

**Mr. Russell Strong
5323 Cheval Place
Charlotte, N. C. 28205**

Dear Russell:

My name is James B. Walden, Navigator on the Robert H. Brown crewm 306 Group, 369 Squadron flying between July 44 to December 9 when our crew was shot down by flack over Stuttgart. As I recall you were flying about this same time. Your book, First Over Germany was a masterpiece and I still read it from time to time as we all get older but still have some vivid memories of what we went thru. You wrote about our crew being shot down on page 294 and our Copilot, William Giglio being badly wounded. He was placed in a German hospital where, after a week of trying to save the leg, it was removed by German doctors and he spent the rest of the war in hospitals but taken care of. Here is the rest of the story of the crew.

I am sure you did not know about Sgt J. Fann or you would have included it in your story. He froze both hands trying to get the escape hatch door open. Took his gloves off trying and at about 60 below, bare hands on metal dont work. He too was placed in a German hospital, maybe same as Giglio, where the German doctors worked for weeks splitting his fingers up and down several times during treatment. He said his fingers were so swollen you could not see thru the fingers. In the end he did not lose a finger and I saw him in France and his hands and fingers looked perfectly normal. Only hot or cold water would bother him. A medical miracle.

The missing crew report said we dropped out of formation and was under control with no visible damage which was true. We flew several minute until the engine that was hit caught fire and flames were blowing back off the wing so it was bail out I was the last out and checked on Bob and he was flying the ship, both hands busy and no visible injury. We kept hoping he would show in Pw camp but not so. No one on our crew saw the ship after bailing out so we never knew what happened. A few weeks ago I received an e-mail from a German lady, Helga Radu, who said she was 4 years old when I was a prisoner in Stalag 1, Barth, Germany. She was living in Barth and still does. She was the Historian for Barth and taught school in the flack school building located next to the camp She was interested in the History of

Stalag as well as the town and was in touch with many pws, guards, daughter if the Commandant etc. Roland Geiger, German living in Saarbrücken was also interested in 8th Air Force history. He gave my name to Helga but thru him he eventually found what happened to our pilot. A German historian wrote a book, in German. his name is Mr Eber. The book was about the War in The Black Forest and he sent Roland copies of two pages of his book that was two eyewitnesses of what happened to our pilot. The copies are enclosed and speak for themselves. A gas tank and at the same time a body falling tell me the ship exploded. No mention of any other parts or crash site. A chute, not open indicate he was blown out either dead or not able to pull the chute. What really happened we never know. He was buried in a cemetery in or near Wolfach and later removed by USA but I don't know where to. 6 of the crew, including me went to Stalag 1 for the duration. I had 29 missions, Giglio 35, his last, and Brown in the 20s, He was hit in the arm by flack and was out two or three weeks. In our tour we lost two navigators, pilot and tail gunner and got 11 purple hearts. This closes the book on our crew as we now know about our pilot.

Best regards

James



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Rebecca Walden

From: <Rolgeiger@aol.com>
To: <jbeckwal@mindspring.com>
Cc: <OttmarErber@web.de>; <archiv@stadt-barth.de>
Sent: Tuesday, February 06, 2001 2:25 AM
Subject: Robert H. Brown

Salü, James,

from a book about the war in the Black Forest around Wolfach Mr. Ottmar Erber sent two pages 69 and 70 telling the fate of your pilot.

Roland

"On 9th December 1944 the Lieutenant lost his life who bailed out of a bomber as his chute didn't open. There are two eye witness reports about this incident by Georg Neumaier and Josef Schwendemann. Georg Neumaier reported: On Dec 9, 1944, in the afternoon at 0130, I stood in a meadow near our house. Suddenly I heard a humming in the air and saw a big gas can coming down towards the west. Immediately afterwards I saw something else coming down in the east. I thought of another gas can, jumped uphill and approaching I realized it was a dead flyer. I saw a deep hole and two yards away the dead man lying on one side. He was a big man with black, curly hair. His head was scattered, arms and legs broken und stucked into the body. His chute was unclosed on his back. Two boys approached at the site. I made report to the local policeman (Landwachtmann) and council adviser Wilhelm Borho and told him there is a dead soldier lying in the fields. I stayed at the site, until the policeman came. The body stayed there until dawn but soldiers took away his papers."

A similar story is told by Josef Schwendemann: "On Dec 9, 1944, a crew member bailed out of one of the planes passing over our country. When the chute didn't open the US Air Corps Lieutenant Robert Brown died at once. On order of the recent town commander, Staff Veterinarian Dr. Braunschweig, soldiers of his unit burried the dead flyer not far away from the crash site on the edge of the forest. I was not there when this happened and was told about it in the evening. Next morning I went to Dr. Braunschweig and reproached him with the fact that a dead man cannot be burried in the forest but needs an ordinary grave on the local cemetery. I ordered the grave-digger to un-burly the man and re-burly him on our local cemtery."

Also of interest is the report of the local policeman "von Steinach" to his superiors at Wolfach from Dec 10: "On Dec 9, about 2 pm Landwachtmann Wilhelm Borho told me by telephone that an enemy pilot whose parachute had failed crashed in a field about 500 yards from the main road in the "Winterwiese" district. This had been reported to the town comander residing at Welschensteinach and the order was given to salve the dead. The enemy pilot got interred into the ground in a field near the crash site. Mayor Schwendemann as representant of the local police ordered the transfer of the

body to the local cemetery. The name of the enemy pilot was 2nd Lt Robert H. Brown, born July 21, 1921. In his wallet there was a military ID No 520239, 1 flight ticket, 2 dogtags Nr. O-815824-D 42/44 one of which was put into the pocket of the uniform he was wearing, 3 British Pounds (paper money) and 15 tickets for butter plus several letters and notes, a paper box with papers, the parachute, 2 felt shoes, 1 stuffed leather shoe, heating pad with fixings, throat microphon. This all was given to the town commander of Welschensteinach."