

Aug 16, 1991

Dale,

I met a former member of the 423rd this week, and he would like to 'join our association. Please add his name to the roster:

S/SGT. JACK STRICKLAND
190 BELCOURT LANE
AURORA, OHIO 44022

sent 8/20/91

STB

Jack was a waist gunner. If you have an extra copy of the July 91 Echoes, I'm sure he would appreciate it, as there are several mentions of the 423rd in it.

Thanks,

Sal Angelle

P.S. I told Jack about the Pittsburgh reunion and sent him a registration form.

March 18, 1944

Angelle

Dear Russell,
while serving with the 367th Squadron I kept a diary. One event which I described in detail was the gunnery mission of March 9, 1945 with the tragic loss of Lt. Billy Miessler and several of his crew. I flew with Lt. Dan Kingley, and with our flight engineer Werner Kennedy, dropped the rubber dingies which saved the lives of two of the crew. Members of the crew of St. Robert Vielle were lost. Vielle and others of his crew were lost on April 14 when Vielle's crew crashed on the Isle of Man. The double tragedy left only Millard Oscherwitz, navigator, as survivor of the original crew.

I thought that this would be an interesting story for Echo. Edit as you wish.

Sincerely yours,
Sal R. Angelle

Dear Russell,

May 26, 1995

Enclosed is a photo of my crew of the 367th Squadron, arrived at Thurleigh February 4, 1945 and remained until the end of the war.

FRONT ROW:

- * WERNER KENNEDY, FLIGHT ENGINEER
- * SAL ANGELLE, TURRET/GUNNER
- * EARL HARTLEY, BALL TURRET GUNNER
- KENNETH WESNER, RADIO OPERATOR

BACK ROW:

- * NORMAN NORQUIST, TAIL GUNNER
- ROBERT OLSEN, NAVIGATOR
- FRANK LYNCH, BOMBARDIER
- DONALD KINGSLEY, PILOT
- * STEVEN CRETEKOS, CO-PILOT
- * CURRENTLY ON OUR ROSTER,

KINGSLEY IS DECEASED.

WESNER, OLSEN, AND LYNCH ARE UNACCOUNTED FOR AS YET.

Hope the photo will be printed in Echoes soon.

Regards,
Sal Angelle

1335 AVALON DRIVE
MADISON, OHIO 44057
MARCH 18, 1998

Angelle

Dear Bob,

At the Orlando reunion last November
I made a donation to the Eighth Air
Force museum with a check for \$100.

Enclosed is another check for \$100
to the museum. At the meeting of
the Association you advised us that
a donation of \$200 to the museum

would entitle the donor to have his
name put on the brick wall of the
306th exhibit. Please arrange for

this as: SAL R. ANGELLE 367TH.

I will look forward to seeing it
at the Savannah reunion in December.

Regards,
Sal R. Angelle

Good
RMA

Earlier do for \$100
rec'd at Orlando reunion.

Don't know anything about a promise to put his
name on a brick wall at Museum for a contribution
of \$200. RMA House

21 February 1997

Dear Sal:

In responding to your letter of 18 Feb, I am afraid I cannot give you much hope for medals. This was not a combat mission, and most decorations are given for action in the face of the enemy.

There are decorations for heroic action not involving enemy action, such as the Soldier's Medal or the Legion of Merit for heroism not involving the enemy. We had several men who received the Soldier's Medal, about 10 during the war, and we had some of Legion of Merit medals presented as well, probably not as many as 10.

I was aware that the DFCs were cut out, or way down in numbers, late in the war. I would suppose it was some non-combat man in 8AF headquarters who reread the requirements and decided we should cut them down. As a friend told General Eaker, medals weren't worth a damn, except to show to your grandchildren. He always thought the Silver Star he received later was for his brass in telling the general just what he thought. Ground men were extremely jealous of the fly boys and their medals (perhaps they attracted more British women!).

In order to get anything moving on medals for the activities of the rescuers, I doubt that you can go far without signatures of the squadron commander or operations officer, and none of those men are now living. There is nothing to prevent your starting some action, now, and I would suggest that perhaps an appropriate person to get in touch with would be your congressman or a senator. Sometimes they like to get involved because of the favorable press they gain if it is all successful.

I'll be happy to provide serial numbers and what other data I may have for your effort.

Good luck,

1335 Anaton Drive
Madison, Ohio 44057
February 18, 1997/20

Angelle

Dear Russ,

My most sincere compliments on your fine editing of my story. The final result was concise and contained all the pertinent elements of the original. I have already received a letter about it from Esther Kennedy, wife of Werner Kennedy, with whom I dropped the disguise. I also received a phone call from Clarence Alred, ball turret gunner of the original crew of Hellcat Hattie. He called from Salt Lake City and we talked for over an hour. Alred told me that his tail gunner took many photos, including the plane and crew. I told him that you were looking for a photo of the plane showing the names, and he will try to get one for you. From your editing I could see that you researched other sources, and I appreciate your efforts.

Russ, in the late months of the war, citations other than the Air Medal, became increasingly scarce. I don't know if you were there at the time, when Captain Butterfield told us at a briefing that the Distinguished Flying Cross would be awarded only when extraordinary performance was displayed, and not upon completion of a specified number of missions, or completion of a tour of duty, as had been the practice.

After the rescue incident of which I wrote, we expected that some of our crew would be recommended for the DFC; at least Kingsley, Kennedy, and myself, who were in the principal roles. Of course, nothing ever came of it. But can this still be done? Even after all the years since, awards are still being made for performances during the war.

During a chat at the Las Vegas reunion, I recall that you mentioned that Kingsley had been chastised for looting formation without authorization. I had not heard that before. Could that have been the reason that citations were not made?

(over)

I had previously thought of raising this matter, but wouldn't know where to begin or who to contact. I'm sure that Vivian Kinsley and Esther Kennedy would appreciate the recognition, and I certainly would as well. I have corresponded with both of them and was able to visit Esther Kennedy here in Ohio. I did not mention to either of them the possibility of a citation. If our breaking formation was the reason that citations were not made, it seems harsh. Those men down in the water were our friends. We had known them for almost a year, and none of our crew needed to note on trying to help them.

I'd be interested in your evaluation, and any suggestions you might have. By the way, I have been corresponding with three others on our crew, all that we have been able to locate, and we are all going to the Orlando reunion for a reunion of our own.

Hope you can respond soon.

Sincerely yours,
Sal

A RESCUE REMEMBERED

It was a bright, sunny day in March, clear visibility, ideal for a mission. For March 9, 1945, the 367th squadron was not scheduled a combat mission. Instead we were assigned a gunnery practice mission over the Wash. Since we were to take off at noon, we ate an early meal. In the briefing room we were told about our mission, that a plane flown by Capt. Cogswell, would tow a sleeve at which we were to fire. Just before we went into the briefing room, I saw Lt.. Wilfred Miessler, popularly known as Billy, and he said "Sal, I have a couple of old English coins which I think you would like. They should fit right into your collection." Billy knew that I had been collecting coins of each series, and knew what I had been looking for. After the briefing as we left the briefing room, he said, "See me right after we get back, I have them in my quarters."

That was the last I was to see of Billy Miessler.

Our crew was composed of Lt. Don Kingsley, pilot, Lt. Patten, co-pilot, Lt. Frank Lynch, bombardier, Sgt. Werner Kennedy, flight engineer, Sgt Ken Wesner, radio, myself as waist gunner, Sgt. Earl Hartley, ball turret and Sgt. Norm Norquist, tail gunner. Before boarding our ship, I gave Norquist my camera, to take some pictures of the formation, and possibly some firing of the gunnery. With such good flying weather, we assembled in formation in a short time. The target ship came into view on the left side, towing a red sleeve. It looked the size of a cigarette being pulled by a

black thread. The formation was tight, almost combat conditions; one ship was so close to us, that I had few opportunities to fire at the target without hitting the other ship. After about a dozen passes at the target ship, at about 4:00, Norquist reported that number three engine on Billy Miessler's plane, was smoking. It was on the right-hand side, so I ran to that side and saw what he had pointed out. Next Norquist shouted "Hey the tail gunner has just bailed out." I knew it was Bob Harrison, who had been on another crew, and was only assigned to Billy Miessler's crew for that one day. Harrison had been training with us since we were in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Miessler then pulled his ship back out of formation and began losing altitude. Number three engine was on fire. Our navigator, Bob Olsen, began entering what Norquist and I were saying over the intercom, in his log. Before a minute had elapsed, the entire wing section around number three engine was on fire and the crew had begun the bail out. Most of Miessler's crew had trained with us in Rapid City, South Dakota, and we knew them well.

There was some short talk over our intercom system. Then our pilot, Don Kingsley, said "Fuck this noise, we're going down there. We could do something." I felt the plane lift upward against my feet as Kingsley pulled back on the controls. We left the formation and began descending. Just then I spotted an A-3 bag, up against the bulkhead separating the radio room from the waist section of the ship. I knew

the bag contained rubber dingies for emergency use. I advised the pilot that they were there and suggested we could drop them through the bomb bay doors, because surely the crew that had bailed out would not be able to sustain themselves in the water very long wearing simple life vests. The pilot said "I'm sure we could do that," and addressing the flight engineer, Kennedy, said "Ken, go back there and give Sal a hand." I dragged the A-3 bag into the radio room. The radio operator, Wesner, had heard our conversation on the intercom and held the door for me. In a minute Kennedy showed up through the door separating the bomb bay from the radio room. He saw me unpacking the dingies, each of which was in an individual pouch. I got on the intercom and talked again with the pilot, recommending the bombardier, Lynch, signal our radio operator a few seconds before we were at a point we were to drop a dingy, near someone in the water, the radio operator then could tap my shoulder to signal me, and I would transfer the signal to Kennedy. It was the only way we could handle it because Kennedy and I would be off the intercom, during the time of dropping the dingies. Kennedy positioned himself by sitting on the threshold of the door between the radio compartment and the bomb bay, with his feet on the narrow cat walk between the bomb racks. We were already at a low altitude; I didn't realize how low until the bomb bay doors opened. We could see the waves, although they were small, quite clearly. Kennedy looked over his shoulder at me with a grin, shaking his head. Neither one of us were

wearing chutes, because there wasn't room for them, and would have done us little good at that altitude. Salt spray began to pick up from our props, spraying Kennedy and I over our faces and shoulders.

As we began to approach the area where the chutes had hit the water, I handed Kennedy one of the folded rubber dingies. I could do this with my right hand only, because my left hand was tightly gripping the back of his parachute harness. As we banked around, we were so low that I thought our wing tip would touch the water and we would pivot on it to make our turn. My admiration for our pilot grew. At last I felt the tap on my shoulder from the radio operator who had received the signal to drop from the bombardier. I transferred a double tap to Kennedy's shoulder, he opened the valve on the CO2 cylinder on the dingy and dropped it through the bomb bay doors. We continued this on a triangular path until we had dropped all four dingies. I ~~have~~ recalled some months earlier while we were in training, that Kingsley said that his early pilot training was on B-25's, and he was accustomed to low altitude flying. No doubt his training was reflected in his flying during that dingy drop. I learned later that we had been flying at an altitude of about 125 feet. As we were flying that course, several time I spotted someone floating in the water, sometimes with the chute still attached, struggling in a Mae West life preserver to stay afloat.

I saw one dingy hit the water, almost fully inflated, so

close to one man, that he had to swim only a few feet to reach it. Within a minute after he had reached the dingy and climbed into it, an air sea rescue launch came into the area, and picked him up. I saw another man heading toward a dingy, but was not sure he had reached it. We stayed in the area at low altitude circling, so as to be a guide for other aircraft and launches sent on the rescue. We flew over the launch that had picked up the first survivor, he was on the small upper deck of the launch and waving his arms wildly; I thought I could see him smiling at us. We continued to fly into the area at a higher altitude, until about 6:00 p.m. A Lancaster Bomber appeared above us, as well as two Mosquito Bombers, two Spitfires, and an American Thunderbolt Fighter. A Catalina flying boat glided to a landing on the water and headed toward someone; we couldn't tell if they had picked anyone up, and when we saw it again after our turn, the Catalina had left the water and headed back to the coast.

There was plenty of help in the area now, and we headed back to our base. It was dark when we landed. We stored our equipment and reported to the Interrogation room to report to the Intelligence S-2 officer. Before I left our plane I took one of the pouches in which the dingies had been stored. The S-2 officer was Capt. Pool, ~~and~~ ^{who} was surprised and gratified when Norquist told him that he had taken some pictures with my camera. I had forgotten he had it with him. Pool sent the camera to the photo lab for developing. He promised me he would return the camera, and copies of the pictures taken.

Pool commended us for our work and advised us that his commendation would be included in his report about the entire day's incident.

We went as a group to the mess hall to get a meal, as by now it was well into the evening. The discussion at the table was about what had happened that day. What ever action that was taken after this mission, we were not advised.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned that there were only two survivors, Lt. Stanley Burns, co-pilot, and Lt. William Johnson, bombardier. I remember Billy Miessler telling me of the coins he had for me. It was common to take mementos from the personal effects of casualties, and I went over to his quarters. It was quiet inside, there were two other pilots walking around, probably still not over the effects of the loss. A corporal and a private from headquarters company were at Miessler's bunk, putting together his personal effects. The corporal asked me if I was looking for something and I had asked if I could take a memento from Billy's personal effects. Then I told them about the coins. He said no monies could be given, as all cash in any form was to be retained for the family. There was nothing else that I wanted, so I left.

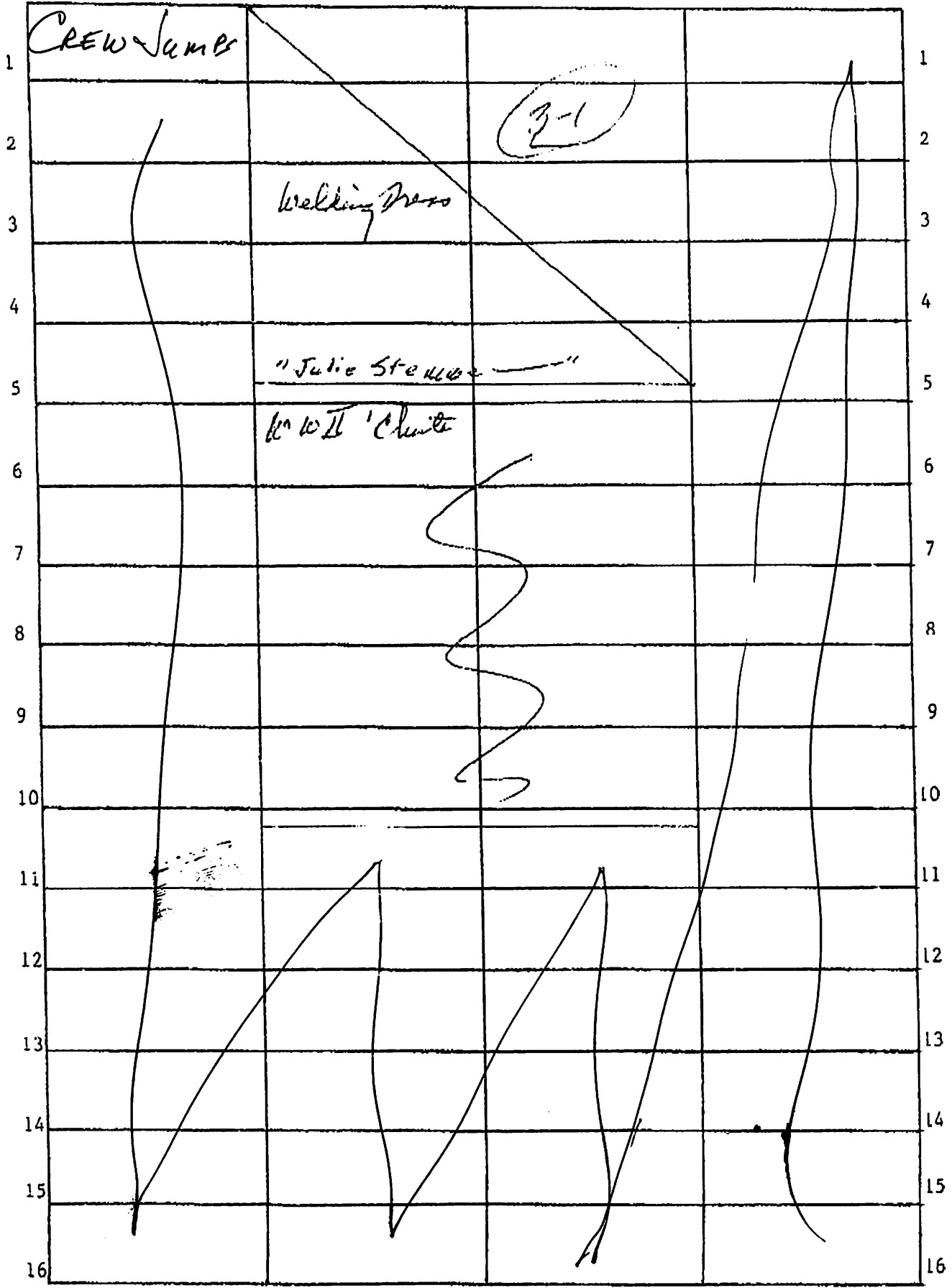
We learned that the casualties on Billy Miessler's plane were Sgt. Mont Baughman, flight engineer, Sgt. Walter Searles, radio operator, Sgt. Carl Caserta, ball turret, and Sgt. Bob Harrison, tail gunner. Their ship was named "Hellcat Hattie". Searles, Caserta, and Harrison, were part

of Lt. Robert Vielle's crew, with whom we trained in Rapid City, South Dakota, before shipping to England. On the 14th of April, Lt. Vielle, with his flight engineer, Ernest Gallion and radio operator, Chester Smalczewski, were on an excursion to Ireland, when they encountered foul weather and crashed into the Isle of Mann. All were killed along with others. Of the original crew of Lt. Vielle, only the navigator, Millard Oscherwitz, survived the war. At a reunion of the 306th in Dayton, Ohio, in 1988, I saw Oscherwitz again, and we had long conversations about our experiences. He wondered aloud why he alone was spared from his entire crew, and I with a bit of humor said "Obviously it was so that you could run the family business," which was a meat packing company in Chicago. I promised to visit him the next time I was on business in Chicago and we could have dinner. Before there was an opportunity for us to meet again, Oscherwitz died from a long illness. If there is a Valhalla for air warriors, Vielle's crew is surely there, and with Oscherwitz joining them, is at full muster.

Sal R. Angelle

306th Echoes

3



South Echoes

1	SEEN AT Castlegos			
2				4-1
3	4-2			
4	Houghton		4-9	
5	4-3	Brisco		
6	Corcoran		4-10	4-10
7	4-4	Fraser		Manning
8	Wilson		4-11	
9	4-5	Roberts		
10	Stewart		4-12	
11	4-6	Key		
12	Houser		4-13	
13	4-7	Hitchman		
14	Argento		4-14	
15	4-8	Beigel		
16	Lavery	Specs to play with rest of		Thompson's

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Our crew was composed of Lt. Don Kingsley, pilot; Lt. Jesse Patton, copilot; Lt. Frank Lynch, bombardier; Sgt. Werner Kennedy, engineer; Sgt. Kenneth Wener, radio; St. Earl Hartley, ball turret; Sgt. Norman Norquist, tail, and myself as waist gunner.

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We stayed in the area at low altitude, circling so as to guide other aircraft and launches sent on the rescue. We flew over the launch that had picked up the first survivor. He was on the small upper deck of the launch and waving his arms wildly. I thought I could see him smiling at us.

We continued to fly in the area until about 6 p.m., going to a somewhat higher altitude. An RAF Lancaster appeared above us, as well as two RAF mosquitos, two RAF Spitfires and a U.S. P-47 Thunderbolt. A PBY Catalina flying boat glided to a landing on the water and headed toward someone. We couldn't tell if they picked up anyone, and when we saw the PBY again after our turn, it had taken off and headed back to the coast.

As there was plenty of help in the area now, we headed back to our base where it was dark when we landed. We stored our equipment and reported to the interrogation room where Capt. Beekman Pool awaited us. He was surprised and gratified when Norquist told him that he had taken some pictures with my camera--I had forgotten in all the excitement that he had it with him.

Capt. Pool send the camera to the photo lab for film developing and printing. He commended us for our work and advised us that his commendation would be included in his report about the entire day's incident.

Discussion around our table at the mess hall was about the events of the day. But we were never advised of any action that was taken following the mission.

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Searles, Caserta and Harrison were a part of Lt. Robert Vielle's crew, with which we had trained at Rapid City. On 14 Apr 45, Lt. Vielle and his engineer, Ernest Gallion, and radio, Chester Smalczewski, were killed when their plane crashed on the Isle of Man, 13 men and a Red Cross worker being on the plane.

Of Vielle's original crew, Lt. Millard Oscherwitz, the navigator survived. Oscherwitz survived the war and died 22 Oct 89 in Wilmette, IL. For years he headed the family's meat packing business.

By Sgt ANGELLE

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'GOING DOWN!' — Sgt of
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Men in the Water — 8/1/47

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(I saw one dinghy hit the water, almost fully inflated, ^{close} so close to one man that he had to swim only a few feet to reach it. Within a minute after he reached it and climbed in, an air-sea rescue launch came into the area and picked him up. I saw another man heading toward a dinghy, but was not sure that he reached it.

(We stayed in the area at low altitude, circling so as to guide other aircraft and launches sent on the rescue. We flew over the launch that had picked up the first survivor. He was on the small upper deck of the launch and waving his arms wildly. I thought I could see him smiling at us.

8/1/47 (We continued to fly in the area until about 6 p.m., going to a somewhat higher altitude. An RAF Lancaster appeared above us, as well as two RAF Mosquitos, two RAF Spitfires and a U.S. P-47 Thunderbolt. A PBV Catalina flying boat glided to a landing on the water and headed toward someone. We couldn't tell if they picked up anyone, and when we saw the PBV again after our turn, it had taken off and headed back to the coast.

(As there was plenty of help in the area now, we headed back to our base where it was dark when we landed. We stored our equipment and reported to the Interrogation room where Capt. Beekman Pool awaited us. He was surprised and gratified when Norquist told him that he had taken some pictures with my camera--I had forgotten in all the excitement that he had it with him.

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Capt. Pool sent the camera to the photo lab for film developing and printing. He commended us for our work and advised us that his commendation would be included in his report about the entire day's incident.

Discussion around our table at the mess hall was about the events of the day. But we were never advised of any action that was taken following the mission.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned there were only two survivors: Lt. Stanley Burns, copilot, and Lt. William Johnson, bombardier.

Sgt Then I remembered Billy Miessler telling me of the coins he had for me. I went to his barracks. It was quiet inside. There were two other pilots walking around, probably still not over the shock of yesterday's events.

A corporal and a private from headquarters were at Miessler's bunk, putting together his personal effects. The corporal asked me if I was looking for something, and I told him about the coins and Miessler's plan for me to have them. He said no monies could be given, as all cash in any form was to be retained for the family. There was nothing else that I wanted, so I left.

We learned that the casualties on Miessler's plane were Sgt. Mont Baughman, engineer; Sgt. Walter Searles, radio; Sgt. Carl Caserta, ball turret, and Sgt. Harrison. Their ship was named Hellcat Hattie (43-38302-Z, which had come to the squadron 23 Sep 44).

Searles, Caserta and Harrison were a part of Lt. Robert Vielle's crew, with which we had trained at Rapid City. On 14 Apr 45, Lt. Vielle and his engineer, Ernest Gallion, and radio, Chester Smalczewski, were killed when their plane crashed on the Isle of Man, 13 men and a Red Cross worker being on the plane.

Of Vielle's original crew, Lt. Millard Oscherwitz, the navigator survived. Oscherwitz survived the war and died 22 Oct 89 in Wilmette, IL. For years he headed the family's meat packing business.

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*Crew Jumps
Over Wash,
2 Survive*

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