



I hope the above helps you picture our plight. Before I go on I guess I had better tell you, because we were not leading, and Hickey's navigation was not too important (we merely followed the planes ahead of us), he was not in the nose with me but up in the radio compartment behind the Major and Deak. He had two good reasons for being there, it was warmer and the armour plate was up there. I can assure you I would have been up there too, if I could have been, but my job kept me in the nose. The only reason I tell you this is so you can locate Hickey in future references to him.

To get back to our condition, we were well organized and on our way to rejoining the group when our troubles really began. But I am getting ahead of myself. When I found out I was hit, I called the Major to tell him according to the rules and then asked Hickey who had the first aid kit to come down to help me out. I was bleeding like a stuffed pig from both legs, but couldn't put pressure on all the points to stop it. Hickey said he would be right down, but then the Major found he had been hit and naturally it was more important that he get fixed up, because he was the only one who could fly the plane back. The result was that Hickey stayed up there to move Deak and help the Major who had to use both his hands and feet to keep us in the air.

Then the waist gunner called and told us the bomb bays were on fire and just about the same time someone else called to tell us that enemy fighters were after us. Being all alone, on fire, and with our top guns out, it looked bad, and it was.. We called our own fighters on the radio to help us, but they

either didn't hear us or didn't have time to get there, but at any rate no help came. The first time they came in they swept us from nose to tail and the left waist, Gernasio called and said he was hit and the way he yelled and ended in a gasp, I figured it had killed him. That left our nose and tail turrets for protection, although I had no idea of what happened to the ball turret gunner in the bottom. We think the tail turret gunner got one of the fighters, but they were either not discouraged for two more came in and hit us in the same place and this time set fire to the nose, and as I found out later, the tail. I tried to call the Major to tell him the nose was on fire, but the same shells that set us on fire must have knocked out the interphone, and I couldn't get him or anyone. I then tried to signal him from the astrodome, the glass bubble on top, but when I looked up to his seat, he was slumped over the wheel.

The only way I could get from the nose to the flight deck where the Major and Hickey were, was through the tunnel by the nose wheel, but this was a blazing inferno by this time, and it was impossible to get into it. There was only one thing to do, and that was to get the nose gunner out of his turret (he is more or less isolated and doesn't know what is going on), and prepare to jump. The fire was getting all over the nose and there was no other place to go but out.

Four chutes came out of the plane while it was still in my vision. The best way of escape for the Major and Hickey was out the bomb bay doors, and about the only way of opening them was from the handle in the nose, so I opened them just