

Two Escapes: Capt. Jack Ilfrey

Capt. Jack Ilfrey, an ace who ended the war with eight victories, twice escaped capture. In November 1942, on a ferry flight from England to North Africa, Ilfrey diverted to an airfield in neutral Portugal because of a malfunctioning drop tank. The Portuguese seized his P-38 and Ilfrey was to be interned. However, while sitting in the cockpit showing the Portuguese how to fly the now refuelled aircraft, Ilfrey quickly started it up, took off and flew it to Gibraltar.

On June 12, 1944, six days after the Allies invaded Normandy, Capt. Ilfrey was shot down by anti-aircraft fire while strafing a train near Angers, France. After



bailing out of his burning P-38, he evaded until he met Jean Voileau. His family, at great risk to themselves, hid Ilfrey for two weeks in their home. The Voileau family gave him food, clothing, false identification, and a bicycle.

Ilfrey posed as a deaf and mute French farmer named "Jacques Robert." Helped by several French civilians along the way, he rode the bicycle about 150 miles to friendly lines in Normandy. Unlike most successful evaders, Ilfrey returned to fly combat missions over Europe until the war ended.

Photo Ilfrey wearing the clothing used in his evasion (U.S. Air Force photo)

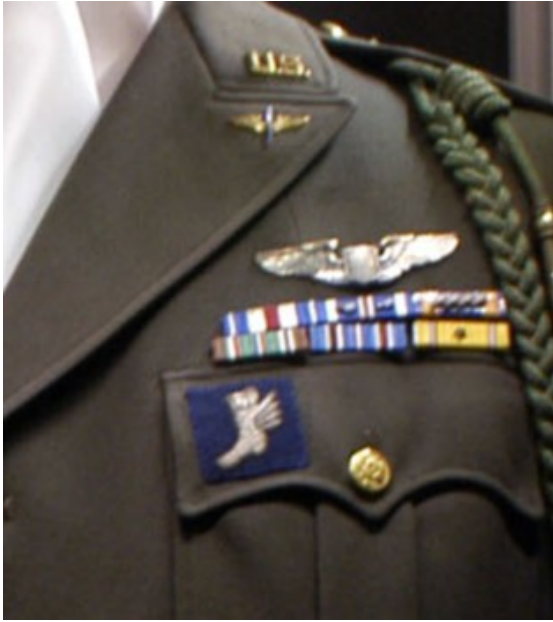


Photo Ilfrey's winged boot for evading in France(U.S. Air Force photo)

Source for article

<https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196024/two-escapes-capt-jack-ilfrey/>