

Speech by Hugo Bach Nielsen

A first responder at the crash site of Lancaster ME449

Reception held at Bechs Hotel, Tarm
12 March 2015

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



H. B. Nielsen and Kirsten Kolby
Photo by Birthe Holme Kasch

By coincidence, I met Gail Michener at the library here in Tarm back in 2012; and it was thanks to Inger Hansen who arranged that meeting. Had I not met her then, I would not be here today. Gail is resident in Canada and I live in Randers, a town in East Jutland. I am so pleased that we met, and happy to be here today.

Gail has asked me to talk about my experiences on the night of March 12, 1945. I was not a member of CB civilian protection¹, but whenever there was an air alarm, I met up at the command center in the basement of “The old peoples home” on Skolegade in Tarm. Thus, also on March 12th.

As we were aware that a British Lancaster bomber was shot down near Lyne, it was decided that Hans Hansen, who knew his way around the area, was to drive there in a small truck and that Niels Poulsen and I² should come along.

We were not the very first to reach the wreck. The first arrivals told us that all survivors were gone. We found no injured crew members in the wreck, but we found the two dead.

To make sure that the Germans did not find the dead, we decided that we should take them to Tarm in the truck to bring them to the hospital, where they could be placed in the morgue until a funeral could take place. A fourth person was now to join us on the trip to Tarm, but as

¹ Danish *Civilbeskyttelse*, literally *civil protection* and usually abbreviated as *CB*, was equivalent to the British *Air Raid Precautions (ARP)*.

² In March 1945, 18-year-old Hugo Bach Nielsen was a member of the local Resistance group *Luftbeskyttelse* led by Niels Poulsen. Hans Hansen was a *CB* member.

there was only room for three in the cab of the truck, I had to sit on the platform with the two dead on the trip to Tarm. The trip went fine without being stopped by the German authorities. We brought the two bodies into the hospital and went back to the command center.

As we sat and discussed the events of the evening, two German officers came by. They wanted to know if we knew the crash site of a British bomber, which was shot down south of Tarm. Since we knew that there was neither injured nor dead in the wreck we dared to say, "Yes, we know the crash site". We showed them Lyne on a map, but that was not enough. They demanded a man or two to show the way. We agreed that Hans Hansen and I went along.

There was not much conversation on the trip. They asked, however, if we had been out there. I lied and said "No" to make sure that they should not ask more questions, but I said that Hans Hansen knew the area and the crash site mentioned.

Close by the village Lyne we drove into the ditch. We had come to a crossing – a T-cross where you had to turn to the left or to the right. Instead of turning, the driver drove straight out and we ended in the ditch. Hans Hansen was what I would call a jolly fellow, and he said in a funny way "Well – here you have to turn". It was not a deep ditch and we were five men, the driver included, so it was easy to get the car on the road again and we could go on.

After we had stayed at the wreck for about half an hour, we drove back to Tarm. As I listened to the talk of the German officers, I understood that they were surprised there were neither injured nor dead in the wreck. They also mentioned parachutes. Home again, Hans Hansen and I set off at the command center.

I do not know how the Germans discovered that there were two bodies at the hospital or how Chr. Andersen, the owner of a horse cart, was ordered to run the two dead – Porter and Morris – into the forest. If Chr. Andersen ever told anyone before the 4th or 5th May 1945 about the place where Porter and Morris had been hidden I do not know. Of course I had heard that they were hidden in the forest but, as I remember, I heard nothing about the exact place until 5th May.