

FLY THROUGH  
A GERMAN  
PRISONER OF  
WAR CAMP  
WITH A B-17  
NAVIGATOR!

# NOT DON FIGHTING YET

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STORY PROVIDED BY DONALD CASEY VIA THE HOLT ORAL  
HISTORY PROGRAM, LISTEN AT [PRITZKERMILITARY.ORG](http://PRITZKERMILITARY.ORG)

BUILD YOUR OWN  
B-17!  
Pg. 8



# Donald Casey



WWII / 8th Air Force

Born 6 November 1924 in River Forest, IL, Don served in the Army Air Forces 1942-1945. After the war, Don worked in Chicago as a lawyer for 54 years with degrees from Dartmouth and Loyola Chicago. Don married twice and had four sons. He passed away in 2016.

My experience in war felt like that of the soldiers from books: "We were 18 and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces."

- *All Quiet on the Western Front*

I was in boarding school when

Pearl Harbor was bombed!

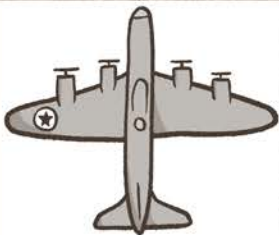


To us, war would be the adventure of a lifetime.

When I turned 18, I became a



Navigation Officer in the Army Air Forces.

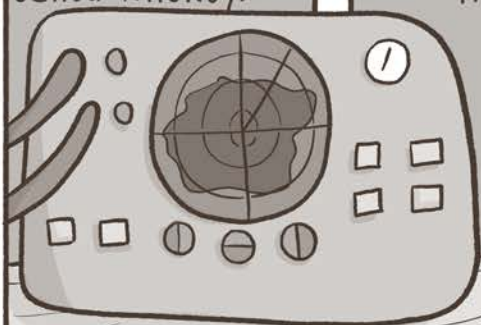


Early 1944 was a war of air forces in Europe. Before I arrived, three of every four planes in each mission were shot down in the 8th Air Force. From the Navigator's window, it wasn't hard to see why.





Our plane got a new radar system called "Mickey."



We were able to fly more missions now that Mickey allowed us to "see through" the clouds.



I was promoted to Deputy Lead Navigator, though I hadn't taken the training course.

They didn't tell me I was promoted because 3 other Deputies had already been killed.

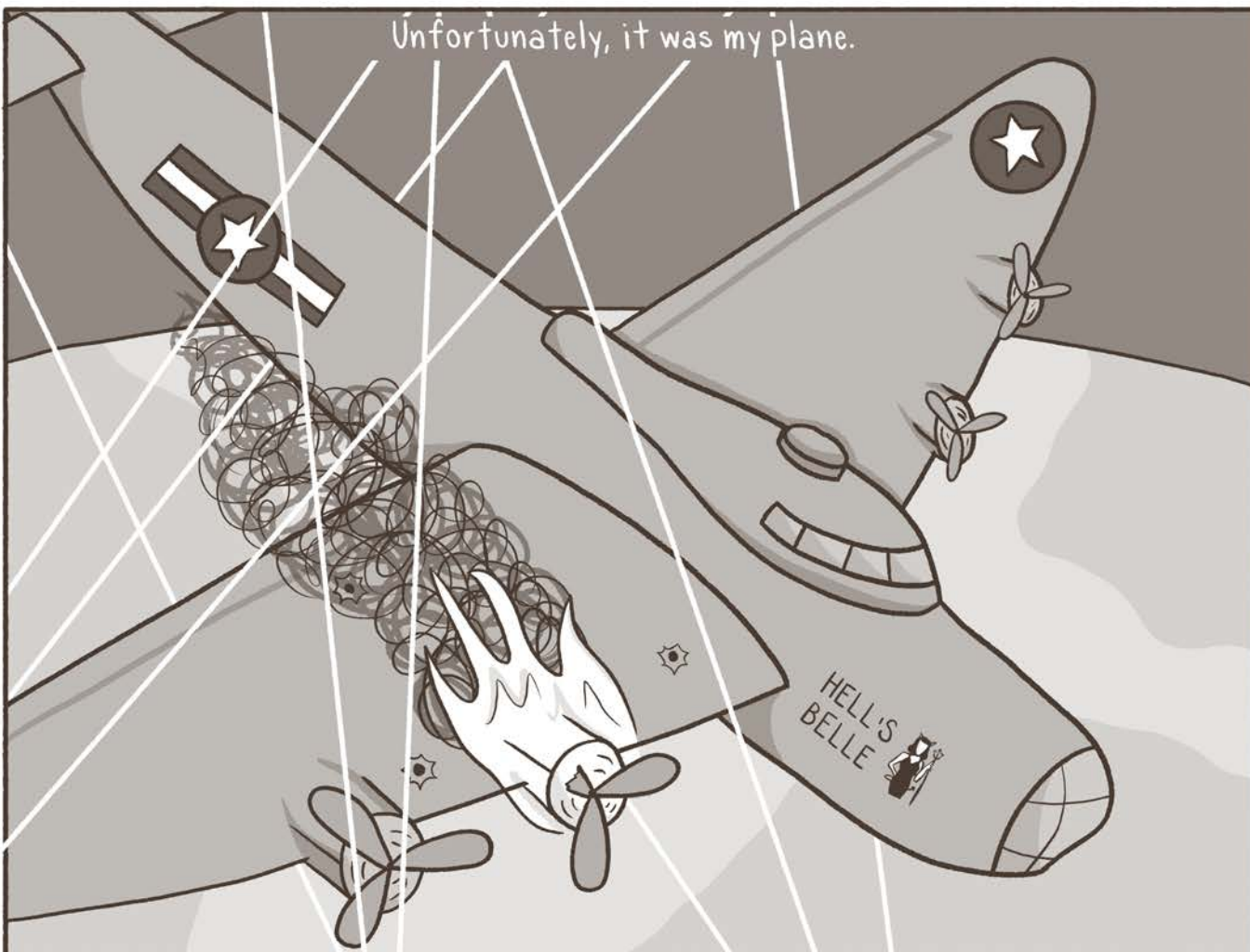
18 June 1944 I went on a mission to bomb an oil refinery in Hamburg.



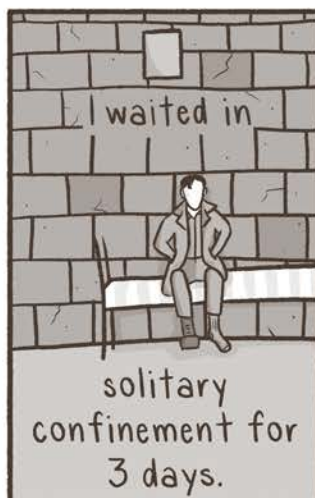
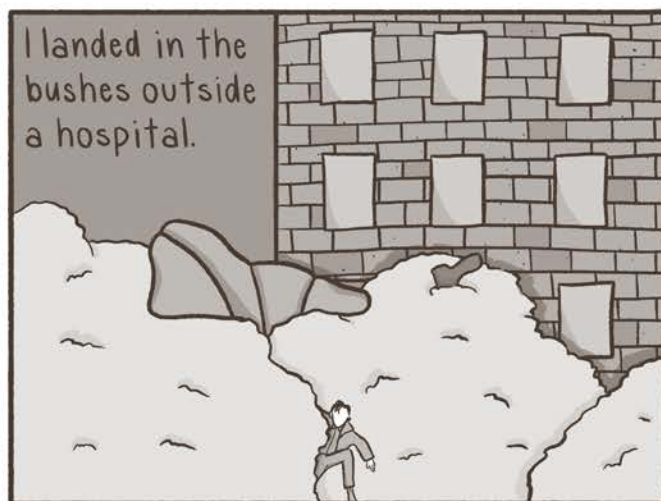
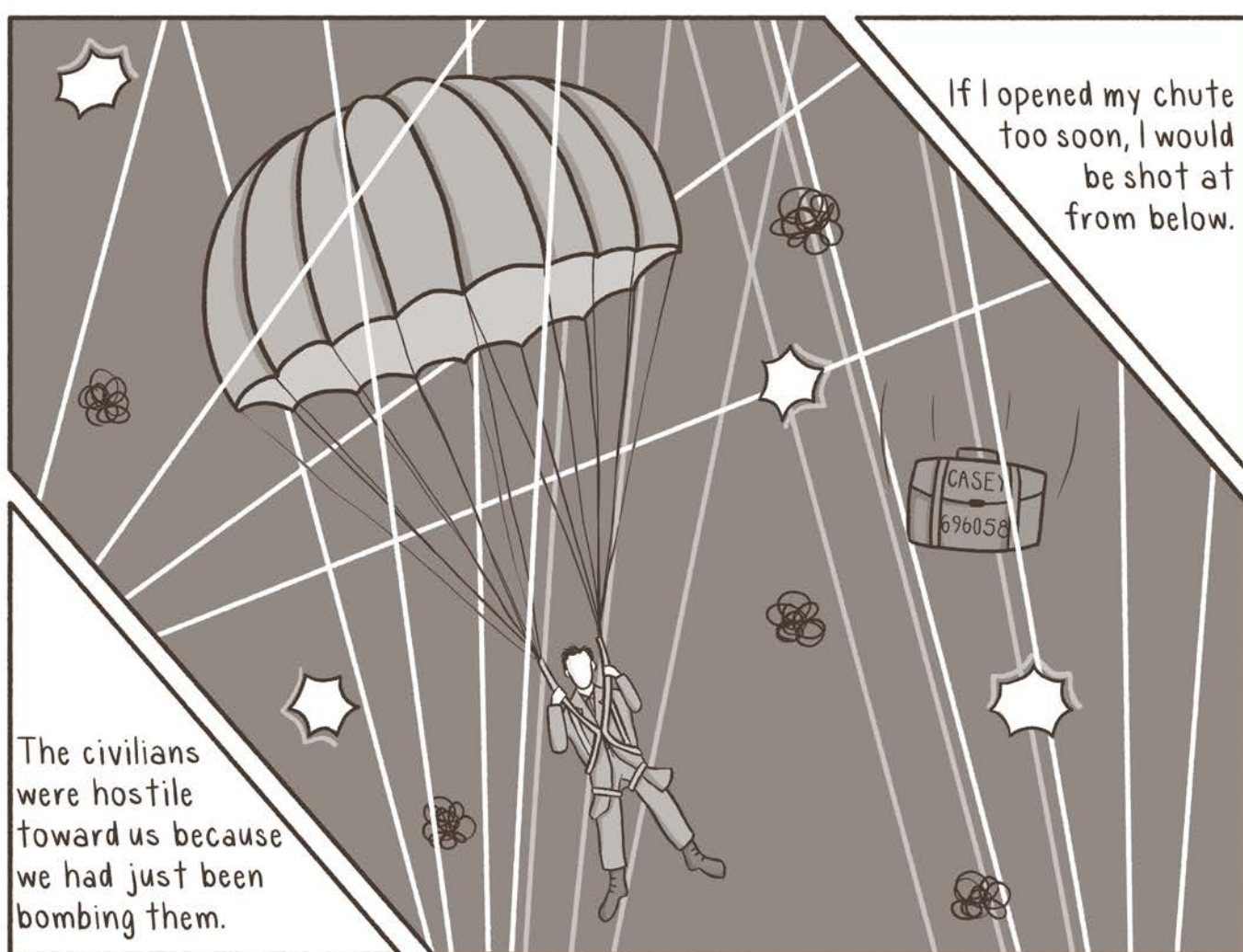
The mission was a great success for the 8th!

We only lost one plane!

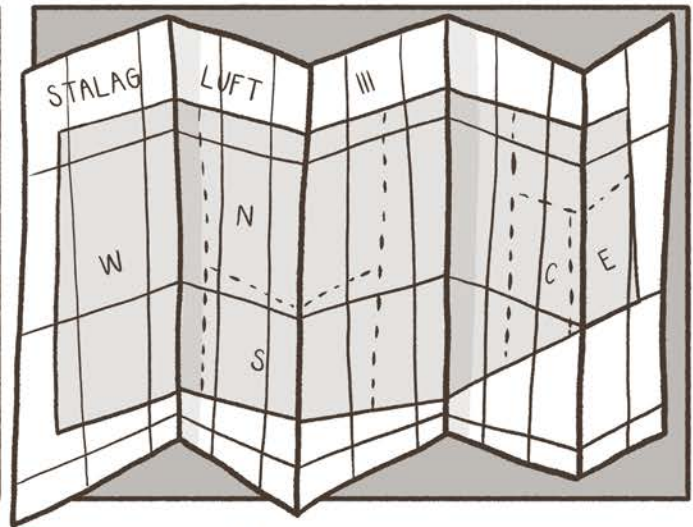
Unfortunately, it was my plane.



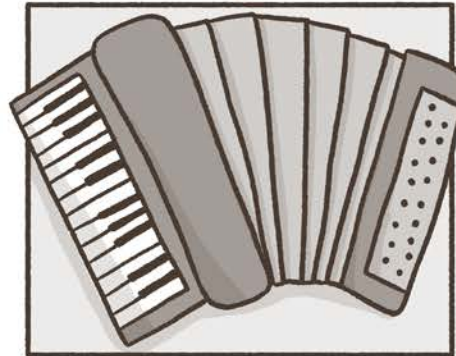
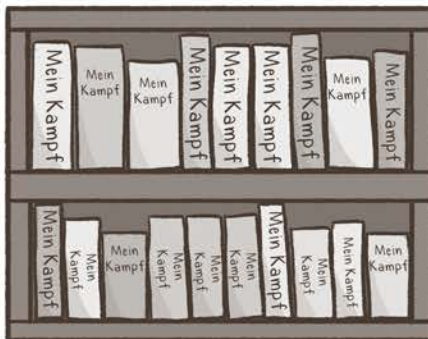






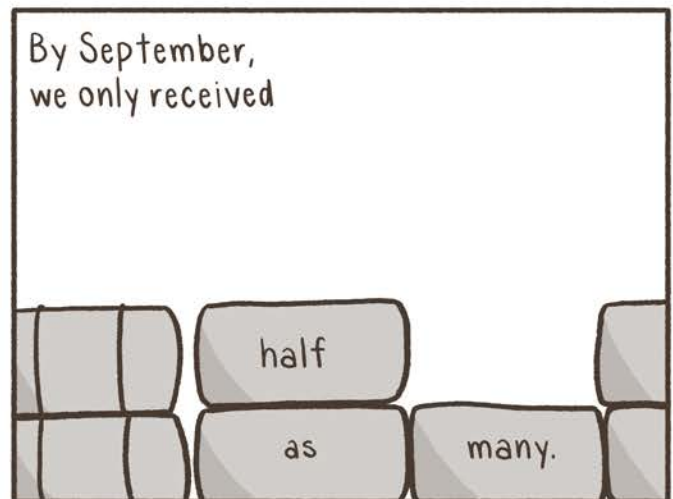
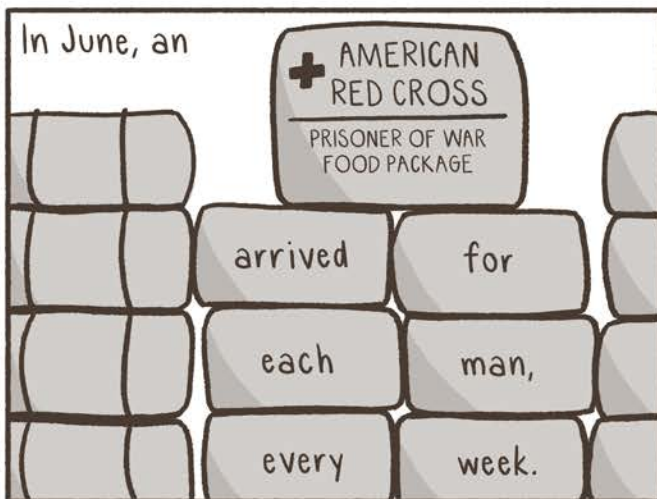


The Stalag had a small  
library,

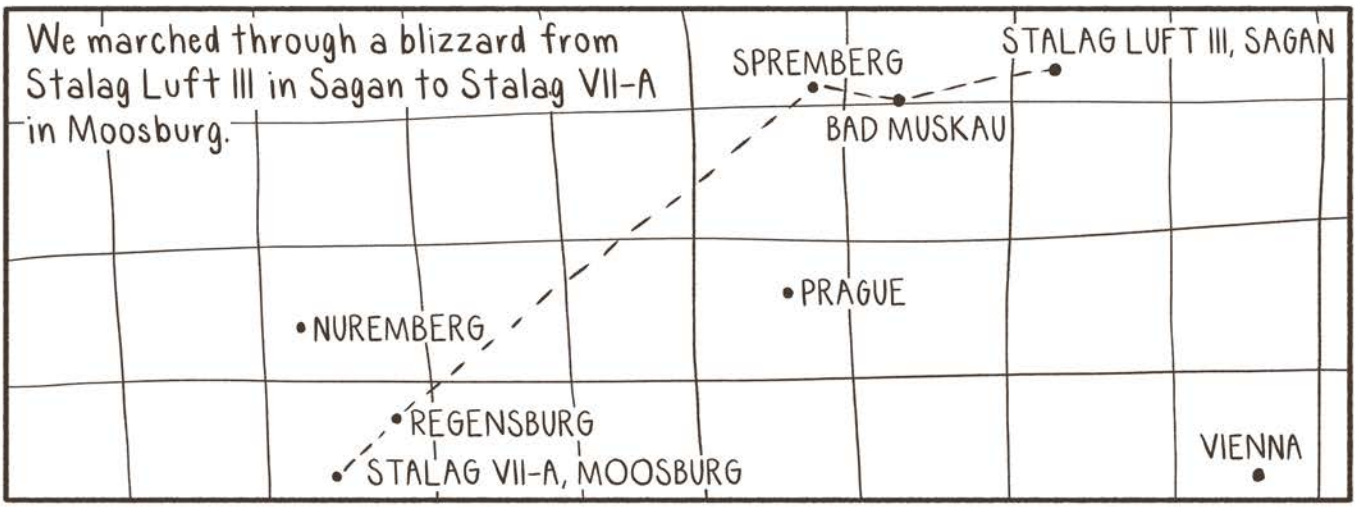


musical instruments,

and time for leisure.





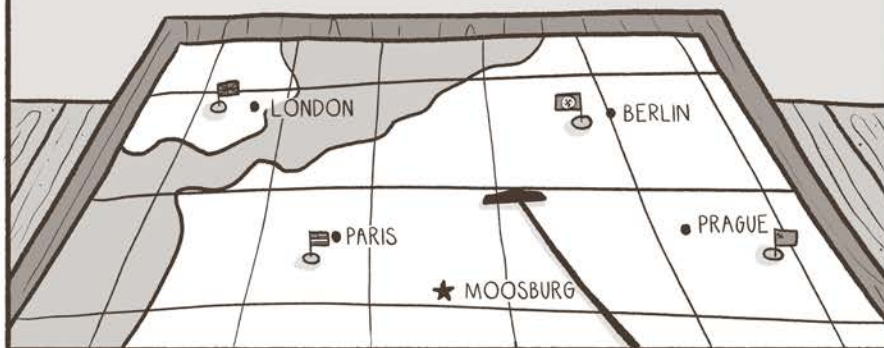




The canteen could now pick up

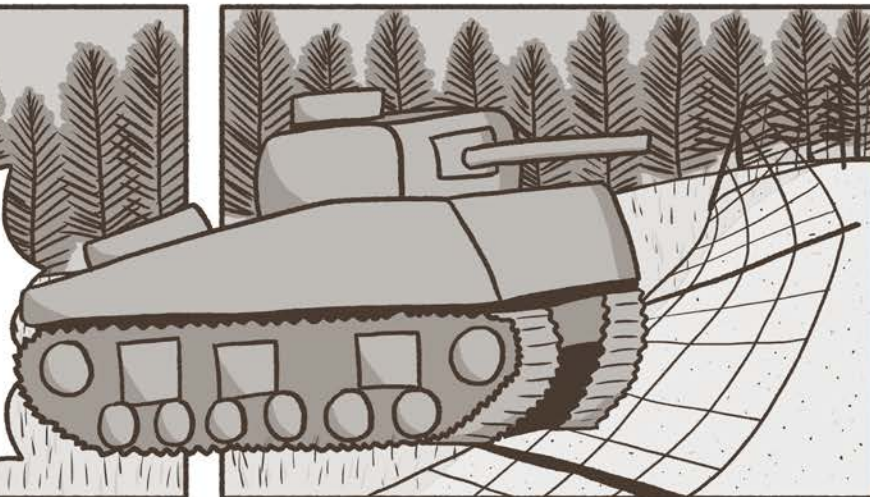


We followed troop movements closely in our "war room" as the Allies approached Moosburg.



29 April 1945  
Patton's Third Army  
won a battle just  
outside the camp.

The tanks of the 14th  
Armored Division rolled  
into Stalag VII-A.



General Patton himself  
helped  
liberate  
the  
camp.



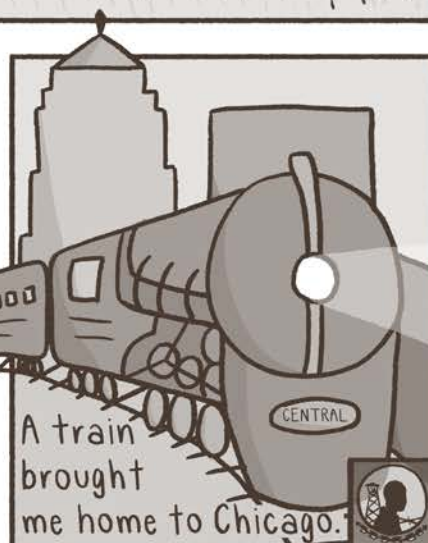
We burned the guard towers to celebrate our freedom.

C-47s flew us to



Le Havre.

Ships took us to  
New York.



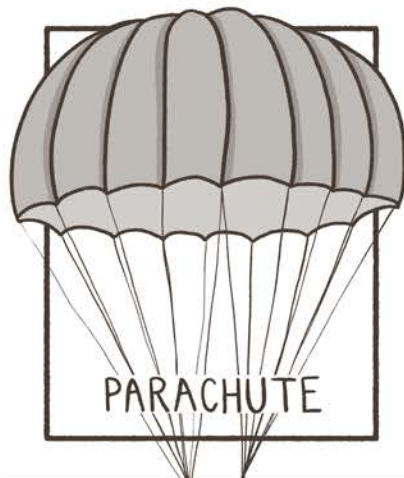
A train  
brought  
me home to Chicago.





Like aircraft themselves, **radar** was a tool that gained prominence through its military applications during WWII. Radar allowed crews to see through the clouds and continue operations safely even in unfavorable weather. The radar system installed on B-17s, the H2X "Mickey," was introduced in late 1943. The system included a pair of domes that sat on the outside of the plane, under the nose, and used micro-waves to return feedback images of the ground below to a display at the navigation desk inside. The dual dome design looked, to some, like Mickey Mouse ears.

The **US Army Air Forces (USAAF)** was active 1941-1947 as a replacement for the US Army Air Corps and a precursor to the United States Air Force. As the use of aircraft became an important part of both combat and logistics during WWII, it became clear that the US needed a more independent sector of the military dedicated to flight operations. In 1944, when Don was flying most of his missions, the USAAF included over 2 million servicemen and 80,000 aircraft.



**Parachutes** were invented long before airplanes, but WWII presented the first major demand with increased opportunities for flight. Parachutes could be worn on the back, chest, or bottom to be deployed via ripcord for those like Don who wore a parachute as an emergency safety measure. Parachutes could also be deployed automatically via static line for new groups like the Paratroops who jumped out of planes on purpose.

The **Great Escape** took place at Stalag Luft III in March 1944, just months before Don arrived. The Great Escape, which was popularized by the 1963 movie of the same name, was an escape mission planned by American, British, and Canadian POWs. 76 prisoners made it outside the camp through a series of tunnels, but only 3 made it to safety. As a consequence of the escape, life at the camp became more strict, and no further attempts at escape were possible by the time Don was a prisoner.



**Forty-and-Eights** were boxcars designed to hold either forty men or eight horses. During WWII, they were most notably used to transport prisoners across Europe.

**George S. Patton** was an American general during WWII. The 14th Armored Division was under Patton's command when it liberated Don and others at Stalag VII-A.

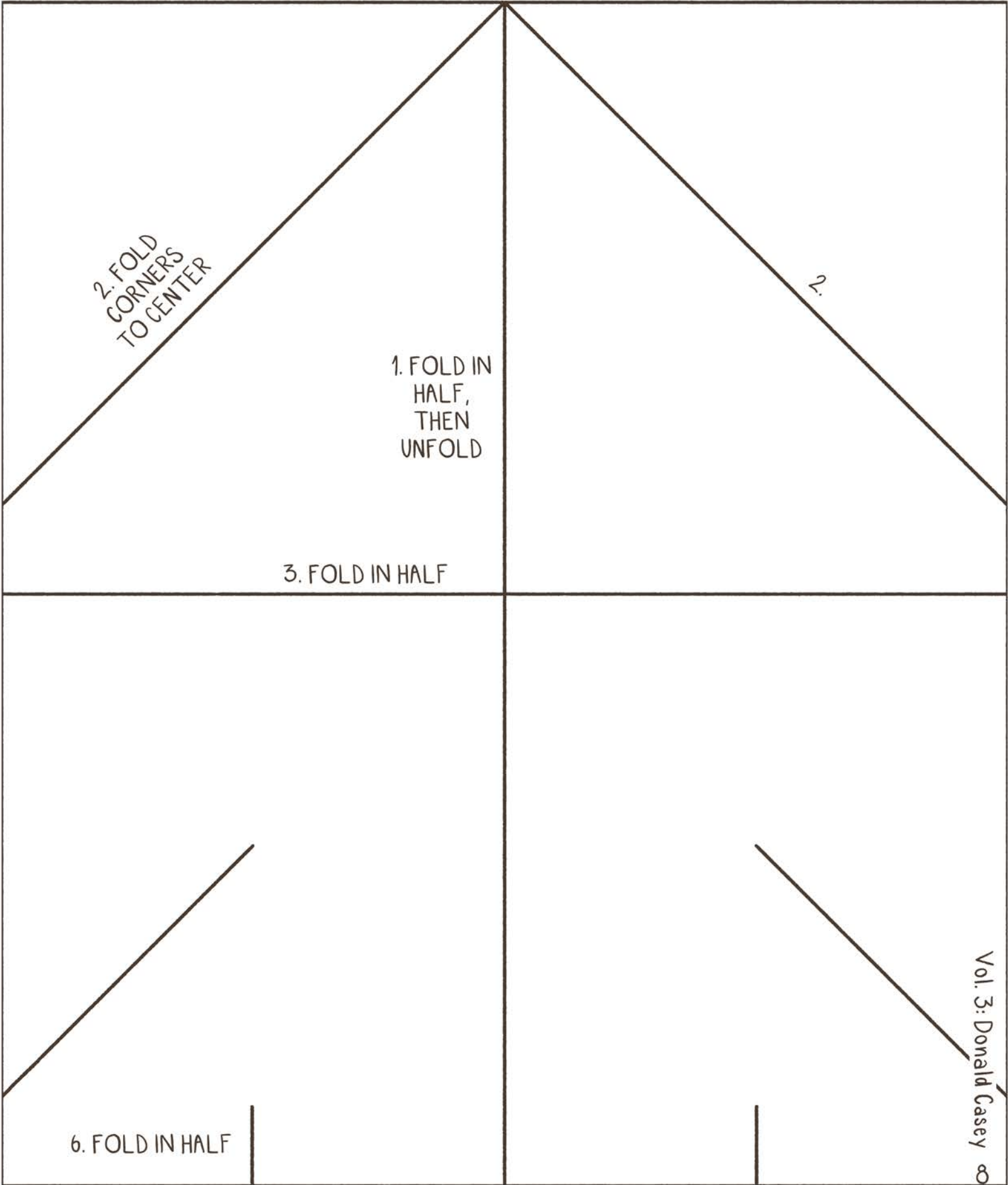
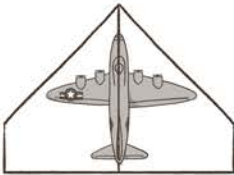
**Stalag** is an abbreviation of the German word for Prisoner of War Camp. 'Luft' meaning 'air,' Stalag Luft III was made specifically for members of the Air Corps like Don.

When questioned by their captors, prisoners were taught to only provide their **name, rank, and serial number**. Additional information might end up helping the enemy.



Build a B-17 like the HELL'S BELLE that Don navigated!

Cut out the rectangle below, name your plane and draw nose art in the space on the back, then follow steps 1-7 to fold a paper B-17 that really flies!





The B-17 Flying Fortress was introduced in 1938, and quickly became a popular bomber in the US Army Air Forces in WWII, with nearly 13,000 built. 10 crew members served on each B-17 including a pilot, co-pilot, navigator (like Don), bombardier and nose gunner, flight engineer and top turret gunner, radio operator, ball turret gunner, tail gunner, and two waist gunners. Crews often decorated their planes with nicknames and nose art, like Don's "Hell's Belle," for good luck.

5. FOLD UP

4. FOLD CORNERS TO CENTER

4

NAME AND NOSE ART:

1944 B-17

DONALD CASEY

7. FOLD DOWN WINGS

7.

