



OFFICERS MESS
SMOKY HILL ARMY AIR FIELD
SALINA, KANSAS

Dec 29th

THE SALINA JOURNAL

Friday, December 23, 1944

SHARP TURNER DOWN

Crashes Near Concordia Today,
Crew Reported Safe
Col. Ralph W. Hodiack, station
commandant of Smoky Hill army
air field, announced this after-
noon that a four-engine heavy
bomber from Smoky Hill army
air field crashed some miles west
of Concordia while on a combat
training mission. All crew mem-
bers were reported safe. A board
of officers has been appointed to
determine the cause of the crash.

Dear Francis,

This has been a day I'll not forget for
a long while. We flew this morning, that
is for a while we were flying.

My airplane commander is home on leave so I
flew with another crew taking the place of their
radar operator who is on D.N.I.F.

We took off at ten twenty-eight and at about
a quarter till eleven our number two engine
began smoking and caught on fire. A few
minutes later our number four engine began
throwing oil like a real gusher; in a few
moments it was running away.

The fire on number two began to get serious
so we tried both extinguishers without any success.
At this time I turned the Radar set off and
the bombardier 'salvaged' the bombs and bomb-

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bay tank. At eleven zero one the order to bail out came over the interphone as we were heading NW at 190 mph at an indicated altitude of 3,500 feet. The ground beneath was about 2000 feet above sea level so we were ~~about 1500 feet above the ground.~~

From our position I was supposed to go first but the tail gunner a kid 18 years old was getting a little excited so I sent him out followed by a A.F.C.E. man who was our passenger. After they had jumped and I could see that the rear of the plane was empty I left the plane to the flier.

I stood in the door and fell out as though falling off a diving board. The slipstream turned me over on my back and I lay there feeling as though I were floating around in space watching the plane fly out of sight.

Then I pulled the rip-cord, had an anxious moment while waiting for the chute to open. Finally I heard a sigh of real, sincere relief as

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that beautiful white canopy of silk blossomed out above me.

When the chute opened the risers were twisted, I had time to straighten them out take a quick look below me and the ~~next thing I knew~~ ~~it was~~ on the ground. When I hit I did a deep-knee bend, stood up and found myself in the midst of a Kansas Corn field.

Most of the time a fellow hits pretty hard when jumping, but we were lucky; there only was a slight breeze there to five mph which didn't bother us at all.

The CFC gunner landed near me so we got together, huddled up our chutes "very tenderly" and walked the mile or so to the nearest farm home. Here I phoned the Air Base and reported the accident our location and that we were uninjured.

A little later we learned that the entire crew was down OK. About an hour and a half later the trucks or rather the "meat wagons" came

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to pick us up and take us back.

We were taken to the Base Hospital where we got a quick once over for injuries and were confined for observation over night.

~~When lying in bed now~~ writing this document, a very humble, thankful person.

Now we are joking but the affair wasn't a bit funny a few hours ago. The sensation of falling through the air is indeed an unusual one but it's not at all unpleasant; of course it's much nicer to have both feet on the ground.

Don't tell Mother or Dad of this as they would be worried. None of us were hurt, I'm flying again new year day so don't mention this to them at all.

Will you return this letter to me I want to save it, it's a new one for me.

This was a real "Thriller"
I'm glad you came thru

OK

your brother,

Tommy.

An afterthought - We were in a B-29 on Dec. 29th, the crew is # 29