Buds Story - Bomb Dump - Abridged

My group was then sent over to England, where we set up our air base. The air base, being about ninety miles from the English Channel put us a fairly safe distance from the main combat area. Our only exposure to danger was an occasional V-1 (buzz bomb) that the Germans would send over aimlessly. These things were loaded with a certain amount of fuel, to get them over England. When they ran out of fuel, they would crash to the ground and explode. There was never any specific target. Occasionally a German pursuit plane would fly in among our bombers, on their way back from a night mission, and shoot up our air field a bit. Beyond these irritants, we were pretty much out of harm’s way”.

When we trained for combat at Mountain Home Idaho, we were using B-24, four-engine heavy bombers. I was assigned to the armament section of our squadron. After we were operational overseas for quite some time, it was decided to split the armament section into two separate operations. One section maintained machine guns and turrets. The other, did all of the maintenance of the electrical bomb release mechanisms, and performed the entire bomb loading operation. Master Sergeant George Bubin was in charge of the bomb loading crews. I was his assistant. We were assigned eight men to work as bomb loaders. When operations decided on a mission, they told us how many bombs, and what types, would be loaded into each airplane. George and I were responsible to see that they were loaded properly. We would preflight the release mechanisms and then assign our three man crews to load a specific number of bombs to X number of airplanes. After we preflighted our airplanes, we would ferry the air crews out to their assigned ships. The crews were located in the main barracks about half a mile from the aircraft.”

George and I decided to build our own living quarters close to the flight line out of empty bomb crates. It started with a sixteen foot square piece of canvas with a wooden floor. It got a little bit crowded so we extended the canvas flaps out four feet on each of the four sides, and built wooden walls. This increased our living area to a more luxurious twenty four foot by twenty four foot structure. The top brass was not overly fond of this idea and threatened to make us move back to the regular barracks. Fortunately, they were finally able to see that this living arrangement was a great time saver and boosted efficiency so much that they finally backed off and let us stay put. Our crews liked it too as they were close to their sacks and could jump back in as soon as their planes were loaded. We made a good share of our own meals. We had powdered eggs and orange marmalade in good supply and it was frequently on the menu. We supplemented this with the occasional wild rabbit for a special treat. We heated our facility with a stove made of an old oil drum and fueled it with a proprietary mixture of drain oil and one hundred octane aviation gasoline. The top brass wasn’t too fond of this either, but once again, the benefits outweighed the costs or hazards so they just rolled their eyes and prayed for us.”

