



Wot a Way to Run a War!: The World War II Exploits and Escapades of a Pilot in the 352nd Fighter Group

Ted Fahrenwald

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Ted Fahrenwald flew P-47s and P-51s with the famed 352nd Fighter Group out of Bodney, England, during the critical tipping-point period of the air war over Europe. A classic devil-may-care fighter pilot, he was also a distinctively talented writer and correspondent. After a typical day of aerial combat and strafing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe – and of course, the requisite partying and creative mischief on base – Ted would sit in his Nissen hut at a borrowed manual typewriter and compose exquisitely humorous letters detailing his exploits in the air and on the ground to his family back home.

But these letters are not the mundane missives of a homesick young man who missed his mother's cooking. Rather, this journalistically educated and incurably comedic pilot detailed his aerial exploits in a hilarious and self-effacing style that combines the vernacular of the day with flights of joyful imagination rivaling St. Exupery. And he didn't sanitize his letters – much. Ted enthusiastically narrates the day-to-day rollercoaster ribaldry that was the natural M.O. of the young men who were tasked to kill Hitler's Luftwaffe. His descriptions of near-constant drinking, skirt-chasing, gambling, and out-and-out tomfoolery put the lie to the notion of the Greatest Generation as an earnest band of do-gooders.

These collected letters are not just literary entertainment: They are a boon not only to military and aviation historians, but also to those who study language, culture, and the science of societies at war.

The letters end dramatically when the ammunition truck that Ted was strafing exploded and knocked his Mustang "The Joker" out of the sky on June 8, 1944, just two days after D-Day. The subsequent story of his adventures with the Maquis (backwoods French Resistance) and his capture by the Germans and escape is recounted in a full-length companion book, *Bailout Over Normandy: A Flyboy's Adventures with the French Resistance and Other Escapades in Occupied France*. Written at age 24 and published from the recently discovered manuscript, Ted's book is a natural accompaniment to this collection of letters.

The Maquis embraced this irreverent and whimsical American fighter pilot as one of their own, and you will too when you read Ted's chronicle in letters and adventure book. His stories leap off the page and provide a depth, richness, and sheer enjoyment that are rare in WWII literature.

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