

Last Mission

by

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We took off on Friday morning at 0740 on a mission to Munich, Germany. Our ship was named “the Flying Shithouse” which, although the crew chief (damn his soul!) assured us was the best plane in the Squadron, turned out to be just that, nothing more than a “flying shithouse”. The crew consisted of the following men:

2nd Lt. Roger L. Kraft - Pilot
2nd Lt. John N. Coleman – Co-pilot
2nd Lt. Earl O’Brien – Navigator
F.O. John Bistarkey – Bombardier
Sgt. John Sangas – Engineer – Gunner
Sgt. Brook K. Truitt – Radio Operator – Gunner
Sgt. Leonard T. Rosen – Nose Gunner
Sgt. William H. Curry – Upper Gunner
Sgt. Joseph R. Horne – Tail Gunner
Sgt. Robert E. Goldman – Ball Gunner

To begin with, we even had trouble before leaving the parking strip. The putt-putt was out, and there was a leak in the oxygen system. Then, on the takeoff, we didn’t have enough speed. Kraft tried to take the ship up but we bounced three times before getting off the ground, one on the runway, once on the ground past the runway, and a third time on some farmers lot at the edge of the field. But we finally did get into the air.

On our way up to the target, the #1 engine started leaking oil, and we couldn’t get full power from the #2 engine. Finally, the #1 engine had to be cut off and the prop feathered. Just before reaching the IP we pulled out of the formation, and headed for Switzerland. (We were losing altitude, and there were too many mountains between us and Italy) With #1 engine out, and #2 engine just as good as out, Kraft and Coleman had to give almost full right rudder all the way. (To counter balance the pull of the two good engines on the right side)

There was a heavy overcast, and we didn’t realize our course was taking us over Friedrichshafen, which is just on the border between Switzerland and Germany. (Later on we learned it was considered one of the heaviest and accurate flak areas in all of German). We passed over the city at about 4,000 feet altitude, and before we knew it, flak was bursting all around us. The sky seemed full of the

stuff. God alone knows how we got through it. The ship was hit several times, and must have looked like a sieve. None of the fellows were hit other than Horne getting a piece of flak just graze the back of his hand, and I likewise had a piece graze my thumb. The main damage in the ship, other than the countless holes, was our radio and also the hydraulic system was knocked out, we barely managed to fly across Lake Constance, and crash land in Switzerland, just 500 feet from the German border!!!

After that, there is little to tell. We landed near the Town of Altnenhein, and after spending the night there, we were taken to Adelboden, where we are now "sweating out" the war.

Additional Notes: America "Evacuation" of Adelboden took place on Feb. 16, 1945.

Returned to Allied Control Feb 17, 1945.