

PEOPLE PROFILE

Flight Lieutenant Cy Grant



FACT FILE

D.O.B 8 November 1919
P.O.B British Guiana
Years of Service 1941-1945
Rank Flight Lieutenant
Branch Royal Air Force (RAF)
Engagements World War II
Awards Honorary Fellow University of Surrey
Other Work
 Barrister
 Author
 Chairman/co-founder of
 Drum Arts Centre
 Director of Concord Multicultural Arts
 Singer
 Broadcaster

Cy Grant moved from British Guiana to the UK to join the RAF, as the year before the RAF had removed its bar and allowed blacks from the colonies to join its ranks.

By 1943 Grant had received a commission and was one of the few black officers in the RAF. March 1943 was the start of the Battle of the Ruhr and whilst he was on third mission Grant's Lancaster Bomber was shot down over Holland on its return to England.

He managed to bail out, escaping serious injury and landed in a field. A local farmer took him to his farm and gave him a hot meal. A local policeman was informed of Grant's presence and handed him over to the Germans. He was taken to an interrogation camp in Amsterdam before being transported with other POWs to Stalag Luft III. Later he



was sent to another compound for Officers a few miles away.

For Grant the worst part of his imprisonment were the last few months of the war, as the Russian army advanced the Germans evacuated the camp. Grant

and his fellow prisoners were forced to march in deep snow, with little rations, sleeping in barns and then being transported in cattle trucks to Lukenwalde, just south of Berlin. By the end of the war, they were freed by the Russians who ripped down the fences with their tanks.

After the war he studied law and qualified as a barrister but went onto become an actor and entertainer. In the 1970s he founded Drum the London based black arts centre and was the director of the Concord Multicultural Festivals in the 1980s.



An aerial photograph taking during a daylight raid on an oil refinery in the Ruhr.

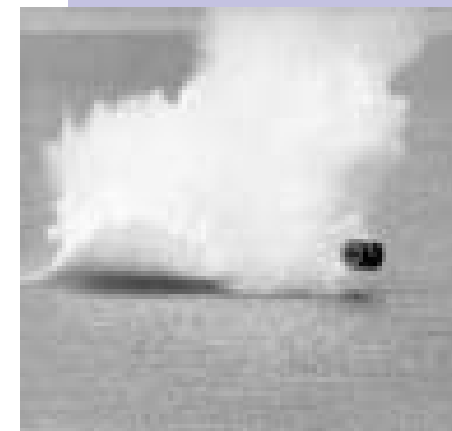


Stalag Luft III prisoner of war camp, scene of the 'Great Escape' in 1944.

BATTLE OF THE RUHR

The Battle of the Ruhr was a five month long campaign of strategic bombing of a major industrial area of Germany called the Ruhr. The targets included armament factories, synthetic oil plants, coke plants, steelworks and dams.

Operation Chastise was part of this battle and the official name for attacks on Germans dams on 16-17 May 1943. The RAF Squadron that carried out the attacks were known as the 'Dambusters' and they used specially developed 'bouncing bombs.'



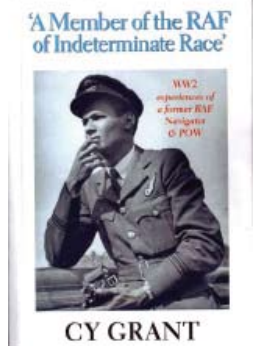
Operation Chastise: the attack on the Moehne, Eder and Sorpe Dams by No. 617 Squadron RAF on the night of 16/17 May 1943. No. 617 Squadron practice dropping the 'Upkeep' weapon at Reculver bombing range, Kent. Second launch sequence (4): the bomb rises from the water after its first 'bounce'.

A publisher of books, papers and poems he wrote his war memoirs in 2006. Cy Grant currently lives in North London. Cy Grant was the first black person to appear regularly on British television with appearances on BBC's

Tonight programme in the 1950s singing the news in calypso, BBC's sci-fi show *Blake's 7* in the 1970s. He also provided the voice of Lieutenant Green in Gerry Anderson's *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*.



MC, MP (Secretary of State for the Colonies) and Air Marshal Sir Arthur Barratt, KCB, (Air Officer Commanding in Chief Technical Training Command) inspect new West Indian recruits to the RAF. Thousands of West Indian volunteers were trained and employed as ground crew.



Cy Grant published his memoirs under the title '*A Member of the RAF of Indeterminate Race**'. He got the title from a caption below a picture of him in a German Newspaper in July 1943 "*Ein Mitglied der Royal Air Force von unbestimmbarer Rasse!*" This was shown as propaganda for the German war machine, implying that the RAF had to resort to recruiting people of an unknown race to fight their wars for them.

*Published by Woodfield Publishing (2007)

Dutch author Hans Klootwijk wrote a book called '*Lancaster W4827: Failed to Return*' which told the story of Cy Grant and his crew after their plane was shot down over Holland. The book is based on research carried out by Hans' father Joost who was just 11 years old when the bomber crashed into a farmhouse in his village.

Klootwijk and Grant have since teamed up and created a website dedicated to the Caribbean aircrew who served in WWII at www.caribbeanaircrew-ww2.com