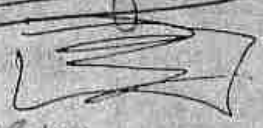


E&E 303 - Thomas E. Combs
(Also see E&E 271)

THE AIRCRAFT
 BUREAU OFFICE OF OPERATIONS
 PW and Detachment
 Military Intelligence Service

H & E REPORT NO. 303
 EVASION IN FRANCE

See # 271 for crew ^⑥

Jan 4 1944
 (Date)

THOMAS E. COMBS T/5 14134640
 (Name) (Rank) (SER)

3rd Sq 104th
 (Squadron) (Group)

AGY: 104th
 SERVICE OF ORIGIN: 104th
 HOME ADDRESS: Chattanooga Tenn
Post 26

NEA: Sept 3 1943
 Arrived in Spain: Dec 27 1943
 Arrived in Germany: Jan 3 1944
 Arrived in UK: Jan 9 1944

MEMBERS OF CREW: (This information checked with PWIB)

	Official Disposition	Remarks Disposition
PILOT <u>Winkelmann</u>		
CO-PILOT <u>Smith</u>	✓	
NAVIGATOR <u>Booth</u>	✓	
ENGINEER <u>Harris</u>	✓	
RADIO OPERATOR <u>Ray</u>		was sold to German French lady for 25,000
1ST ENGINEER <u>Combs</u>		
2ND ENGINEER <u>Coccoris</u>		
WING WOUNDED <u>Dorsey</u>		was left in hospital for Paris 3 days before
WING WOUNDED <u>Leola</u>	✓	
TAIL GUNNER <u>Bankhead</u>		found where they had a funeral for Sgt B - La Ferté <u>la FERTE AIXIS</u>

Were you wounded? no mat. wounds

Handwritten notes:
 - French said he was riding up & down near railway lines on bicycle
 - was sold to German French lady for 25,000
 - found where they had a funeral for Sgt B - ~~La Ferté~~ la FERTE AIXIS

(For details concerning the mission see E4E report # 271)

When the order to bale-out was given I tried to release the bombs. The bomb-bay doors opened but the bombs were hung up. I was afraid of blacking out because I had taken off my oxygen mask and since the copilot had left his seat I went ~~to~~ into the nose and found it empty. I jumped ^{then} around 20000 feet as the pilot was hooking on his chute. My fingers were numb when I fumbled for the ripcord but I got the chute open around 17000 feet. As it opened an object hurtled by me and looking down I saw another chute open several thousand feet below mine. There were two other chutes in the air, and, I heard an explosion but could not see what had happened.

Jumps AT
20000 feet

GUIDES
CHUTE
INTO WINDS

When twin-engine fighters took off from a field south of me and started climbing I tried to slip the air from my chute so that I would fall faster. There were fields and woods beneath me and I tried to work the shroud lines so that I would fall in the ~~wind~~ trees. I did come down on the edge of a wood. From the air I ~~saw~~ ^{had seen} a man and boy running toward me, and, before I had unbuckled my chute harness the man ran up to me with civilian coat and trousers. While I was changing into the clothes ^{disappeared in the wood with} the boy ~~took~~ my flying equipment and chute, ~~introduced~~ and a woman who seemed to be a part of the family arrived with meat and bread. As soon as I was dressed the man took me by the arm and led me further into the wood ^{which was} ~~to~~ swampy and difficult to penetrate. After hiding me in swamp grass he motioned that I was to stay there until he returned. I had learned nothing from him because everything had taken place so quickly. From the moment I hit the ground until I was hidden and alone again not more than ten or fifteen minutes had passed. I had noticed that as my helper left the swamp he was careful to straighten the grass so that there were no signs ^{left} where we had entered.

GIVEN
IMMEDIATE
AID

CANT
UNDERSTAND
HELPER

Several hours later my helper returned. We tried to talk but couldn't understand each other. However he was very friendly and kept patting me on the back. After a few efforts at conversation he gave up and guided me through the swamp to a small ^{stream} where he had a boat. We rowed down the stream to a path,

SENT OFF
ALONE BY
FIRST HELPER

where we left the boat and followed the path out of the swamp. He climbed a hill and from the top my helper pointed to a wood and motioned me to walk toward it. I started off and thought he was with me but when I turned around he was still standing at the top of the hill. He kept motioning me to go on and it took a few minutes for me to grasp that he was through with me and I was on my own again.

I walked through the wood for about an hour before ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
I heard road traffic. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Rather than cross a main road at that time I changed my direction ~~is~~ so that I could stay hidden in the wood. I heard a man yelling and creeping forward I saw a farmer plowing with oxen. As he came around the field again near the woods edge I waved to attract his attention.

APPROXIMATES
FARMER IN
FIELDS

He walked over to me and nodded his head when I said that I was an American airman. He was not in the least disturbed and made signs to indicate that I was to hide until he could return for me. I watched him ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ take his oxen back to the farm. On his way back to me he walked through a turnip patch, pulling one now and then as if ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ he were still working.

~~XX~~ This farmer was a taciturn person with very little to say, and if I tried to tell him something about myself he would motion me to keep quiet. When he took me to his barn he pointed ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ to the hayloft and left me without any knowledge of how much he could or ~~XXXX~~ would help me. During the afternoon he brought food and after dark took me into the house. I discovered that he had spent the afternoon fixing up a back room in his house ~~where~~ I could stay comfortably until he got help for me. For the next eight days I lived in this room. The door was locked all the time and was never opened except to three knocks. If I heard anyone trying to get in without knocking three times I was to leave the room by an exit which the farmer had ~~is~~ prepared for me. I lived so quietly in this room during the eight days that his ~~small~~ child never knew I was in the house. In the evenings I was allowed in the kitchen and it was then that I began to get some idea of ~~what~~ his plans ~~were~~.

HIDDEN IN
HOUSE

2.

There were some French departmental maps on the wall of the kitchen. I studied these carefully and tried to tell my helper that I wanted to go to SPAIN. He would listen but ~~always~~ always ^{tell} me just to keep quiet and wait. At the end of four days he brought a Frenchman, ~~teacher~~ who spoke English, to the house; I learned then that my journey was arranged.

Journey
ARRANGED

On 13 September I was moved to a house in another town. There were several hitches in the plans made to return me which caused me to have to live cooped up in a room from ~~March~~ 13 September to 18 December. Several times my ~~lack~~ lack of patience almost caused me to run out on my helpers although I never lost confidence in them. I had been told ~~that~~ by intelligence that if ~~helpers~~ helpers showed no signs of ~~doing~~ doing anything within two or three weeks that it was time to move on. I think evaders should be very sure that their helpers are ~~not~~ not trying before endangering them to the extent of running out on them.

LIVES FOR
THREE
MONTHS
IN SAME
ROOM

John F White Jr

W.S. Holt

APPENDIX B:

- a. On 13 September evader travelled in PARIS metro while 300 German troops (green uniform-black boots) were being transported in special cars.
- b. On 18 December 100 German troops left PARIS travelling toward BOULOGNE in three troop cars. They carried full pack and rifle and evader thinks they had yellow piping on their shoulder straps.

EX