

# ONE MORE RIVER TO CROSS

experiences in World War II of Lt. Colonel Ray Kubly, U. S. Air Force (Retired)

Dedicated to my family, all my World War II crew and to the "Dutch" families that helped to save me.

Ray Kubly

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The following story of the experience of Lt. Colonel Ray Kubly, U. S. Air Force (Retired) is to tell what happened during World War II. A recent trip to Holland (Oct 1992) was to refresh memories and to meet the people and places where he spent time with the "Dutch" underground from September 1944 until March 1945.)

It all started on October 7, 1942 when I first decided to enlist in the U. S. Air Corps to help make the world safe for democracy.

Being born and raised on a dairy farm in Watertown, Wisconsin was the beginning of an experience no one would ever dream of. My parents, both of Swiss ancestry, came over to America for a better life and future in 1910. They farmed in the New Glarus area before moving to Rice Lake, Wisconsin in 1911. They moved to Watertown, Wisconsin in 1921. With five brothers and three sisters, we grew up milking lots of cows and doing most of the farm work by hand.

I graduated from the Watertown High school in June 1942. Pearl Harbor and WW II was well under way and I could wait to be drafted or enlist. On October 7, 1942 I enlisted in the Air Corps. I was called to active duty on January 27, 1943 and reported for duty to Miami Beach, Florida for basic training.

I was assigned to a Bombardier/Navigator school at San Angelo, Texas. After graduation, I was sent to Tampa, Florida for assignment to a crew. Here I was given a choice to either go on B-25s or B-17s, the Flying Fortress. I chose the B-17s because they had four engines and I figured we would have a better chance of getting our job done. After being assigned to a crew and finishing our training, we were told we would be replacing crews in the 8th Air Force who either finished their 50 missions or were shot down.

Members of our crew were:

Jim Heiby	Pilot	Bucyrus, Ohio
Bill Krebaum	Co-pilot	South Lyons, Michigan
Mike Geist	Navigator	New York (Long Island)
Ray Kubly	Bombardier	Watertown, Wisconsin
Wiley M. (Pappy) Moore	Radio man	Asheville, North Carolina
Everett Coates	Tail Gunner	West Point, Virginia
Willie Riley	Ball Turret	St. Louis, Missouri
Hubert Betterton Jr.	Waist Gunner	Hartsell, Alabama
Louis West	Engineer- Turret Gunner	San Diego, California
John Robinson	Waist Gunner	Charleston, South Carolina

After we finished our initial training at Drew AFB, Tampa, Florida, we were given orders to fly a brand new Flying Fortress to England. We picked up our plane at Savannah, Georgia and flew to Bangor, Maine for refueling and then to Goose Bay, Labrador. After a few

days delay because of bad weather, we flew to Iceland for a fuel stop and continued on to Wales. This was around August 1, 1944. After our arrival in England, we were assigned to the 7th Sqd of the 34th Bomb Group, 3rd Bomb Division, 8th Air Force. Our planes had the Big Square D on the tail markings. We were stationed near Mendlesham, East Anglia; about 15 miles north of Ipswich, England. The 34th Bomb Group was being changed from a B-24 group to B-17s as they could fly higher, faster and further. After training with other crews, all B-17 replacements and the old B-24 crews were assigned their first combat mission.

Sunday, September 17, 1944 we were to bomb the German flak batteries that surrounded the city of Arnhem, Holland. This was to eliminate or reduce the losses for all the paratroops and gliders that were supposed to land in the big "Market Garden" operation. Two British and one Polish airborne units of over 12,000 men were to take and hold the Arnhem bridge over the Rhine river. The Airbornes and gliders all landed within 10 miles of the city of Arnhem, Holland. As history now tells us, this turned out to be a big disaster. The British, Canadian and American forces were unable to get enough tanks and supplies to hold off the German Panzer Divisions. Out of the 12,000 men involved, only about 2,000 were able to get back over the Rhine to the south and survived. The rest were killed, wounded or taken prisoner. The book "A Bridge too Far" by Cornelius Ryan and the movie of the same name does a remarkable good job of telling what happened with "Operation Market Garden".

After flying 7 missions over Germany, we were assigned to bomb a synthetic oil refinery near Meresberg, Germany on October 7, 1944. This was the "target" for the month of October. Its destruction would help shorten the war.

We took off about 4:00 AM and rendezvoused with the other squadrons and groups and we were on our way to Meresberg. About 500 planes were involved. All went well until we started our bombing run. It seemed we just started straight and level when black puffs of smoke started popping around us. Suddenly we left the formation as our plane was hit several times. We started to drop altitude while smoke and fire were coming out of one engine! Then we lost two engines! Number one engine was "feathered" and with the fire extinguisher our pilot was able to put out the fire. Number 3 engine propeller could not be "feathered" and was windmilling from the air speed.

This caused our pilot Jim Heiby great concern as this would make us lose altitude faster than we wanted. He thought we could make it back to England at first, but it was only a short time later when we decided to try to

make it to Eindhoven, Holland which was then in allied hands and was free. Our friendly P-51s came up along side us to escort us back to Holland where some English Spitfires watched us for a short while so the Jerrys wouldn't shoot us down.

I was up in the nose of the airplane doing the navigation. We were still losing altitude and we were wondering if we could make it to Eindhoven. About that time, our pilot called everyone to the radio room located in the center of the plane and to prepare for "ditching." We couldn't lower the wheels. The hydraulics must have been damaged. Then the "buzzer" rang which meant everyone should "bail out!" Wiley Moore said, "everyone bail out!"

I don't know who pulled the door latch, but we all took off like a bunch of paratroopers. I pulled my emergency cord immediately after clearing the plane. My forward velocity was so fast that my chute opened horizontally behind me. When it opened, I hit the harness so hard that my flying boots almost came off. As I was swinging in the air, I heard some rifle shots. What was that? Next thing I knew, a sharp sting went through the right calf of my leg. I knew I was hit as I could feel the warm blood running down my leg.

I pulled my chute straps as I was coming down fast to avoid going into a tree. I landed in a ditch alongside a little country road. As I was pulling my chute together, two "Jerrys" came running up with their rifles pointing at me yelling "Comrade!" "Comrade!" "For you the war is over!" I then knew I was a POW.

Those two men then saw I was shot through the leg. I took my first aid kit from my belt and sprinkled sulfa powder on both bullet holes that went in and out of my right leg. Next, I put a small compress on each wound and taped it up. The two Germans then formed a basket with their hands and carried me to their headquarters about a 1/4 mile away. We had bailed out right over a German front line staging area. There must have been over 100 German troops in that immediate area.

Shortly, they brought up my pilot, Jim Heiby, on a stretcher. He was shot in the back and was bleeding internally. He kept on asking for a doctor. None ever came. A medic came over and gave each of us a shot of morphine to ease the pain. Jim Heiby died that evening. Wiley Moore was brought up with a broken leg from his parachute landing.

I never did see any of the rest of the crew. My understanding was they were taken right to a POW camp in Germany. Later that afternoon a German Lt. came over and said that Hubert Betterton was killed. His parachute never opened up. Don't know if the parachute never opened or he panicked and didn't pull his rip cord soon enough. We bailed out less than 1000 feet so there was very little time for error.

I was lucky to be alive. I wouldn't have to fly into flak anymore. That night I was taken with other wounded Germans to a front line first aid station. We were only 5-10

miles behind the front lines. I could hear the artillery shells going off continuously and the sky was lit up like lightning.

The next morning a German truck picked up all us wounded (all Germans except Pappy Moore and me) and without any lights we headed for Utrecht, Holland and the St. Antonius Hospital which the Germans had taken over from the Dutch Sisters. The hospital was filled with 300-400 wounded Germans and about 20 wounded allied POWs. In our little room there were about 20 wounded English, Canadians, Polish, Dutch, Americans and some other nationalities. We were all considered "litter patients" as we couldn't walk. Otherwise you would go right to a German POW camp. We all slept on the floor with one blanket to lie on and one blanket to cover up. One seriously wounded English paratrooper had the only bed in the room. An English Doctor, Captain John Buck from the 156th Paratroop Brigade had volunteered as a medic to help take care of the wounded. He arranged for me to have a pint of blood in a direct blood transfusion. Several days later the paratrooper still died from his wounds.

While I was at the hospital, the morale of the wounded stayed high. There was always someone that could think of something funny or would be finding fault with our enemy. Everyone thought the war would be over before long and that we would all be home free and safe again.

Then came October 26, 1944. Just a few days before, a Dutch engineer, named Mr. Dekker, came to us and asked if any of us would like to escape? Yes! What would we have to do? After much talk and consideration, six of us wounded decided we would take the chance. There were Jack Murrell, from Cumberland, Md., Pappy Moore from Asheville, N. Carolina, a Dutchman, Harry Jansen, from Hilversum, two unnamed Englishmen and myself.

Our plans were to go to the basement of the hospital and crawl through the heating system inspection tunnel. All we had to do was follow the "hot" uninsulated steam pipes to the main furnace room. There were civilian clothes to change into in the tunnel. The Dutch underground people met us with bicycles outside the main furnace building. It all went like clock work. By the time Corporal Schultz, our German guard, came around for a bed check, we were safe with three different families outside of Utrecht. After our escape, the Germans made several attempts to find us with road blocks and house to house searches. Thanks to the Dutch people, they never did find any of us.

Harry Jansen and I stayed with the Mythisan family in Utrecht. Jack Murrell and Don Moore stayed at the Davids family in Utrecht. The two Englishmen who are unknown, went to another home which at the time of my writing is also unknown. While at the Mythisan home I became ill with a high fever and sore throat so severe that I couldn't swallow. Fortunately, I was directed to a

member of the underground who had some brief medical training and he discovered I had a bad case of tonsillitis. Without an anesthetic, the man then used a pliers to crush the inflamed tonsils.

After about one week, the underground thought it would be safer if we moved out into the country. The

### PEGASUS I

Pegasus I, "The Great Escape" was the result of the airborne invasion of Arnhem, Holland. After the failure of "Market Garden" there was a group of one hundred thirty, mostly English escapees that the Dutch resistance gathered in the area around Ede, Holland. An escape plan had been agreed with the 2nd Army. The "Airbornes" would make their way down to the Rhine river, the following night, on the 22nd of October. They would filter silently through the German front line positions under cover of darkness. At midnight, a Bofors gun would fire a burst of tracer shells into the air to mark the exact crossing point over the river. The escapees would then signal to the south bank with a torch for the assault boats to come over to collect them.

Meanwhile, a batch of fresh uniforms and a selection of weapons had been dropped by parachute for the escapees so they could come out fighting and with dignity. The escape route ran from Ede to Renkum, through the woods and fields down to the Rhine and then west for one mile along the north bank of the river to the crossing point.

At 9:00 PM, a party of 133 would be escapees had gathered at the rendezvous at the Oranje Nassau Oord near Renkum. Also in the party was PFC Esparza of the 82nd US Airborne Division (who had been captured near Grave and had jumped off a train in Germany) and three Russians of whom nobody knew anything and with

### EPILOUGE

And of those who took part in Pegasus I, What can one say?

That it was the greatest successful "home run" of the 39/45 war is a matter for the "Guinness Book of Records."

The "Airbornes" and the allied servicemen had an

### PEGASUS II

The successful Pegasus I was all history for us on November 14, 1944. We all had a little party at the Hulsker home in Leersum prior to our departure for another attempt to go through the front lines. This was to be PEGASUS II. Jack Murrell and I were then led by two girls to the home of the Idenburg family. After hiding in the chicken coop, the girls brought us some "Spek" which they thought would be a special treat. We got "Spek" sick, but survived the ordeal. While there, a German patrol came through the area looking for anyone

Dutch guides moved Jack Murrell and I to Ziest and then Doorn. After an overnight stay, we ended up at the Hulsker's home in Leersum. We felt secure and had a pleasant stay for 10 or 11 days waiting for a chance to escape through the front lines.

whom there was no means of communication. The escapees set off in single file with the strictest orders to remain absolutely silent. Only the guides at the head of the column knew the way through the pitch black woods, so it was vital for each person to keep in touch with the one ahead. This was no easy task while climbing through hedges and falling into deep ditches. For the final 300 yards the column had to crawl on their bellies through an open field under the guns of the most forward German outpost until a gentle slope took them down to the river. Twice the leading sections bumped into German patrols and stens and spandaus exchanged fire. Each time, surprisingly, the Germans pulled back.

Promptly at midnight, ten sharp explosions broke the silence and a stream of red tracers curled lazily Northward from a position well away in front of the column. Leo Heaps was a Canadian officer who had dropped at Arnhem and after an extraordinary adventure had been captured. He quickly escaped and rejoined the 2nd Army and helped organize the "Pegasus" and was waiting on the north bank of the river to guide the escapees to the crossing.

The 130 escapees were soon climbing up the south bank of the Rhine river to safety. The only absentees were the three Russians who had disappeared as suddenly and as mysteriously as they appeared.

obligation to try to escape if they were captured. They had a right to be proud that they had done their duty.

But it was the Dutch people who were the heroes ordinary men and women who courageously and unhesitatingly risked not only their own lives but those of their families too in helping the "Airbornes."

suspicious. Jack Murrell and I hid under some evergreen trees while we could see the Germans feet as they walked by. Luckily we were not spotted.

Exactly where we stayed next cannot be remembered, but we ended up in the woods between Ede and Otterlo where Gerit Van Ee was our underground guide. We were issued English uniforms and ordered to hide in the woods for the arrival of Major Maquire and his other underground friends. Abraham Du Bois known as "Ham" was sent to organize the Pegasus

II. He was replaced by Major Maquire, for competitive reasons. This is still very sensitive to this day according to Dutch I.S. agents. There were blunders or mistakes made.

Finally we got going after dark. It was a very dark and overcast sky. It was November 18, 1944. Each one of us tied a cloth rope to our belt behind our back so we could hang on to each other and not get lost. The experienced English rangers and airborne fellows were up front, while we "fly-boys" brought up the rear. We were all excited because they said we would be across the river by midnight and be drinking wine! We were to cross the Rhine between Renkum and Wageningen. There were about 50 different people in this group.

After walking across fields and down through fire lanes in the woods, we heard a voice calling "Halt!" All at once someone yelled "Germans!" Then machine gun fire erupted up in front of the group. We threw our English sten guns in the woods and ran as fast as we could in the direction we were coming from. Our idea was to get back to the wooded area where we assembled and try to contact the underground again.

From the 50 men that started out on this PEGASUS II mission, 40 or more were taken POW with 8 being wounded and one killed. As far as we know, Jack Murrell and I were one of few to have evaded capture.

After several hours, we were tired and thirsty! It was cold, 35-40 degrees F. We licked moisture from the evergreen trees to quench our dry mouth and thirst. We finally lay down under some big evergreens. We had accumulated some leaves and pine needles on the ground to make a dry and comfortable place.

At daybreak, we were extremely thirsty, hungry and tired. We saw a small farm building in a clearing in the woods where we tried to sleep. Jack and I cautiously approached as a dog came barking at us. Shortly after, an old farmer came out and we told him we were "Tommys." We had English uniforms on. Could he give us something to eat and drink? After going into the house, he gave us some warm milk and some kind of hot porridge. Did that ever taste good! Then we asked if we could sleep in the barn loft. He showed us where to cover up with some hay and we slept all day in the barn.

After we woke up, we found the barn door was locked and the farmer not around. Jack and I discussed the situation and decided we would take off and see if we could find the underground again. After walking an hour or so, we stopped at a house with a family named Donkers. He said he thought he knew someone in the underground. Soon someone came and guided us to a little country guest hotel named LEPEKOEEN, owned by a Mr. Schreuder. Jack and I were asked to stay in the attic so none of the guests living at the home would know we were there. They had strict rules that we could only go down to the toilets when the guests were out or eating a meal in the dining room.

After about 10 days at below freezing temperatures,

the attic was no longer a place for us. We asked to get a better place so we could have a warmer room.

The Dries Klooster home in Barneveld, Holland was our next stop. Mr Klooster was the postmaster in Barneveld and knew lots of people and whom to trust. His family included Dries Jr., Jannes, and several sisters who were students in school at the time. The boys were used as couriers and for other underground activities. After about 4 days, Mr. Klooster came home and said we would have to move again. The Germans would probably be coming to their house looking for us. That evening we moved out to the Cor Lof home on the outskirts of Barneveld.

The next morning the two Germans came looking for us and, of course, the Kloosters denied any one was there. Mr. Klooster hid under the stairway while the "Jerrys" were deciding what to do. The Sgt. went back to his headquarters while his aide stayed with Mrs. Klooster. While she served tea to the German in the kitchen, Dries slipped out of the house. He then had to hide with other underground people until the end of the war. The Canadians came to town on the last day of the war to get the Germans to surrender. Dries was leading the Troops to the command post of the Germans when they threw a hand grenade and killed him.

The time between Dec 5 to late February 1945 went slowly as the "Battle of the Bulge" was going on nearby. We saw lots of air battles when the sky was clear. Cor L. and family, plus Jan Mulder and Kasper Reinstra were our contact with the Dutch Underground.

Ben Lockett, Angus Low, Robert Boyd of the British airborne group plus John Sjrnsen of the Canadian army joined Jack Murrell and I during this period of time. They avoided capture or had escaped from the Germans. Many ideas were discussed as to how we could get across the Rhine to freedom. At the end of February, the three Englishmen were successful in returning through the front lines.

A new route through the "Biesbosh" on the river Waal was developed, and many individuals were taken successfully through during February and March 1945. About that time, Mick Tapson, an Australian Mosquito pilot was brought to our group at Cor Lofs. Another attempt to get through the front lines was organized. With the help of Cor Lofs underground group, they led us to the Chris Cornelius home in Amerongen, Holland.

From his home we were to go to Schoonhaven. Bert Monster and Jan Voges from the village of Vreeswijk were to be our guides. Mick Tapson was leading our group of 4 to cross a dike near Vianen to meet Bert Monster and Jan Voges. Mick Tapson got past the German check point, but, John Sjrnsen, who was right behind, got stopped. I was next in line but when I saw what was happening I turned around and said "let's get out of here". We rode our bikes "Hell Maal Schnell - footsie" which means get the hell out of here! The last I saw of John Sjrnsen was when he was taking off his farm

coversalls and showing his army uniform. After the war I contacted him and learned that he had been put on bread and water for about a week and then sent to a German POW camp. Later I heard that he was murdered in Canada, but to this date no details.

Jack and I got back with the underground group at Vreeswijk. Mick Tapson went on with Jan Voges and Bert Monster and completed the crossing.

In a few days another attempt would be made. Our guides took us to the Henk Ryneveld farm near Schoonhaven where we crossed the Rhine river without any problem. This area between the Waal and the Rhine was still in German hands. After we crossed the Rhine, Dick Van der Brugge and Klaas Hejboer and their underground group were in charge of us. A young lady named "Map" Kerling Dogterom was one of our guides in this area. We biked to Slidrecht located on the north shore of the Waal river. The "Biesbosh" is a marshy area forming the mouth of the river into the North Sea. Here the tide flows in and out daily. It can be fresh water or salt water.

After a wait for a dark, moonless night, the underground said we were going through the "Biesbosh" and would be free by midnight. Jack Murrell, Paul d'Albenas, a Canadian, an unknown Polish spitfire pilot and myself set out in a small rowboat with a Dutch guide. We had to be very quiet as there were German patrols watching for any activity. This was the front line! The Canadians were positioned on the south shore of the Waal river and would be waiting for us as we had radio contact with them. They knew when and where we were to land.

After we made the crossing in the boat, we landed on the south shore. Someone yelled "HALT!" I remember yelling "Don't shoot - we are Americans!" The Canadians asked us to come up and over the dike with our hands over our heads. They informed us, you are



Wolter and Hannie Noordam and son; Ray Kubly



Ray Kubly, Riet and Jan Klooster

now free! What a wonderful feeling! They took us to their headquarters for a wonderful welcome. Some wine showed up and we toasted our new freedom. This was March 12, 1945.

We were then sent to the headquarters in Antwerp, Belgium where we were interrogated by the British and Canadians. After several days, we flew to Paris and spent another few weeks being interrogated by the American intelligence service. After completing this activity I was sent to the 8th Air Force Headquarters to lecture on escape and evasion tactics at other Bomb Groups in the 3rd Bomb Division.

It wasn't long after this that the war was ended on May 8, 1945! Happy days are here again! I returned home by ship to Boston and returned to the home farm.

After remaining home on the farm for 3 years, I decided to go to the University of Wisconsin - Madison and graduated with a BS in Agriculture in 1952. Since that time I have been in the seed business, the last 32 years with Dairyland Seed Co., West Bend, Wisconsin. At the time of this writing, I am still working part time selling seed. During the same time I stayed active in the Air Force Reserve and retired in 1973. From 1966 until 1982 I served on the Watertown School Board. Since then I have been active in The Reserve Officer Association. As of 1987, I have been the Executive Secretary of the Wisconsin Reserve Officers Association and editor of the "Wisconsin Reservist".

A 3 week trip to Holland in September and October of 1992 has prompted the completion of this lifetime memory. Many thanks go to all my Dutch friends for their gracious hospitality and the cooperation in visiting many of the places I stayed at. Also, a thank you to Jack Murrell for his input of memories. The pictures and maps following this story will give you an idea where this all took place.

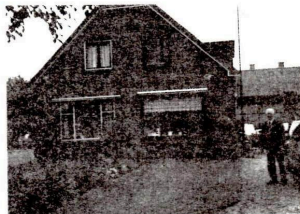




Barn where Jack Murrell and Ray Kubly slept November 19, 1944 - near De Valouwe



Ray Kubly, Gerit Van Ee, Cor Lof



Cor Lof home 1944 - 45 - Barneveld, Holland



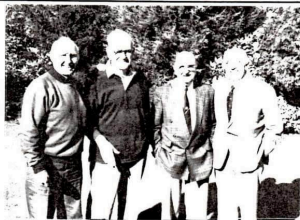
Cor Lof, Ray Kubly, Jan and Edy Mulder



Ray Kubly, Chris Cornelius, Cor Lof



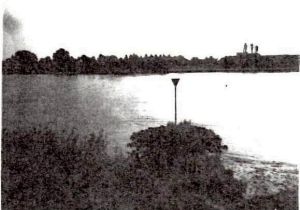
Cor Lof, Mrs. Van Ee, Ric Lof, Ruth Kubly, Gerit Van Ee



Ray Kubly, Bert Monster, Dick Van der Brugge, Jan Voges



Bert and Colleen Monster



Rhine River crossing point near Schoonhoven, Holland



Mrs. Voges, Bert and Colleen Monster, Jan Voges and Ray Kubly



Ray Kubly, Henk Ryneveld, Bert Monster



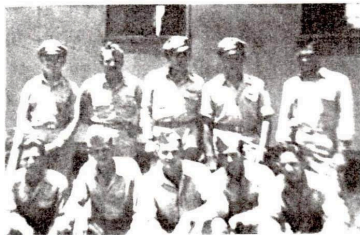
Canal crossing near Vreeswyk, Holland  
Ruth Kubly, Colleen and Bert Monster



Mary and Jack Murrell



Ray and Ruth Kubly



(Back) Ray Kubly, Jim Helby, Bill Krebaum, Mike Geist, John Robinson  
 (Front) Willie Riley, Everett Coates, Hubert Betterman, "Pappy" Moore,  
 Louis West



Cor and Ric Lof