

17 Apr '43

But, like most of his fellow 306th officers, his trail soon made its way to Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan where he would spend nearly two years.

1st Lt. Frank K. Watson was flying as Casey's wingman. Right after bombs away Watson's airplane was hit hard by flak in the tail and almost collided with Casey's plane. The plane wanted to slow roll but Watson and his copilot, 1st Lt. Robert B. Kemp, kept it upright as the German fighters swarmed in. An ME 109 with gun blisters underneath each wing hosed the aircraft with 20 mm cannon fire. With his controls shot out and fires developing, Watson ordered his crew to bail out.

He himself had trouble making his way out of the smoke-filled cockpit and fell between the pilots' seats into the nose crawl way. He went out the nose hatch and landed in a pasture where he was kept under restraint by two German farmers until soldiers shortly arrived to pick him up. Other survivors besides Watson and Kemp were Sgt. Robert E. Hansen, nose gunner; Sgt. George Kormish, waist, and Sgt. Roy E. Livingston, engineer.

2nd Lt. Calvin O. Bjornsgaard, navigator, died of wounds due to lack of medical attention. S/Sgt. Arthur J. Sanders, waist, also died later of wounds. Killed that day were Sgt. Reed M. Bottomley, ball; S/Sgt. Lawrence E. Davis, tail; and T/Sgt. Wilbur R. Giraud, radio.

Capt. Walter Smiley, leading the high squadron, was attacked by fighters but made it across the target and out to sea, only to turn back when he evidently realized that his plane was doomed. The plane hit the water before reaching land and there were no survivors. With him that day were Lts. Avery L. Ewan, copilot; Wilbur W. Breunig, navigator; and Martin M. Strauss, bombardier; and T/Sgt. Donald B. Hepler, T/Sgt. Raymond C. Clifton, S/Sgt. Roderick C. Clark, S/Sgt. William R. Payne, S/Sgt. Lawrence J. Sliff and S/Sgt. Roy K. Staiff.

Lt. Robert C. Miller's 368th plane was hit on the bomb run and severely damaged. When the group made a turn off the target, Miller was unable to turn his ship to remain with the formation. Continuing on a straight course, he quickly became a target for the Luftwaffe fighters. The number 2 engine by this time was burning fiercely and Miller ordered bailout. Jesse Wade, one of the waist gunners, had a foot nearly severed by a 20 mm. shell. Edward H. Small, engineer, says that soldiers and farmers were waiting for him as he landed in a field, but a couple of shots of whiskey eased his concerns.

Others of the crew surviving that day were Lt. John D. Teare, copilot; Lt. Jack S. Shaeber, navigator; Lt. James C. Shelley, bombardier; T/Sgt. Joseph M. Spiro; S/Sgt. William J. Phillips, ball; S/Sgt. Edwin A. Truscott, waist, and Sgt. Milton K. Williams, tail.

Lt. Fred D. Gillogly was leading the second element in the low squadron and was undamaged until hit by flak over the target. With only one engine feathered, Gillogly and his crew watched Smiley's plane go down in the water, saw Judas leave the formation, and