

Target For Tonight online campaign. Mission 20 Oil Refinery, Tonsberg, Norway 25/26 April 1945  
102 Squadron C Cobblers

“Grandma, did Grandpop ever talk about his time in the war? About flying bombers and stuff?”

“Oh, he talked about his mates and the larks that they got up to off duty and during training but he didn’t really like talking about being on active service. He said it was 90% boredom and 10% terror. The briefing for that night’s target was the worst part. Waiting to see if it would be one of the well defended targets in Ruhr or worse still Berlin or better if it was what he called a “milk run”. The anticipation winding up until they got into the aircraft at which point routine sort of took over until they were under attack and then the fear returned.”

“The only mission he ever would talk about was that last one to Norway and the oil refineries. ‘Cos they didn’t know it would be their last one, but they knew that Germany couldn’t be far off from chucking it all in. He said it was worse in some ways knowing that they might have some hope of surviving the war, unlike most of his mates, and yet could still cop it from flak, nightfighters or engine failure or even a bad landing. As it turned out it was a “milk run” apart from some flak they didn’t even see an enemy in the sky. But when they got back safely to base he found that he couldn’t let go of the steering column he’d been that tense and it had been a long old flight, same as Berlin and back. Then he turned to his Flight Engineer and said, ‘Piece of cake.’ Now let’s go and have a nice cup of tea and we can finish sorting his stuff out later.”