

163, NEW BARN LANE,
Cheltenham.

GL52 3LH.

10th March 2001.

— My dear Gae and Margaret
— and your families
Jean and I were saddened by your news
but relieved to learn that the final hours
of Bobs life were peaceful - In our younger
days, pneumonia was regarded as the old
mans friend - may he rest in peace and
our thoughts and prayers are with you all
during these days of grief.

The children must not think or remember
Bob as a frail old man, deteriorating by
the month.

Encourage them to think of him as I remember
him during the war time days. He was
a wonderful pilot and an outstanding captain
of a Lancaster crew. I was an instructor at
Blyton and had the opportunity of choosing the
crew I was to join at the end of my tour
of instruction. I studied records of each crew
and selected Bob and his crew as they were
classified as "above average" and "likely
to make a good bomber crew"
I never regretted my choice for Bob

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Inspired confidence and at the same time had a firm grip on the discipline of his crew.

Both of us sat alone together in the nose of that great aircraft. We needed to act as a team and to share intimately in the dangers and problems of keeping the aircraft on course and in the air. We thought as one and acted as one for how after how and night after night. When facing danger and imminent death on so many occasions together, one soon appreciates the sterling qualities of crew mates. The greatest danger I think that we ever faced was over Hamburg when we strayed from the stream because Dugs was not sure of the aiming point - We became isolated on the outskirts of the town and for 28 minutes we were shot at by every gun in the area. Bob flung the aircraft from wingtip to wingtip, after about 15 mins I thought we would never survive - one of those shells would surely explode in the lane. - When we eventually cleared the area we just looked at each other and spontaneously shook hands before wiping the sweat off our brows.

On our last trip I had the unhappy duty of telling Bob - that the starboard wing was on fire and we had only minutes before the wing broke off. Bob nodded and then said to the crew - Sorry chaps - this is the end of the line - abandon aircraft. Bob and I held the aircraft level while the crew baled out. Bob and I were to go out immediately after each other. Bob remembered our mascot "Joe" sitting on the compass - paused to stuff him into his pocket by which time I had gone and the aircraft was beginning to dive into the ground. We met again when I eventually reached Switzerland.

Bob, Bill Millburn and I danced around in a circle to celebrate our re-union.

When Bob was my Best Man (when I was married in 1947) 'Joe' came with him in his jacket pocket - It was an emotional meeting in the Vestibule which only Bob and I fully understood.

A gentle and brave man who inspired enough affection among his crew that we all remembered each other and on the night of 5/6 September we all sang each other the band that was forged in battle was maintained for ever

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50 years - ~~is~~ this not out of an empty
sentimentality but out of a genuine respect
for each other as an "above average" crew
held together by a quiet, reliable, gentle and
efficient Pilot - not many crews possessed
or developed an affinity such as we had.

Encourage the children to remember - their
grandfather as a gentleman, a brave
pilot, a leader of a crew who were prepared
to go wherever he lead.

Although only two of us are now left
of the crew we have promised to maintain
our contacts.

I beg you to keep in contact and
come to see us from time to time.

Bob will not die while he remains in
the hearts of his crew and his children

Tell them again - Bob was not the
frail old man they visited -

He was a strong, respected and gentle
leader.

Love and Blessings to you
all. God Bless you,

Eric and Jean
(Dickson)

Bob Cant's Engineer at Lancaster PM-11

JA 868