

Second Mission to Erla*

By F. Douglas Bowles, 367th

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On 16 Jan 93, three former 8th AF fliers returned to Antwerp. Two were members of the 367th: 1st Lt. Joseph Consolmagno, navigator, and T/Sgt. F. Douglas Bowles, radio operator. The third was Lt. James O'Brien, 44th BG, who piloted a B-24 on that fateful 5 Apr in 1943.

Consolmagno and Bowles were shot down and captured on their first mission to Erla--a mission that cost the 367th four aircraft.

At the suggestion of Belgian author, Achille Rely, the fliers were invited by Erik Pertz, a Belgian Public YV producer, to appear in a documentary based on Rely's book, Bombs Burst Over Mortsel. The documentary will be aired on Brussels' Channel #1 2 Apr 93.

Bowles and Consolmagno had never met previously. Joe was an original member of the 306th, while Bowles had been a replacement, arriving at Thurleigh 15 Feb 43 on Clarence Fischer's crew. It a switch, Consolmagno was on Fischer's crew 5 Apr, while Bowles was flying with Kelly Ross' crew.

Another Belgian author, Jean Dillen, who is preparing his second book for publication in September, also hosted the fliers.

There is an eerie feeling, standing next to the building your group bombed. Your emotions are in turmoil as you recount your last mission for television. Consolmagno and Bowles were at ground zero--and their mission was complete.

* See Echoes Apr 86 "5 Apr 43, Mission to Erla"