

## Speech by Dorthea Madsen

### First helper of Mervyn Bertie and Stoney Mitchell

Reception held at Bechs Hotel, Tarm  
12 March 2015

to commemorate the 70th anniversary  
of the shooting down of RAF Lancaster ME449

*Translation by Anni Guldberg Madsen*



**Dorthea Madsen**

(nee Kristensen)

Danish helper

*Photo by Dan Michener*

I was serving as a housemaid at Vestjysk Gymnasium in Tarm when there was an air-raid warning and I checked the black-out curtains. I saw something burning, and then I saw it falling; I thought that it must be an airplane, it could not be anything else. The next day, 13 March 1945, was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday when I had the day off. I went home to my parents, who lived 8 km east of Tarm, and I told my father and mother about what I had seen in the sky.

A lady with a milk pail came to our door. She had been further east at the grocer's, and she told us that some people were standing at the edge of the road and could they be Germans. Then a thought struck me and I wondered whether they might be from that airplane. I then took my father's bicycle; it was the only one still functioning. I rode up along side them; by then they had passed a couple of kilometers to the west along the road leading to Tarm. They asked, while pointing towards Tarm, "Viborg?" I do not speak any other languages, but I indicated "No"; do not go there because there are so many Germans. I knew they would be caught at once if they went into Tarm. I explained to them with hand gestures that they should come back with me to get something to eat and be allowed to sleep. They talked about it, whether it would be alright; I might be an informer.

I bicycled ahead so that people living near the road would not see us together; you never knew what the Germans would be told. I got them home with me, and they sat down. The first thing they asked was what time it was, and then they asked if they could wash their hands because they had buried the parachutes.

Bertie took a Danish 50 kroner note out of his pocket and said "cigarettes". Fortunately I had three in my bag, so he got a cigarette. It was mostly Bertie talking. Mitchell was kind of fuddled, and he had wet shoes and wet feet and stockings. We made him swallow a couple of tablets, and then he rested on the sofa. Before that I had taken off his shoes and stockings and I washed his feet, and then he got a dry pair of my father's socks, and I washed his socks and hung them out to dry.

It was a huge experience for me so many years ago.

I am happy that everything is kept so nice and looks so good out at the grave. This is a big celebration today. Thank you for coming.



For her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday on 13 March 2015, Sue Westcott and Gail Michener gave Dorthea Madsen a miniature version of the plaque that had been unveiled at Englændergraven.

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