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29 November 1944

STATEMENT OF T/SGT SHOPPE, 60TH BOMB SQDN., FLIGHT ENGINEER.

We took off at around 6:15. The clock on the instrument panel had been removed so I don't know exactly the time but it was just about 6:15. We climbed to 800 feet. Capt. Miller called in at that time and asked if the field was clear for transition and they told him it was weather but clear for transition. We went up to 5000 feet - above the overcast. On the way hit icing conditions, turned on de-icer boots and pitot heat. I started the intercooler flaps closing to maintain carburetor temperature at 25 degrees. At that time No. 3 engine ran rough.

Q: Did No. 3 run rough on take off?

A: It seemed like it swallowed a valve; the backfire was at the same speed always.

Q: Did you have any trouble before you hit the overcast?

A: No, sir. As soon as we went into the climb I noticed it. Then we climbed up over the overcast. Pulled power back on No. 3 to ~~2070~~ <sup>2000 rpm 30" C.H.</sup>

Q: You had full power up until you hit the bottom of the overcast?

A: Yes, sir. We got above the overcast and it was throwing sparks and running awfully rough so I notified Capt. Miller to cut it to prop. It was very clear, you could see the stars and blanket of clouds below. We feathered the prop and I cut the mixture, the fuel shut-off valve, turned the generator off. I already had the vacuum pump on No. 2 so that I wouldn't have to move it; then cut the magneto switch off. Everything was normal on the other three engines.

Q: About how long did you fly along?

A: I would say approximately six or seven minute s. It was that long anyway. The pilot had called in for emergency landing instructions and told them that one engine was feathered. Then we started to turn - which direction it was I don't know because I couldn't see from the engineer's seat - but we started down through the overcast and everything was still normal and Lt. Miller called me and he told me No. 2 was on fire. I asked Fries how bad it was burning and he said that the whole bottom of the wing seemed to be on fire. The first thing I did was cut the fuel shut-off valve, cut the generators off in that engine. At that time Lt. Phillips set up power on the other two engines, on 1 and 4.

Q: Did you notice the fuel pressure on No. 2?

A: Fuel pressure was normal. Lt. Phillips set up 43" <sup>at 2500 R.P.M. C.H.</sup> on No. 1 and No. 4 and we were maintaining good flying speed and we were maintaining altitude at that time.

Q: On two engines with the other engine burning?

A: Yes, sir, the other engine was burning at that time. Capt. Miller got out

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of the pilot's seat and he ordered us to prepare to bail out, just to stand by at that time. The tail gunner (assistant engineer) - I had him up in front - opened the hatch and the nose wheel was still up.

Q: You tried to get the gear down?

A: Lt. Phillips put the gear down. It came down normally, he hit the toddle and the gear came down. Then the fire was out of control. I thought they might try to put it out and I asked him if I should pull the fire extinguisher and he didn't answer; he seemed to be hunting his parachute. Then Capt. Miller yelled for his parachute and called the tower and said we were bailing out.

Q: Did he get back in his seat at any time?

A: Sir, I don't know whether he did or not or whether he stood up. I was watching the carburetor temperatures and he called to me and said "O.K. Shoppe, the other men will be ill out and you and I will sweat it out." At that time Lt. Bennett asked Miller "Should we bail out?" He said "Yes, sir." So I opened the bomb bay doors and Corporal Fries called him and said "Bomb bay doors open." Capt. Miller was standing up. I don't know if he had his headset on. He yelled "For Christ's sake, bail the men out." Capt. Barthel had gone first. I don't know what altitude we were at that time.

Q: You were still on instruments?

A: Yes, sir. The first man came out through the clouds because I watched to see through the hatches if they were dropping out through the clouds. I remember Lt. Bennett went, then Garner was to go, who was the tail gunner, and Garner didn't go.

Q: Who went first?

A: The Navigator, Captain Barthel, went first. Before Bennett went he noticed Garner had his chute on wrong. He was real panicky so I grabbed his hand and put on his ripcord and shoved him out, and Capt. Miller screamed at me to get out of the airplane. I looked up at Sgt. Vanderpool and he was trying to crawl out of those stairs and I knew if he did he wouldn't get out so I kicked him out. I reached over him and fastened my chute and Capt. Miller yelled at me "Go, go". I hadn't hit the ground yet when the airplane exploded.

Q: What was Miller doing at that time?

A: Captain Miller was standing up. He was just as frantic as could be. You couldn't do a thing with him. I tried to talk to him and couldn't even make sense. No one was flying the airplane. Just before I came out Lt. Phillips was sitting there with a glare, looking straight forward. No one was flying the airplane. Miller was standing there yelling in the pilot's compartment "Give me my parachute". I was trying to check the instruments and get contact with the men in the rear and in the meantime trying to throw the other two men out. I remember him standing up and screaming. He was out of his seat. After I hit the ground I just left the parachute lay where it was and ran straight to the airplane.

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Q: Where was Lt. Charles in the airplane?

A: In the rear, sir.

Q: Did you have any indication on No. 2 backfire or cause of the fire?

A: No, sir, no indications at all. All indications were normal; fuel pressure never dropped, hadn't dropped at the time I left on No. 2, still O. K.

Q: That is important. You are sure about that?

A: Yes, sir, when I cut the fuel shut-off it dropped, but until that it was perfect.

Q: How long after the fire started did you shut the fuel off, do you remember?

A: Just as soon as Fries told me how bad it was burning I reached up and flicked the fuel shut off valve forward, sir.

Q: You didn't have any indication of anything wrong with No. 2 that might have caused the fire?

A: No sir, as far as I know. I checked the instruments and they were all normal.

Q: When did Miller start getting out of hand?

A: Just as soon as he found there was a fire in No. 2 he got really frantic.

Q: He was all right up to that time? Perfectly normal as far as you can tell?

A: The only difference he kept talking to me a lot. He was cross with the co-pilot. I noticed that before the fire started. He never talked to me before.

Q: Who was flying the airplane when you started down through the overcast?

A: Captain Miller.

Q: You say Lt. Phillips was the one who added the power?

A: Lt. Phillips had to add the power because Capt. Miller was standing up at the time the power was increased.

Q: How much did you increase on No. 1, 2 and 4?

A: The power was <sup>2200-32" Q.F.</sup> 2232. Never increased the power until I shut off the fuel. <sup>2400-33" Q.F.</sup> 2433 on No. 1 and No. 4.

Q: You say you were still in mid air when the plane crashed?

A: It crashed before I hit the ground.

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Q: How far were you from the plane when it hit the ground? Approximately.

A: A very short distance. I was there in no time at all. I don't know how far. I saw the cow was in the barnyard and I was scared I was going to hit it and loosened the leg strap and the cow got tangled up in it. I saw the cow either in the light of the fire or the moonlight, I wasn't sure.

Q: Were you under the overcast when you went out?

A: Yes, sir, I came through the smoke of the airplane.

Q: You landed south of the airplane.

A: I am not sure, sir, which way it was. It was that farm house there where we came through last night.

Q: Did you notice during the flight, after you got up on top, erratic flying? Did they seem to know where they were all the time, any jumping around in the cockpit?

A: My back was turned to the pilot and co-pilot both. The navigator was very calm, probably the coolest man on board - very calm.

Q: Do you think there is any chance that No. 3 was icing up?

A: No, sir. I had the carburetor temperature at 25 and if it had been icing it would have cleared it up at that time. 1 and 4 were perfect, sir.

Q: Prior to your bailing out would you say it was in control or out of control?

A: I don't know for sure because I was watching the instruments because we only had two engines left. I understood that Capt. Miller and I were to bring the airplane in and the rest of the crew was to bail.

Q: Do you know whether Phillips had a chute with him?

A: Yes, sir. Phillips was sitting on his. If he had it on, I don't know. I didn't have mine on.

Q: You don't know actually whether Phillips was in the airplane at the time you bailed out?

A: I wasn't positive about it. I glanced around at one time and Lt. Phillips was sitting there with his hands down at his sides when Miller was standing screaming after he had increased the power.

Q: Do you know whether the airplane was on automatic pilot or not?

A: No, sir, that is one thing I do not know. All the men were congested around me. It was all I could do to operate what I had to operate there; they were pushing up against me and I could do very little.

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Q: When Phillips set the power on 1 and 4 was that when you looked to see who was flying the airplane?

A: Yes, sir; Capt. Miller was standing up. Lt. Phillips didn't have his hand on the stick. If he did, he had his right hand on the wheel - could have been possible. His left hand was at his side.

Q: Who gave the order to lower the gear? Did you hear any order given?

A: No. I heard one of the men screaming that the gear was still up and I called Capt. Miller and told him the gear was still up and then it went down. Capt. Miller may have reached down and toddled it.

Q: It was quite a while after the gear went down until you got out?

A: I was the last one out. I wouldn't venture to say how long it was.

Q: How did the plane hit, what position?

A: The nose was down. We were losing altitude awfully fast and it was on fire so I couldn't tell which position the wings were. Careened once and hit.

Q: Did it careen around, which way?

A: I saw the flames fly, sir.

Q: You didn't see the tail whip around?

A: I couldn't see the tail.

/s/ Perry F. Shoppe  
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