

The document transcribed on the following pages reproduces the statement of 1st Lt. Gene R. Goodrick, taken from Missing Air Crew Report #11111, describing the events occurring aboard his aircraft during a mission on 30 November 1944 to attack oil targets in the area of Zeitz, Germany. The aircraft was damaged by flak, and four crew members bailed out. Goodrick and the remaining crew continued the mission, bombing the target and returning the aircraft to Grafton Underwood airfield. For his role in this mission, Goodrick was awarded the Silver Star medal.

This is not a memoir dimmed by time. This statement captures the words of Lt. Goodrick on the day of the mission. It clearly has not been edited to put the facts in any order - it is just what he said (or wrote), as he said (or wrote) it.

The transcription has reproduced the exact wording of the original document, including typographic errors. Insofar as possible, the original spacing has also been preserved.

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STATEMENT BY 1ST LT. GOODRICK, GENE R, O-760823, LEADER OF HIGH ELEMENT OF
LEAD SQUADRON OF 41st "B" GROUP IN A/C #800.

We made the first bomb run and there were big contrails, and we caught a collision heading from another squadron coming in from the left. Major Koehne said he couldn't bomb so we did a right run and I figured we would go back and make another run. We did drop down about 3,000 feet to get out of the contrails and turned back on the bomb run, and were pretty well along on the bomb run when flak started getting accurate. About two minutes before bombs were away we got hit and a large explosion took place both inside and outside the ship. It bounced me right out of the seat. I got excited. I heard this hissing noise behind me and smoke started filling the cockpit. I looked back and there were sparks where the oxygen was burning. It was coming up along the wall in back of the cockpit. Flames were coming out from under the flight deck and the cockpit filled up with smoke. The engineer got out of the turret immediately upon the explosion and was making quite a bit of noise back there so I thought he was trying to put the fire out. The fire was on the pilot's left system. I kept yelling for the engineer to get the fire extinguisher but I later found out the fire extinguisher hadn't been used and I told the co-pilot to go back and help him out. I was trying to hold the ship in formation. We were flying close formation. The co-pilot went back and I continued to fly the ship. About this time I noticed the hatch below was opened, so I figured the only reason for that was that they had bailed out. Therefore I salvoed the bombs myself. The bomb bay doors had been opened previously, before the bombardier went out. The bombs went away with the rest of the formation. After bombs away there was no particular need for me to stay with the rest of the formation. My right wingman was flying very close, so I dove down below so if the ship blew up and to keep from running into another ship. I then noticed both the engineer and co-pilot had gone. I didn't have any oxygen. My oxygen system was hit. It was the one that was burning. My system all burned out. They opened the escape hatch and I think that is what put the fire out. I got out of formation and I realized I didn't have any oxygen. I had been off of oxygen about four minutes. I looked down and checked and found I didn't have any oxygen so I tried to get a walk around bottle. I set the ship on AFCE and got out of the seat into the hatch trying to get a walk around bottle broken loose. I never did get one loose. I was getting very weak and I had told one of the gunners to come up and help me out, and I told him I didn't have any oxygen. The ball turret operator came up. I had not ordered him to get out of the ball turret

all this time. He came up and put me on the co-pilot's oxygen and I put him up in the top turret. We had dropped to about 16,500 feet. About that time there were three fighters in the vicinity at 2 o'clock high. They were too far away to be identified, so we kept calling them out and maneuvering around until we found out they were P51's. I then got him out of the top turret and I was trying to get back into formation with some group as we didn't have a navigator. We took a heading west and I saw this formation of bombers about five miles ahead and 7,000 feet higher so I started going towards it and ducked into a thin layer of stratus clouds. Stayed in there for about three or four minutes and came back and there were still fighters around the area. Somebody asked the group leader to fire some flares. About two minutes after I heard this over the V.H.F. I saw these flare trails and I knew they were up ahead so I called him and told him I was moving in formation. We were climbing very fast and I picked out what I thought was our formation and I was correct. It was our group. The hydraulic and electrical system had been shot out and the wheels were going up and down. Both landing gear motors had burned out. The right landing gear was locked down and the left was burned out. We joined the high element and came back to the base. We didn't have any flaps or lights. We lowered the wheels but didn't have any brakes when I hit the runway. I didn't know how I was going to stop the plane. I was going to ground loop it, but the ball turret gunner didn't know where the tail wheel lock release was so we just ran off the end of the runway. All the remaining crew did a wonderful job of sticking with me. Right after we were hit somebody said, "Let's get out of this thing." I think it was either the co-pilot or the engineer. After that I noticed that everyone up front was gone, so I called back and they were all staying there. I told them we could make it back OK. None were injured.

The electrical system was destroyed by the burst underneath turrets, flaps, bomb bay doors, wheels and landing lights inoperative. I hit the ground around 125 or so. The only thing I was landing by was, the ship ahead of me. My radio compass was inoperative. After I followed him all the way around I could then see the outline of the runway. The A/C number was 800. It will be out at least a week. Twenty-seven holes in the left wing alone. I don't know whether any main spars or tanks were hit or not.

There was a dent in either the Navigator or bombardier's helmet. This may have helped influenced their jump. Also, we had just seen two bombers blow up right before the target. There was a lot of flame in the A/C. The hydraulic fluid was down in there burning with the oxygen. I think the blast from the open hatch was what blew the fire out. The men that bailed out were not my original crew. Most of them had many missions.

I don't think the engineer was the first man out. Within a matter of seconds after the oxygen explosion the navigator and bombardier definitely bailed out and then the engineer and co-pilot. I motioned to the fire and he motioned that he understood but then he bailed out.

I had four engines all the way. I had no trouble staying in formation. The elevator had several large holes torn in it. The ball turret gunner cranked the wheels up over Germany but when I got over the base the tail gunner let them down. The ball turret gunner helped in the landing. There is a hand pump on the co-pilots side which comes right down out of the bottom of the hydraulic pump and he pumped this hand pump all the way down. It slowed the plane up very little however. He called off the air speed and helped me line up with the runway, and also pointed out the planes as we came around. I couldn't have gone around again after I had gotten on the runway because I might not have been able to locate the field again.

//signed//
GENE R. GOODRICK,
1st Lt. Air Corps,
Pilot, A/C 800.

THIS IS A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

//signed//
J. R. WYATT,
Captain, Air Corps,