



- Boy-ke -
Jumped from 1600 feet
January 5, 1944

By Walter H. Kellt, 368th

Who was Boike?

Boike was a dog. He was also the crew mascot for my gang, which flew "Weary Bones" 42-37943 (368th G Model, tail letter L).

Boike first made his appearance one October 1943 evening in the BOQ at Grand Island, NE. He was accompanied by six assorted crew member sergeants, and a mysterious looking flight bag.

"Lieutenant, this is Boike, our new mascot."

Five-Pound Wonder

He didn't look like much, being of doubtful lineage. He was all black except for a small white patch on his chest and white paws. He weighed all of five pounds. Somewhere in his background was Scotch terrier blood..

"Are we correct in assuming he is flying to the U.K. with us?" the four officers questioned.

"Oh yes. He is definitely flying over with us and will be a full fledged member of the crew."

"What happens to Boike when we have to go to altitude and have to put on oxygen masks?"

"No problem, sir. We have all that taken care of," whereupon the mysterious flight bag was opened and eager hands produced a standard oxygen mask which had obviously been modified by an additional strap.

"But, does it fit?"

"Oh, yes. As you now can see it fits securely over his snout." And, indeed it did, with no apparent leaks.

"Ah, yes, but what happens if we have to jump out and hit the silk?"

Boike's Own Parachute

Back to the bag again and out came a small parachute and special "dog" harness made by some sympathizing parachute packer. It was very tiny, but fit snugly around his chest, stomach and front legs. The chute diameter was alleged to be about six feet. And, so it was agreed that Boike was indeed an official crew member

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Boike — Combat Dog

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and was going to war with us.

One afternoon months later, during a "stand down", into the officers' quarters came the enlisted crew with determined looks on their faces.

"Lieutenant," someone said, "we have decided that Boike is not a real member of our crew as he has not even flown a single mission. All he does is eat and get fat."

"So what?" we asked. "What can you expect of a mere dog?"

"We have a mission planned for him," was the answer. "He is going to make a parachute jump and then he will be a real crew member."

"And how is he going to make this jump?" we asked.

"Very simple, sir. In two days, as you know, we are scheduled to slow time a new engine on 'Weary Bones'. We, including Boike, will be on board and you will fly over Thurleigh with flaps down, as slow as you can fly, and we will drop Boike out of the tail gunner's hatch."

"You have to be kidding," was our incredulous answer. "If the chute doesn't open we will all be murderers and I could be court martialed for 'dog murder'."

Out Came Boike!

After the third pass the fateful deed was done! Out came Boike. The static line did its job and down came Boike, the chute blossoming over his head. Upon wracking the ship over on its left wing, we could all see Boike rapidly speeding to the ground with hind feet dangling, suspended by a chute that seemed too small.

Down, down he went and after some thirty seconds Boike hit the ground, hind feet first. He let out a yip and at full speed headed for the nearest patch of trees some thousand feet west. The jeep was unfortunately on the wrong side of the field, but someone took note that Boike ran to the woods and lifted his leg on the first tree he came to.

In the meantime, up in the air, over the radio came the question: "Ship flying over Thurleigh, what are you doing, throwing a dog out of your aircraft?"

"Thurleigh, this is 'Weary Bones' 943, we are just testing a parachute."

"Roger, 943, Thurleigh tower out."

Editor's note: Unfortunately, the flying control log for 5 June 45 makes no mention of a dog parachuting out of a B-17.

"But sir, we have done everything to make this a no-fail mission. We have enlarged the harness, installed a static line on the chute and tested the whole thing by dropping it attached to a rock from the control tower. We can't fail and Boike will be as safe as it is possible to be.

"Besides," they continued, "we will have a photographer on the ground taking pictures. We will take pictures of him just before he hits the ground. We'll send the pictures to **Stars and Stripes** and we'll all be famous."

No amount of protesting from us could deter the crew from going through with this doubtful event. And so, on 5 June 1944 at 1000 hours "Weary Bones" was seen flying at 1,000 feet over Thurleigh with half flaps at 120 mph. Aboard was the entire crew, with the exception of the bombardier, who was on the ground traveling with a base photographer in a jeep.

Boike was all harnessed up with his static line attached and ready to go!

Col. Williams (LTC Robert C.), who just happened to be in the tower at the time, grabbed a telephone and called 368th squadron operations:

"What are you crazy guys doing, throwing a poor, defenseless dog out of an airplane?"

"Its o.k., Colonel, that was Boike's seventeenth jump!"

"O.K., 368th, we were just wondering what was going on."

And so that was the end of Boike's famous jump and he was now an official member of Keilt's crew.

While no photographs were taken of the descent, Boike was picked up by the jeep and driven to 368th headquarters where the accompanying picture of him was taken before his parachute was removed.

Boike continued to live near the mess hall and reached a weight of thirty pounds. As far as anyone of the crew knows, Boike remained at Thurleigh long after my crew went home.