

Navigator found Samsø again after 50 years

War drama over Samsø in a new light

Text 1993 and photo 2006 by Aage Snedker – translated by Anders Straarup

SAMSØ One of Samsø's most sombre memories from the occupation is the shooting down of the American bomber over Alstrup on October 9 nearly 50 years ago.

The other day this event was brought back from fading memory, when the navigator of the plane and one of the main characters of the drama, Carl Groosbeck, now 72, revisited the crash site.

Together with his daughter Delia and his two sons Carl and John he had travelled the long way from Illinois, USA to Samsø to see the place again, where at the age of 22 he was literally thrown out in the horror of war and only survived by a miracle.

About a year ago another member of the crew of the American plane, Co Pilot Miles C. McCormack, also visited Samsø.

Their return to the small field in the middle of Alstrup, where their plane crashed, confirms how deep an impact the dramatic episode made on their minds.

Apart from the plane's Tail Gunner, Sergeant Douglas Farris, who was killed before the German fighters forced the bomber in over Samsø, all members of the crew returned safely to their homeland, when the war was over.

Help from the local people

For Carl Groosbeck the stay on Samsø after the dramatic shooting down became very short.

During his visit to Samsø the other day he had an opportunity for a short conversation with Ruth Jensen, who at the time of the shooting down lived on "Lykkestrupgård" at Sælvig, where the other crewmembers from the American plane went for help.

About himself he told Ruth Jensen that he was taken prisoner by the Germans shortly after he landed by parachute at Vadstrup.

One of his buddies needed first aid, and it slowed him down so much that the Germans caught up with him and took him to a farm close to the Wehrmacht observation post at "Dyret" near Tanderup. Here he was locked up in the hen house of the farm, only allowed to have some water to drink.

- In spite of that the wife on the farm smuggled food in to me, and that was the last decent meal I had till the liberation from the German POW camp in 1945, he confided to Ruth Jensen.

Though 50 years have passed Carl Groosbeck recognized the landing place at Vadstrup, as if it had happened yesterday.

Historical meeting

The visits to Samsø by the two Americans have refreshed the memories of the event in 1943 in the minds of the generation of residents of Samsø who are old enough to remember it.

To Miles C. McCormack and Carl Groosbeck the journey to Samsø and the visit at the crash site in Alstrup have undoubtedly been an experience for life. The fact that before his visit to Samsø Carl Groosbeck had been on a trip to Hamburg to meet Heinz Phillipp, crewmember of the fighter that gave the American bomber the coup de grace by sending bursts of machine gun bullets into its fuselage, confirms once again that behind every action is a reason, but also a desire for pardon.

And that time heals all wounds.

Also in 2006 Carl Groosbeck visited Samsø. This time with his grandchild, who listened eagerly to her grandfather's account of the shooting down at an interesting meeting at Samsø Folk High School.

