

SMS 1210
PROC: 2020, CJS

SPERRY, GEORGE B.
1941-1944

LINEAR FT.: 1.5
APPROX. NO. PGS. 2,000

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This collection was donated by Catherine Sperry, daughter of George Brooks Sperry, a member of the 133 Royal Air Force (Eagle) Squadron who was shot down and taken prisoner by German forces in Occupied France on September 26, 1942.

A native of Alameda, California George Sperry earned his A&E mechanics license and both his private and commercial flying licenses shortly before World War II broke out in 1939. George was unable to join his brother, William Sperry, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps that year due to physical restrictions, so he continued working at the Oakland airport unloading boxcars, assembling and test-flying aircraft, and making deliveries. He finally seized on the opportunity to participate in the war effort by joining the Eagle Squadron on February 9, 1941, three days before his 27th birthday. After many months of training and practice with British Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) fighters in Canada and Great Britain Sperry reported to the 133 Eagle Squadron stationed at Biggin Hill in April, 1942. In the following months Sperry took part in dozens of missions across the English Channel and into enemy territory before being transferred to the 336th Squadron of the U.S. Air Force in the summer of 1942. Just days after his transfer he was forced to abandon his Spitfire fighter plane as it was shot down over Occupied France, and he was captured by German forces the following day.

One of the few remaining survivors of his squadron, Sperry was taken to Stalag Luft III where he met General A.P. Clark and a number of other high-profile American and British soldiers. For the first year he was kept in the north compound with British Allied soldiers, but was moved to the south compound in September of 1943. He remained there until January 28, 1945 when, according to Sperry's account, a Russian invasion of German territory prompted the Luftwaffe to move Sperry and other American airmen from Stalag Luft III to Stalag VII A, or Moosberg, through a treacherous winter storm. He stayed at Moosberg until, on the morning of April 29, 1945, Sperry and his fellow prisoners of war were liberated by the U.S. Army's 14th Armored Division. George Sperry, as noted in his narrative contained within this collection, was held prisoner for two years, seven months, and three days.

Sources: George Sperry, as told in his running historical narrative throughout SMS 1210. Also: "Mother gets Letter from War Prisoner" and "Alameda Flying Officer Prisoner on German Raid," unknown newspaper, February 22, 1943. These articles can also be found within SMS 1210.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

SMS 1210 consists of materials that were produced by Lt. Sperry, members of the Eagle Squadron, and prisoners of war who were detained at Stalag Luft III and Moosberg. It also contains photographs of Eagle Squadron members and airplanes, and contemporary newspapers written about Lt. Sperry, detainment facilities, and World War II in general.

The majority of materials in this collection were taken from a series of four binders that were assembled by Lieutenant Sperry himself, and the materials have been kept in this original order to preserve their context. These materials are arranged primarily in chronological order, with an ongoing narrative written by Lt. Sperry appearing throughout. Some parts of this narrative are typed while others are hand-written, and it describes Lt. Sperry's experiences as an Eagle Squadron Pilot and as a prisoner of war.

The first two boxes hold the contents of two binders titled "133 Squadron" Books I and II, which describe Sperry's experiences in the British Royal Air Force as a member of the 133 Eagle Squadron. They include photographs of Sperry, other Eagle Squadron members, and their equipment, Sperry's personal account, and R.A.F. identification papers. They also include the two empty binders in which these materials were originally donated. The contents of the first two binders have been removed into folders (but kept in original order) due to the precarious conditions that existed therein, and it is recommended that the following two binders be periodically reviewed and considered for rehousing.

The third box contains two binders titled "Stalag Luft III" and a folder that holds newspapers from the 1930s and 1940s. These binders provide an ongoing account of Sperry's experience as a prisoner of war, photographs of himself, the prison camp, and other prisoners, drawings and poems produced by his fellow prisoners, identification paperwork, and other valuable primary source materials from Stalag Luft III.

Keywords and terms: World War II; World War, 1939-1944; Eagle Squadron; No. 133 Squadron; Royal Air Force (R.A.F.); Prisoners of War (POWs); Stalag Luft III; Moosberg

Names: Sperry, George Brooks; Hoover, Chester L.; Magee, John; Russell, H.G.; Falter, Jerry; Boyle, J.B.

ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

BOX 1

Binder 1 "133 Squadron Book I"

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative written by Sperry • Eagle Squadron photographs • Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) photographs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper articles • Clothing coupons • Eagle Squadron lists of deceased fighters |
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BOX 2

Binder 2 "133 Squadron Book II"

- Narrative written by Sperry
- Eagle Squadron photographs
- Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) photographs
- Newspaper articles
- Sperry membership cards
- Spitfire article
- Spitfire schematics

BOX 3

Binder 3 "Flying Officer George Brooks Sperry: Eagle Squadron-Royal Air Force"

- Narrative written by Sperry
- Handwritten personal accounts, poems, and other material from other Stalag Luft III prisoners
- Sperry Stalag Luft III identification card/tags
- Newspaper articles
- Drawings
- Stalag Luft III photographs
- German prisoner of war currency

Binder 4 "Stalag Luft III"

- Narrative written by Sperry
- Handwritten personal accounts, poems, and other material from other Stalag Luft III prisoners
- Prisoner list handwritten by the prisoners themselves
- Photographs
- Articles
- Drawings
- Maps
- German Marks
- March to Moosburg

Folder 1 Newspapers. May, 1940-September, 1942