



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
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PRESS RELEASE

Voices of Veterans: Capt. Gerald Groden served with the Royal Air Force During WWII as a Lancaster Bomber Pilot

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AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. In this special episode, we highlight the service of Capt. Gerald Groden, who moved to Texas after he served with Great Britain's Royal Air Force as a Lancaster Bomber Pilot.

There are many stories from World War II that leave us in awe of what our Veterans have done to help preserve our freedom but one such story in our Voices of Veterans archive comes from a Texas resident and native of Great Britain's Royal Air Force.

Born May 13, 1921, in Kent, England, Gerald Groden was one of seven children. His father, an engineer, moved the family when he was young to Langford following a promotion to oversee a Water Works plant near Essex.

"I worked a lot of odd jobs when I got older," Groden said as he talked about his youth. "I worked for a butcher, I remember that, because I got to drive a little pony and cart to deliver meat all over the place."

Groden had bigger goals for his life other than delivering meat and earned a scholarship to Cambridge with the hopes of working with animals.

"In 1937 or '38, somewhere in there, I went to Cambridge, and I was going to be a veterinary surgeon, and I was in my first year and my eldest brother, Bill, was killed when he was on a ship to Jamaica, and it was torpedoed," Groden recalled. "There were no survivors. That was two weeks before war was declared."



VOICES OF VETERANS

name Groden, Gerald		
military branch Royal Air Force	rank Captain	conflict WWII
date interviewed 08/06/2015		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interview available on voicesofveterans.org

A native of Great Britain, Gerald Groden served with the Royal Air Force during WWII as a Lancaster bomber pilot. Groden talked about the first time he went on a bombing mission, which he referred to as "a mix of emotions." Groden took part in numerous missions throughout the duration of the war, often in very trying circumstances, he remembered his time in combat as "exciting" and "terrifying."



Groden said he soon quit Cambridge and volunteered to join the Royal Air Force. It was there he served as a Lancaster bomber pilot and took part in numerous missions.

"Flying was considered glamorous back then," he recalled, "and at first, they told me they had too many pilots and navigators but said they could get me flying quickly if I would go in as an Air Gunner, which I took."

Groden said he went to Yatesbury to undergo training and learn morse code and the basic things he needed to know to help communicate while out on missions. Once he

finished training, he was linked to a Wellington Squadron, which was a twin engine, big bomber of its day.

“I was with them for the next two years, we did all sorts of maritime stuff, air-sea rescue, well, not just that but anti-war submarine warfare, we had all sorts of things on board,” Groden said, his words carefully chosen. “Interestingly, we had this thing called a Leigh Light Wellingtons, which was a system that you had a big search light in the airplane, and we’d drop down before you got to a suspected submarine, illuminate the target and we bombed it.”

Groden said he didn’t think they did a great job of hunting U-Boats during that time but felt they did a good job of not allowing them to surface like they were supposed to. He said after those missions, the squadron was reappointed to Lancaster Bombers, a big four engine bomber.

“I got put into Bomber Command in a place called Waddington, which was of the stations we had,” Groden shared. “Our mission was to bomb military targets in France, Germany – anywhere, really.”

Groden said the first time he went on a bombing mission was a mix of emotions.

“It was all exciting, it was, but also terrifying at the same time, we lost an awful lot of aircraft,” Groden recalled about his first mission. “We weren’t really equipped to do the job really.”

To listen to Capt. Gerald Groden tell his story, click the button below.

[Capt. Gerald Groden's Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)