

## A Civilian Casualty



Glenn Hess was an instructor pilot in the 831<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron. Glenn flew the 485<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group's last mission of the war, to the marshalling yard at Linz, Austria on April 25, 1945. Glenn remained in the Air Force after World War II, finishing his career as a B-52 instructor pilot. Glenn and his wife lived in Garden Grove, California until his death in 2006. Glenn related this story at the 485<sup>th</sup> reunion in Reno in 2002. The incident occurred a few months prior.

Returning to my home one day, I fell in behind a rental motor home that was preparing to get off the freeway at the next exit. (I live in Orange County, two miles south of Disneyland.) As we proceeded to the exit I could tell by his confusion it was a tourist in front of me, unfamiliar with where he was going. At the exit, he made a right turn onto Harbor Boulevard. After heading north for a very short block, he surprised me by turning right again (east) on the avenue where I live. After traveling about one hundred feet he pulled to the curb and stopped. Knowing he was disoriented, I chose to pull in behind him and wait to see if I could help.

After waiting several minutes for him to make a move I decided he might be wary and might not want help. I pulled around him and went several hundred feet on down the street and turned into my driveway and stopped. By the time I exited my car I saw he had stopped across the street. He came across the street, carrying a thick, computer-generated travel itinerary and began speaking poor English, with an accent that was German or Austrian. He was trying to determine where the motor home park was that was in his itinerary. Being familiar with the park, I was able to give him directions.

While we were occupied, his wife had left the motor home and was walking up the drive. As she got closer, my gaze was embarrassingly riveted on her deeply scarred upper lip. Immediately recognizing my wonderment, she unabashedly started telling me that she and her husband were natives of Linz, Austria and that when she was six months old, lying in a crib in their home, she was hit by a piece of shrapnel from a bombing raid, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1945. What a shock this was to me! Somehow I managed to wish them a happy exploration of America on their month long visit, which included two days at Disneyland.

Upon their leaving, I rushed into the house and checked the records I have and found that I had been the pilot of a B-24 crew that bombed Linz, Austria on our last mission of World War II; 25 April 1945.

Having lived with all kinds of nightmares since being in Italy in 1944-45 and having actively participated in the war, I have asked God to forgive me for the destruction we had been a part of, particularly to the damage done to those who were innocent. I sincerely believe this was His answer for me to open my eyes.

Captain Glenn Hess  
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