Gordon elliott

WWII

# life at home 13 years old

My name is Gordon Elliot I am now 83 years of age. In 1944 I lived with my family in Oakley a village near to Eye Airfield, home of the 490th BG. USAAF.

The first time any of us ever saw a black person was when the Yanks came to build the aerodrome at Eye. This was amazing to us. Everyone on the airfield was friendly and we were allowed on the base seeing first hand it growing. We got to know them by name but over the years I have forgotten most of them.

My Mother used to do some washing for them, lots of mothers around did. Most of them were flyers and sometimes when we took the washing back the hut would be empty. They had not returned from their last mission. It would make us sad because they were so cheerful and friendly but people were dying all the time and most of us had lost relatives. It was sort of like accepted. All of these huts we visited were behind Brome Church.

I got to know an airman, I do remember him. He was a co pilot on a B17 and he became a good friend of my family. His name was Russell King and he came from Boston, Massachusetts, when he returned to The States after the war was finished He gave me his bicycle. When I tried to get it through the base gates I was stopped and it was taken off me. But they checked up and it was returned after Russell's name was scratched off the cross bar. (They all scratched their names here, they were stolen so often. Not by us, by each other.

Another was John Gilroy, I have a picture of him with me, my brother and Stanley Fulcher, another flyer. He lived in Bettendorf, Iowa. He did 35 missions and returned to the USA in May 1945 on a ship called Marine Robin. He died in 2003 (aged 93).

One time when we were coming home from the base we were stopped by the local police. They wanted to know where we got the clothes which mother was going to wash. They marched us back to the hut we got them from but soon got back in their car with a flea in their ear. The Yanks didn't like our police on their base.

From Oakley where I lived I had to cycle to Eye, where I went to school. I always went through the hut part of the camp. All the time we got sweets and gum, they were all really good to us kids.

When I was old enough I joined the Army Cadets and they wanted to take a picture of us (they had never seen kids in uniform) and said they would give us a football, but when they did it was oval like a rugby ball.

Christmas was best of all. They came and picked us up to go to the mess hall for a party and we had peanut butter sandwiches, ice cream, oranges and a banana AND we got a present.

When I was 13 I got a paper round going round Horham Airfield. I delivered every Sunday to one hut and the airman there said he would get me a fountain pen – I had never even seen one. But the weeks went by until one day I went in and the hut was empty. I never got the pen. Until years later when I was telling a veteran who was visiting Eye the story and he reached into his pocket and gave me his. I have it still in memory of all the empty huts

