

(1)

Re: ANTWERP

August 31, 1992

Dear Obie & Grace;

These are some of the incidences that I could remember, others come to my mind as I write about this experience, of our fatal day, June 22, 1943. It would take me a long time to rewrite as I go along writing about this event.

This is what I saw on our fatal mission of 22 June, "43". As I know I saw more than any other crew member on our plane. Before my intercom was shot out I called to you, to let you know that guns were inoperable and to turn around and go back, you answered--that I continue to track the enemy planes as if I intended to fire at them, I automatically became an observer of positions of the FW 190' coming in at our plane. Still charging my guns to operate, without success. One plane came in at 8 O'clock low, firing at the under-side of our plane, possibly hitting Cooke' position, Cooke was still firing his 50', I presumed he was not hit. The second plane came in at 9 O'clock directly at "Waterman" which at that time I did not know that he got hit. As we approached the target and the bombs were dropped, I followed them down as far as I could see them and waited for the clustered explosion of the bombs, to my estimation "Turners" accuracy was a "near-miss" he either hit the target or finished off what the other bombers missed.

I then resumed my attention to enemy fighter planes coming in, (my ball-turret was still in operation vertical and horizontal) as I watched another at 6 O'clock low, this FW 190 came in firing and was responsible for hitting the underside of the fuselage shattering the plexiglass on the ball-turret obscuring my vision and crippling the operation of the turret putting it in horizontal position, it locked at 6 O'clock pointing to-ward the tail position. From there on, my observance was blacked-out by the shattered plexiglass. The fighters FW 190' took their turn on taking the final step in downing our bomber.

I saw most of the attacks come from 6 O'clock low and at 9 O'clock. These positions were vulnerable, because of extreme damage done to these positions and they knew they were safe from gun-fire.

Moments later, minutes I think, but it seemed longer--the plane started to vibrate. I started to pray, thinking that I will go down with the plane, at that instant the ball-turret dropped to vertical position enabling me to get out of the turret--not knowing that "Counihan" released me. I only found out this when he called me on the phone, "1989-1990"--46 years later that he was responsible for my release. On getting out of the turret I immediately put on my chest-chute, approached "Counihan" as he was firing at a plane coming in at 3 O'clock I then noticed "Waterman" slouched up against the fuselage--his side had holes (fuselage) the size of basket-balls and base-balls, I surmised it was flak and 20 millimeters, (Counihan left me out of the turret at that time and would have noticed "Waterman" lying there, he must not have been hit at that time) "WATERMAN" was dead, he did not move, he did not hesitate. At the same time I saw "Cooke" he was crawling forward from his tail position when the plane nosed over and into a slight spin, 50 cal. ammo boxes started to fly, one grazed the left side of my head, I became pinned to the ball-turret, with another box jamming my left ankle to the floor.

"Cooke" never got to the waist position, I saw him spinning around with the ammo boxes. I do not know if he was wounded or knocked unconscious by the ammo boxes.



(2)

Re: ANTWERP

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In his position "Cooke" could not bail out, he did not hesitate. I realized weightlessness and centripetal force.

Reed was still in the Radio position at that time, we were still in the plane, falling at least a few hundred feet, when the center part of the plane cracked in two at the ball-turret position. I did not see anyone bail out, I assumed that all of us came out at one time. I did not know that the front part of our plane exploded.

Coming down I counted (6) chutes including myself with the seventh chute appearing last and falling fast with large holes in the chute, that chute was "Tricketts" he was identified on the ground by a name-plate on his jacket his face was not recognizable.

Doug Turner is a mystery--the thing that bothers me is; when the German intelligence questioned me about him. I thought he made it back to England or hiding out some-where in Antwerp. The Jerries threatened me with a firing squad if I did not tell them where he possibly could be. "Turner" disappeared in mid air possibly by a freakish hit from anti-aircraft fire. "Tricket" also could have been hit by anti-aircraft fire.

Obie--I put this letter to-gether with the best of my knowledge, some of my military records have been destroyed.

Sincerely,

WERBIE