



Alert... Luka & Treana

Collapse mum is saved by blind son

By ALEX WEST

A MUM who fell unconscious at home was saved by her four-year-old son who is virtually blind. Little Luka White got help when Treana Richards, 31, collapsed as she dressed him for school. The single mum had taught him how to phone in emergencies. But he knew he would not be able to locate her mobile upstairs. Despite very limited vision, he let himself out of the house and knocked on a neighbour's door in Martock, Somerset. He told Lesley Aldridge: "You must come quick, my mummy's poorly." She rang 999 and Treana was taken to hospital and treated for stomach pains and dangerously low blood pressure. Luka was born with a rare genetic disorder and is registered blind. Treana said: "I'm so proud of him. He's very clever and loving. What he did was amazing."

Star Joni on mend

JONI Mitchell is progressing well after her brain aneurysm, says fellow singer Judy Collins. The Big Yellow Taxi singer, 71, was found collapsed at her LA home in March and spent two months in hospital. Fellow US singer Judy, 76, wrote online: "I have heard from a close mutual friend that Joni is walking, talking, painting some, doing much rehab every day and making good progress. I have another friend who went through the thing similar it does take a long time. I will try my best to see our songbird in LA in the coming weeks."

Fired app for rescue

RESCUE crews at a house blaze needed Google Translate to ask a Russian nanny if anyone was trapped inside. She was the only one they saw at the kitchen fire, but they used the mobile app to make sure as she spoke no English. Fireman Tony Pascall said: "She couldn't read the screen and her glasses were in the kitchen. We had to get them." The woman, who was alone, was given oxygen in Weybridge, Surrey.

BUENOS BAREYS
Argentina's Playboy mag has vowed to defy US chiefs' ban on nudity.

BUNGLED DNA TESTS FOIL FAMILY'S BID TO IDENTIFY BODY



THE Sun is fighting to bring a lost Second World War pilot home at last. JOHN NICHOL, captured by Iraqi forces, above, when shot down during the 1991 Gulf War, investigates.

THE remains of crashed World War Two pilot Dennis Copping lay undiscovered in the Sahara for decades after the conflict. But they are now at the centre of a new battle — with Government red tape, the fall-out from the Arab Spring and the looming threat of IS.

Flight Sergeant Copping was just 24 when his plane, a US Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk fighter, crashed in the Egyptian desert in 1942. No trace of him or his aircraft was found. Then, in 2012, 70 years after he disappeared, the plane was discovered by amateur archaeologists, almost perfectly preserved by the arid desert conditions.

A short distance away were some human remains. Could it be Dennis? And might his family finally be able to hold the full military funeral this hero of the skies deserved?

Sadly, in the three years since the discovery, the family's hopes have been thwarted, and they have now been told the Egyptian authorities have tested the remains and were unable to extract a DNA sample to confirm their identity. But an investigation by me and The Sun has found huge holes in these claims from Cairo. A Freedom of Information request in the UK uncovered a letter from the Egyptian government to the British Embassy in Cairo about the DNA test results.

Glaring error

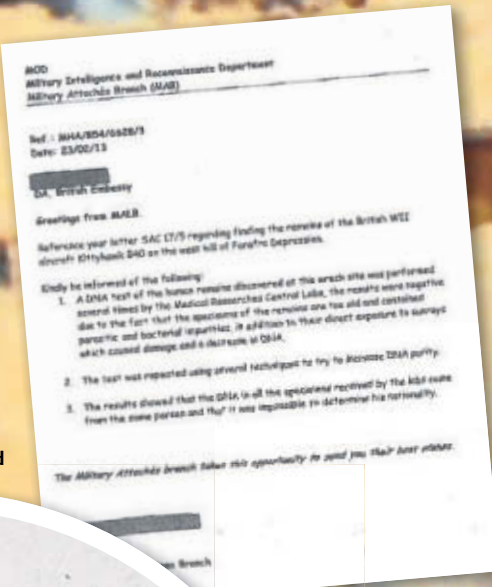
It claimed DNA could not be extracted from the bones because they were too old — a claim that experts have said is rubbish. The letter then said the DNA from all the bones came from the same person. You don't need to be an expert, or even have a science GCSE, to spot the glaring error. How can they say the DNA from the bones matches if they couldn't extract any? The Egyptians' DNA report was accepted without question by Britain's Ministry of Defence and Embassy staff, which is baffling. But efforts by the family to double-check the tests or do further searches have been hampered by the political upheaval following the Arab Spring, the uprising that has rocked the Middle East in the past few years.

The situation was made even worse when IS took over huge swathes of Iraq and Syria last summer. Jihadists in Libya pledged allegiance to IS and have now crossed the Egyptian border into the very region where Dennis crashed.

Last month Egyptian soldiers hunting insurgents in the desert mistakenly killed eight Mexican tourists, and the worsening security situation makes it impossible to revisit the desert to search for more remains. The Sun has made repeated requests to the Egyptian government for information about the remains that were found. But the questions which could easily solve this mystery remain unanswered. Where are the remains now? Can an independent expert review the DNA test results? Can he carry out his own



MYSTERY... Egyptian letter and below, pilot Dennis the day before he crashed



I'll fight to solve 73-year riddle of WW2 ace pilot

Says Gulf War hero JOHN NICHOL



tests to check, once and for all, if the remains were Dennis's? From personal experience, I can imagine every raw emotion the flight sergeant must have gone through as he tried to remain airborne all those years ago. Almost exactly 50 years later I too crashed in the desert — this time in Iraq in the first Gulf War. I was captured by Saddam Hussein's henchmen, held hostage, beaten, tortured and paraded on TV. But compared to Dennis, I was lucky — I came home. Dennis's grieving family were denied the one solace of saying goodbye, as his body could not be found. The young hero had grown up in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, the youngest of five brothers and sisters who lived with dentist dad Sydney and mum

Adelaide. He joined up in December 1940 at the age of 23 — the same age I was when I was commissioned as an RAF officer. By summer 1942 he was serving with 260 Squadron, part of the British force trying to halt Nazi Rommel's advance across North Africa towards the Suez Canal. On June 28, he and another pilot were ordered to fly two damaged Kittyhawks to a repair unit. It should have been a routine 40-minute flight. But soon after take-off, Dennis inexplicably departed from the agreed flight path. The other pilot radioed him and tried to get his attention, all to no avail. We shall

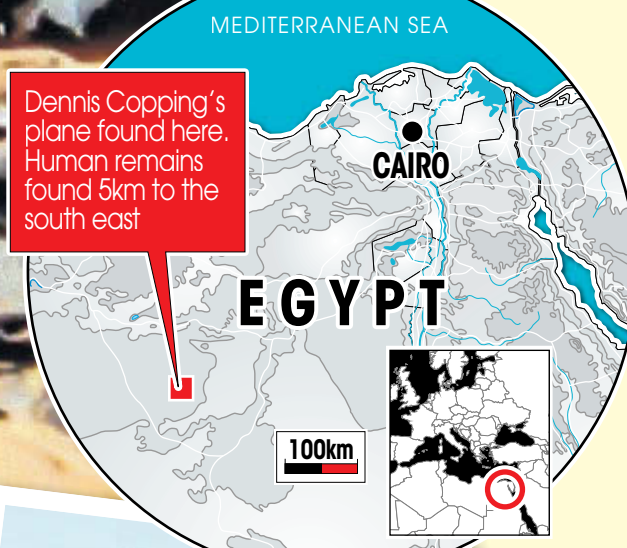
never know why Dennis followed the wrong course, but what we do know is that he eventually crashed, deep in the Western Desert, around 150 miles from the Libyan border. Evidence at the site of a makeshift shelter and other equipment suggests he survived the crash. It is hard to imagine his fear and confusion when he finally realised the situation. I well remember standing up in the vastness of the Iraqi desert after ejecting from my burning Tornado jet in January 1991. I had gone from my position as a modern knight of the air to nothing more than a very afraid, very alone human being, deep behind enemy lines. But you have to fight on, to try every

avenue in the hope of survival. And I have no doubt that is what Dennis did as he apparently tried bravely to walk out of the desert. But that area is one of the driest on earth. Decades can pass without a single drop of rain and Dennis is likely to have succumbed either to his injuries or severe dehydration. Metal button Nothing more was heard of him until that remarkable discovery in February 2012. In June that year the bones were found, around 5km from the crash site and next to a rocky outcrop that provided the only possible shade in the area. A scrap of white cloth similar to Dennis's parachute was found just a few inches away and a metal button with the inscription "Made by SSD

Bros 1939" was discovered close by. Experts who have studied photographs of the cloth are almost certain it comes from a parachute. We cannot be 100 per cent sure it was Dennis's but that is the most likely explanation. And we cannot know for certain the button was his — but why else would a British button made in 1939 be in the vastness of the Sahara? Back home, Dennis's family was delighted at the news. Relatives sent DNA samples to Egypt and the long-hoped-for military funeral now looked a distinct possibility. His nephew and next of kin John Pryor-Bennett, 65, told me: "Dennis has always been in my thoughts. My nana — his mother — always had his picture on her mantelpiece and she would have a little commem-

oration on his birthday. For years they left his bedroom just as it was when he went to war. "My dad would talk about my uncle who had been a fighter pilot. "So when I heard about his plane being found it was a real tingle-down-the-spine moment." An MoD spokesman said: "The MoD does not have the resources to actively search for remains of service personnel from any conflicts. However, we do become involved when remains are found. "At this point efforts will be made to identify the remains, trace relatives and organise an appropriate burial in the country where they were located." The Egyptian authorities need to come clean and tell us where the remains are so they can be re-tested — and the British Embassy in Cairo

should press them to do so. As for Dennis's relatives — just like an RAF pilot downed behind enemy lines — they refuse to give up hope. Surrounded by pictures of his beloved uncle, John told me: "Dennis was a brave young man who died for his country. "The least we can do is to try to find him so we can have a proper funeral and lay him to rest with the rest of his family." **Additional reporting: ROBIN PERRIE** ● John Nichol's latest book, *After the Flood — What the Dambusters Did Next*, is published by William Collins, priced £20.



Dennis Copping's plane found here. Human remains found 5km to the south east



CLUES... investigators with fabric thought to be from a parachute, the metal button and fragments of bone, below, found near the crash site, above

