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Article Summary: Dougald Werner, a Nebraskan, was a war correspondent with UPI. This is a short article he wrote about an air battle over Germany in which an injured radio operator asked to be thrown out of his crippled bomber in hopes of lightening the load and improving his crewmates' chance of survival. They refused and the bomber made it back to base.

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And when the air war is at its peak—when the Eighth is out day after day and the RAF night after night—the unshaven faces and the redness of the sleepless eyes of these Soldiers of the Press match those of the fliers and ground crews themselves.

Constantly on the go to cover every facet of the American side of the air war are two young United Press veterans, Collie Small and Dougald Werner.

They are the boys with the musette bags. Where—or whether—they will sleep when night comes—they never know.

They may visit as many as four different bases, each as much as a hundred miles from the others. There they get the basic facts of the day's mission, and the human, personal-experience stories from the men who have just returned from fighting five miles high in the skies for their countries and for their lives.

After these fliers have turned in to rest for the next day's job, Small and Werner assemble and write their stories and send them, despite communication ball-ups and hazy, dim transmission lines.

Then they may go around to the back door of the mess to beg a late meal from the chef—perhaps all their food that day. Later they grope their way to a strange barrack where they'll crawl in beside some weary flier or bomb loader or an intelligence officer destined to be awakened in an hour to plan the next day's mission. . . . Then they are at the grind again.

A Bomber's Return

DOUGALD WERNER *

This reporter (whose boyhood name was Merle McDougald Werner), writing from a base in England on February 15 last, gave a thrilling example of the stories that come home with the bombers. No sort of activity in the home field could compete with the satisfaction of making these daily reports on the way our boys are taking it to the supermen.

The radio operator turned his blinded, bleeding eyes to the top turret gunner and pleaded:

"Throw me out! I'm hit badly and no use to you now. It'll save 175 pounds and maybe get you back to England."

They told about it at this base today as they framed a recommendation for a congressional medal of honor for that radio operator—T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler of New York.

* On the staff of United Press, London.

The turret gunner didn't jettison Vosler, and the shell-battered Fortress plunged into the English Channel after the crew had dumped out everything else that was movable in an effort to stretch its last few pints of gasoline.

But that's getting ahead of the story. To go back to the air battle over Germany in which the Fortress *Jersey Bounce* was pounced on by cannon-firing German fighters . . .

Two of the Fort's engines were shot out by flak and the *Jersey* dropped from formation. The fighters crowded in for the kill.

One shell burst in Vosler's radio cubicle. Fragments pierced his legs, chest, face and eyes. A direct hit on the tail disabled its gun and knocked out the tail gunner.

Vosler struggled to his gun, but his legs and thighs were perforated by shell fragments and wouldn't support him. He crawled onto his table and groped for his machinegun. The Germans were just a blur, but he kept that gun hot. Just before the fighters turned away one last 20 mm. shell burst squarely in front of Vosler's face. More fragments tore into his face and eyes.

The crew began to throw equipment overboard, hoping to nurse the staggering ship across the Channel. Vosler stumbled about, blood streaming from his face. Working by touch, he rigged an emergency radio set and bent over the key to send out repeated SOS calls. Now and again he toppled over the key unconscious. Always he would recover and continue to call "SOS - SOS - SOS."

Then Vosler made his decision. He called to the top turret gunner (Moody of Maine) and begged that he would toss him through the hatch to lighten the load. It might be enough to stretch out the gasoline so the rest could reach the English shore.

Moody refused — gently.

The big ship plunged into the Channel and Vosler crawled out of the radio hatch. He held the wounded tail gunner from sliding off a wing until they were able to get into a dingy. The rescue launch arrived in a few minutes.

At first doctors believed both Vosler's eyes would have to be removed. Lately there has been improvement and he is able to distinguish light with his right eye.

"There's not much to be expected from the left eye," said the flight surgeon from Massachusetts. "The flak in the rest of his body will be removed in time."

Officers hoped Vosler would be able to see a General pin that Congressional Medal on his tunic. He is the second member of the Hell's Angels bomber group to be recommended for that medal in recent weeks. The first was a bombardier from Illinois who stuck to his post, although badly frozen.