

Escape From France

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Before the United States and its allies invaded Europe in 1944, Americans flew bombing missions over France from bases in Great Britain. Their mission was to stop Nazi Germany during World War II (1939-1945). Jason interviewed his great-uncle, Ardell [Adie] Bollinger, who was shot down over France in 1943.



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Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler wanted to conquer France.

My great-uncle, Adie, enlisted in the Army in July 1942. Instead of becoming a **paratrooper**¹ as he had hoped, Adie went to radio school and joined a B-17 bomber group. In May 1943, he was sent overseas to England.

During one mission, Uncle Adie was shot down. He jumped out of his plane into an open field. He decided to lie down in the field because the Germans would look in the barns and buildings.

The next morning, a local priest and three other Frenchmen brought bread and milk for Uncle Adie. The priest told him the Germans had left. The priest also told Uncle Adie that there were other Americans who had survived being shot down. One needed medical

attention. The other men were named Kelly, a **gunner**,² and Calais, an assistant radio operator.

All wanted to get back to England. The best route, they decided, was to cross the Pyrenees mountains into Spain.

¹ **paratrooper:** soldier trained to parachute from an airplane

² **gunner:** crew member in an aircraft responsible for operating the plane's machine gun

They would spend their nights sleeping in haystacks and their days walking. They would knock on doors asking for food. A man at one home was friendly and gave the three fliers food.

The next morning, an old truck picked up the Americans and drove them to a **château**³ 20 miles away, where they spent two weeks. The château was part of the French underground, which throughout the war resisted the Germans.

The lady at the château taught the fliers some French and gave them clothes and shoes to wear. However, Uncle Adie's feet were too big. They gave him wooden shoes. Uncle Adie said there was no way he was walking to Spain in wooden shoes.

One Saturday night, the same truck dropped off the Americans in a village square. A girl with a bicycle quickly grabbed Uncle Adie's arm and walked him to a row of houses. The girl knocked on a door of one of the houses. A man appeared and opened the door. The man who opened the door spoke English. He said the Americans had to stay there for a while. The plan was to get the fliers to Paris; then [they would] take a train south to the Pyrenees.

But, the Germans had captured the leader of the underground. Uncle Adie and the others decided to go to England alone. Uncle Adie found a priest who spoke English. The priest introduced the Americans to a French journalist.

The journalist took them to the house of a fisherman, who said he could get the Americans back to England by boat. When the time came, they went down to the harbor and met about 25 others—Americans, British, and Frenchmen—all trying to escape, including a former member of Uncle Adie's crew, Jim Armstrong. The plan didn't work.

Finally, a few weeks later, Uncle Adie got in a small boat jammed with people. They drifted down the river, out of the harbor, and into the ocean. They had escaped.

³ **chateau:** castle or large country house

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Adie Bollinger was all of the following EXCEPT

- A the great-uncle of Jason Lombardozi
- B a paratrooper in the U.S. Army
- C a member of a B-17 bomber group
- D a U.S. veteran of World War II

2. Adie's plane was shot down over France in 1943 during World War II. What was the effect of his plane getting shot down?

- A Adie risked his life looking for a new plane to fly during the war.
- B The crash injured Adie, and he was taken to a hospital in England.
- C With help from the French underground, Adie escaped to England.
- D Armed forces arrested Adie in France, but he eventually escaped to Spain.

3. Which of the following conclusions about the Frenchmen whom Adie encountered is supported by the passage?

- A The Frenchmen were generous and helpful.
- B The Frenchmen were selfish and impolite.
- C The Frenchmen were indifferent and unfriendly.
- D The Frenchmen were suspicious and nervous.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "Before the United States and its allies invaded Europe in 1944, Americans flew bombing missions over France from bases in Great Britain."

In this sentence, the word **allies** means

- A people fighting in the underground army
- B goods and services traded between countries
- C people who live in many different countries
- D nations united by a common purpose

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to describe

- A all of the events that led up to World War II
- B how the French underground was formed
- C Adie Bollinger's experience during World War II
- D why Adie Bollinger wanted to become a paratrooper

6. When did Adie enlist in the Army?

7. When Adie’s plane was shot down, he jumped into an open field. How did Adie avoid being captured, and what does this tell us about him as a person?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

When the Americans were trying to return to England, they spent their days walking _____ their nights sleeping in haystacks.

- A or
- B nor
- C for
- D and

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In 1943, Adie Bollinger was flying a bombing mission over France to stop Nazi Germany during World War II.

Who? Adie Bollinger

(was doing) What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** paratrooper: a soldier trained to parachute from an airplane.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
