

June 13th 1944

After completing their 30 mission tour, flying combat missions over Europe from December 24th 1943 to June 6th 1944, Bill Greenwell and his co-pilot Denny Fontinakes went to London, England for a few days of R&R (rest and recovery).

On the evening of June 13th the air raid sirens over London came on, warning people of the danger of an approaching attack formation of aircraft. Considering there had been no significant opposition over the beaches during the June 6th D-Day landings, Bill and Denny were curious as to what kind of attack the Germans could mount over London itself.

They were staying at the Red Cross club in downtown London, so they went up to the roof of the same building, to see what was going on. After 4 years of attacks, Londoners had become used to the drill, finding shelter in basements and subways. Remember, everything that was fired up in the air by the defenses was coming back down and could easily maim or kill anyone on the ground.

Since these two friends had just finished their 30 mission tour and survived everything the Germans could shoot in their direction, they considered the risk of death to be insignificant.

It was a spectacular sight that night, searchlights, barrage balloons, anti aircraft guns firing at a single aircraft, at very low altitude, barely above the rooftops of the taller buildings of the city. They could tell from the concentration of fire that the plane was not flying near their location, so they continued to watch the events unfolding.

The engine of the plane made a sound like they had never heard before, similar to a large single cylinder engine running at a fairly low speed. The exhaust was loud, a popping noise that was not as frequent as the exhaust of a multi cylinder engine. The exhaust was also very bright and a trail of flame followed the small plane as it continued on a straight course, without any defensive maneuvering to avoid the hundreds of guns that were shooting in it's direction.

Bill and Denny cheered the brave pilot who would attempt any such crazy attack on one of the most heavily defended cities on Earth at the time. Admiration for bravery in facing the most hated enemy of every Pilot, anti aircraft fire that could not be returned, for which there was no defense available, to give the victim some sense of striking back at those who were shooting at them.

The small plane continued on it's course for a short time, then the engine quit and it dove into the ground and exploded. Another poor Pilot's life sacrificed in this damn war thought the two friends as they went back downstairs to the streets of London.

The next day the newspaper reported of the first pilot less flying bomb attack of the night before. It explained that the Germans launched the Buzz Bombs from ramps on the coast of France. Guidance was fairly crude, a gyroscope for direction, pyrometer for altitude, and enough fuel to go the distance between launch ramp and target. When launched they were assisted up to speed by rockets, until the air pressure was sufficient for the pulse jet engine to function. This was a simple flapper that allowed air into a chamber, where fuel was injected and ignited with a spark. The somewhat random explosions provided the thrust and speeds of over 400 MPH were possible. The name Buzz Bomb was in reference to the noise from the explosions, and their frequency was similar to the buzzing of some insect wings.

Not even 6 months before, when the two friends had flown their first combat mission on Christmas eve 1943, their target had been Noball, France. The altitude had been low and they were hit by flack and seriously damaged in that attack. Only now did they realize that the long "ski ramps" that were their target were the launching sites of the same pilot less flying bombs that had hit London on the night of June 13th 1944. On this, their first mission a single 88 MM flack explosion had left close to 200 holes in their new plane, knocked them both unconscious. It was a pretty rough start for the green crew. Another mission to the same target on the 21st January 1944, was called a "Milk Run", a mission that was considered easy, and