

**Pilot RAF Squadron Leader Stan Slater evaded
with the assistance of many Danish Resistance members and civilians**

70th anniversary of the shooting down of RAF Lancaster ME449

**Speech by Peter Slater
representative of the Stan Slater family**

**Bechs Hotel, Tarm, Denmark
12 March 2015**

My name is Peter Slater. I am the son of Stan Slater who was the pilot of ME449. After the war finished, Stan kept in touch with a number of people who were associated with the events of 12 and 13 March. Most notably with Anna Mørk, the English-speaking daughter of Frederik Kørvel. Anna and her father, together with Anna's mother and numerous other brave members of the Resistance helped three members of the crew, including my father, to evade capture and travel across Denmark and go on to the UK via Sweden.

What I would like to do is read extracts from a manuscript that was written by Frederik Kørvel in 1945. Originally it was really difficult for me to comprehend the risks that Danish people took helping our airmen, and Kørvel exemplifies that sort of risk.

Kørvel's recollection starts with:

One day at about 11 o'clock a work man from Østerbro, called Petersen the grocer, came home to us and said 'I say, can you help us? We've found an English airman'. 'Of course I'll help; if he can be saved, he must. Wait an hour or so and I will inform you. I must go on some business'.

Moving on. There was a member of the Resistance called Dr. Øllgaard and he did not believe that Frederik Kørvel had fully realized how dangerous this could be. Øllgaard said: *It's completely impossible for you to have an airman in your house with all those people there.*



Peter Slater
son of Stan Slater
Photo by Birthe Holme Kasch

And some of those people Kørvel had in his house were actually German soldiers who were billeted in the house down below. Frederik Kørvel would need to keep the airman upstairs in the bedrooms. Kørvel recalls:

Øllgaard still thought I should give it up. The war will last one or two months more, at the most. He was right, it lasted 2 months. And no harm will come to a British airman in a prisoners' camp for that short time. However, I insisted that I would not let an Englishman fall into the hands of the Germans. Then, truth to tell, they had another airman from the same aircraft.

That was Thomas Fairclough, and Frederik Kørvel said:

No, let him come too. The danger is the same with one as with two.

At six o'clock that evening, after he had been told about the two airman, Kørvel waited for his daughter to come home from the municipal office where she worked and there was nothing for him to do he said, but to tell her -- whether she liked it or not -- for hiding it from her was impossible.

Now I had an easy job of it. Instead of blaming me for the danger I was exposing both her and my wife to, not to speak of myself, she went into the cause heart and soul, saying 'So at length something happens in this hole of Quislings'. I thought, then she had better be told that I was a saboteur too. That too she took as a matter of course.

To which Frederik Kørvel added:

You could see that she took after her father.

Frederik apparently had taken part in blowing up the railway line at Ølgod in February of that year.

The two men, my father Stan Slater and Thomas Fairclough, were in the Kørvel house for just under two days.

Then Dr. Øllgaard asked me through Constable Gammelgaard to be on the new road at the recess opposite Skaarup's east of Ølgod at 12:30. So after dinner I took them out for a walk. I brought my bike. I took the route past the water tower. Four times we passed Germans, among them twice some officers. I saluted them as usual because they knew me through the two non-commissioned officers we had staying at my house.

What nerves! Then, 3 or 4 days later, after Frederik Kørvel had seen my father and Thomas Fairclough on their way:

Dr. Øllgaard tackles me again. There is trouble with an airman from the same aircraft who is staying in Lyne. They can not and dare not have him any more. I said 'Bring him here.'

So this is the third airman Frederik Kørvel is helping. Within an hour he was instructed to meet him that evening at 9:00 at the south gate of the churchyard. The third man was Ken Foster, the Flight Engineer, and he stayed with the Kørvels for 10 days. A long time to harbor a man under such difficult conditions.

But, all went well thanks to Anna who could translate everything from me to him so that all was done exactly as I wanted. All three airmen used my wife's and my bedroom while we slept

downstairs. I thought that was the best for our safety as I could better explain and manage things against curious Germans.

The days went by and the danger grew. An old woman, who stayed with us then, began to talk to other people. 'Who could be the man we have here?' 'Could he be a wounded person?' She had heard us talk to him in the other room Now I was aware there was imminent danger.

I go down to Dr. Øllgaard and tell him about all of this. He asked me 'Can't I keep him till Thursday?' This I think was Tuesday. I said Yes, but you must take responsibility if things fall out badly. Up to this day I will take it. And you need not be afraid that I will give anything away. My wife and daughter won't be involved because I will say they were forced by me and need only say that they dared not do otherwise. Though that is not true. They were piloting airmen through the kitchen and another room into the corridor to the lavatory, keeping guard and piloting them back again. My wife did that when I was not home. Face to face with me she sometimes cried with fear, rather fear that the old woman should do us harm. All this I explained to Dr. Øllgaard, who immediately took steps to get the airman away.

Øllgaard helped Ken Foster get away through other members of the Resistance. The worst tension was over. But as long as the men had not got safe out of the country, the danger was not over.

My father was very aware that had he been caught, he would be seen as a prisoner of war and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. But he was also very aware that had the Danish helpers been caught, they would have been shot by the Germans. It is amazing that so many Danes gave freely of their time and effort to help the airmen.

Just as a final note, you might have thought that all these events, and being shot down in Denmark, might have been enough to put my father off flying operationally. But actually just before the Pacific war ended in the Far East he was waiting for an appointment to act as a Pathfinder for the Tiger Force¹.

www.shotdownindenmark.com

¹ Stan Slater remained with the RAF post-war, retiring in 1970 with the rank of Group Captain.