removed from the plane and taken to the hospital. It was while in the hospital on March the 23<sup>rd</sup> I learned the guy who replaced me was killed while over Hamm, Germany



when the tail of the plane took a hit.

## **Betty Goss Maxwell**

I was working in Indianapolis at the RCA Company, which was making radio tubes for the Navy at the time. I was working as an AC tester. Each day the headlines in the newspaper told how many of our planes had been shot down and as I read the stories, I couldn't keep from wondering if one of them had been Verle's plane. I was living in my mother's house while working for RCA, along with my sister, and in our window we had two service star flags. One flag was for Verle and the other for my brother in law who was in the Army. I'm sorry to say, but I had a lot of friends then who became gold star wives.

On March 10<sup>th</sup> 1944, while at work, my worst fears came true when I received a call from Verle's parents telling me to come home. His sister and I rushed home hoping there would be more news on how he was.

The Western Union read as follows:

WESTERN  
UNION  
NDE75 36 GOVT=WUX WASHINGTON DC MAR 10  
225P  
FOREST A MAXWELL=  
:RURAL ROUTE NUMBER 3



:REGRET TO INFORM YOU YOUR SON  
SERGEANT VERLE J MAXWELL WAS ON  
TWENTY FIVE FEBRUARY SERIOUSLY  
WOUNDED IN ACTION OVER AUGSBURG  
GERMANY PERIOD MAIL ADDRESS FOLLOWS  
YOU WILL BE ADVISED AS REPORTS OF  
CONDITION ARE RECEIVED=  
:ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

That same day a letter also came from a nurse in England who had written a letter for Verle letting me know he was okay. About three months later he was sent back stateside on a hospital plane just days before D-Day, knowing they would need the beds for the wounded in the up and coming operation.

After Verle landed in New York, he called to let us know that he was being sent to a hospital in Illinois. After his stay in three different hospitals, he was allowed to come home. I remember the day a taxi pulled up in front of the house and I watched as this guy with braces on his legs got out. When he turned around I knew it was Verle and rushed out the door to meet him.