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29 November 1944.

STATEMENT OF S/SGT VICTOR VANDERPOOL, INSTRUCTOR, SEC E, 247th AAF BU

Right after we took off I noticed sort of a thump in the engine, in one on the right-hand side - No. 2 I think it was. We flew a little higher that way and pretty soon it stopped so evidently the pilot had feathered the engine. I was in the back and didn't know what was going on in front. I was in the radio compartment. I saw the Navigator on the interphone system and I wasn't on interphone because I had my headset plugged into the liaison receiver so I could check on the other radio man. As soon as I checked on him I got on the interphone and asked him if we were getting ready to bail out and he said yes.

Q: That was Captain Barthel?

A: Yes, sir, the Navigator. I immediately put on my chute and told the other radio man to prepare to bail out and right away he started putting on his chute. The Navigator was up near the flight deck, practically standing on it and I was right behind him. Some way my chute got caught on the turret and it was very hard to get through with a back type. The other radio man had his chest chute. I asked the Navigator what they were waiting on and he said they couldn't get the wheels down or that they hadn't attempted to put them down. They finally came down and three fellows bailed out ahead of me: I was the fourth one out. I followed the gunner out. He followed the Navigator. The bombardier was the first one out. I had a hard time to get my chute loose. I crawled about half way down the hatch; I was kind of afraid to jump. Anyway, then the engineer put his foot on my head and kicked me out so I jerked my ripcord.

Q: Did you hear the pilot or anybody warn the boys in the back end?

A: I could hear nothing on the interphone because my headset was plugged in to liaison receiver and that cut it out. Why the other radio man didn't get out I don't know because he was ready to bail out, crawled out so he could bail out, then Capt. Miller asked him to get his chute, which evidently was back in the radio room. Then I bailed.

Q: Could you estimate how long it took you to hit the ground?

A: The first time I jerked the ripcord nothing happened so I put both hands on it and it opened. I had about three good swings and then hit the ground.

Q: Were you in the clouds when you bailed?

A: No, we were still in the overcast when the first man went out. Just as I came out we came out of the overcast.

Q: Then Shoppe followed you out?

A: McCauley was there ready to go.

Q: Was the pilot in his seat?

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Statement of S/Sgt Vanderpool (cont'd)

A: No, sir, the pilot was standing up, using his hands, motioning and yelling to get out of the airplane. I remember seeing him reach down to make an adjustment on the automatic pilot. I believe, then asking McCauley to get his chute.

Q: Do you know whether the lights were on?

A: I believe so, sir.

Q: Did you watch the airplane after you were out in your chute?

A: As soon as I bailed out, while I was still trying to get my chute open, I could see against the overcast a light flash and the engine (they said No. 3 engine) caught on fire, but as soon as my chute opened I saw the ship down on the ground burning.

Q: The airplane hit before you did?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: You didn't see it in the air?

A: No, sir, I didn't see it. My back was turned.

Q: How far did you land from the plane?

A: I would say possibly a mile.

Q: Did you go to the plane then?

A: I went to a farm house about a quarter of a mile from where I landed, left my chute and then walked on over to the airplane.

/s/ Victor M. Vanderpoole
VICTOR M. VANDERPOOLE
Instructor Gunner
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Eugene S. Sapiro
EUGENE S. SAPIRO
1st Lt., Air Corps
Asst. Base Operations Officer

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