

E&E 272 - William H. Booth
(Also see E&E 271 -- Ralph D. Smith)

HEADQUARTERS
WINGHEAD BUREAU OF OPERATIONS
E/W and X Detachment
Military Intelligence Service

U.S. AIR FORCE NO. 272
EVASION IN FRANCE

December 18, 1943
(Date)

William H. Booth ^{1st}LT, O-800093
(Name) (Rank) (ASN)

349 100
(Squadron) (Group)

AGE: 28
LENGTH OF SERVICE: 1 yr 11 mos
HOME ADDRESS: 8050 TART AVE
Pittsburgh Pa USA

MIA: 3 SEPTEMBER '43
Arrived in Spain: ~~11/18/43~~
Arrived in Germany: ~~12/15/43~~
Arrived in US: 12/18/43

MEMBERS OF CREW: (This information checked with PW's)

	Official	Narrators
	Disposition	Disposition
PILOT O-738320 2 nd LT CHARLES B. WINKLEMAN	MIA	
CO-PILOT O-801345 2 nd LT RALPH D. SMITH	MIA	Narrator
NAVIGATOR O-800093 2 nd LT WILLIAM H. BOOTH		NARRATOR
FORWARDER O-676325 2 nd LT HOWARD M. HARRIS	EYE # 258	
RAILS OPERATOR 37426256 1/SGT JEAN E. RAY	MIA	
TOP TURRET GUNNER 14134640 T/SGT THOMAS E. COMBS	MIA	
RAILS GUNNER 32437605 S/SGT THOMAS L. CUCCARO	MIA	
WING WINGER 31042353 S/SGT ALFRED J. ZEOH	EYE # 259	
WING GUNNER 32443852 S/SGT MICHAEL F. DARCY	EYE # 167	
TAIL GUNNER 38220710 S/SGT ENNIS M. BANKHEAD	MIA	

Were you wounded?

No

Told 1 crew member was killed with chute unopened when he struck the ground - unidentified.

LT SMITH'S STORY UNTIL JOINING LT BOOTH:

We were going in toward PARIS when we ran into a heavy flak barrage.

DAMAGED BY
FLAK

A gas-tank was hit and the supercharge on ~~that~~^{the} engine blown up. We made a scheduled turn after that and I saw that our number one engine was on fire. Pieces of hot metal were peeling off the wing when the bale-out ~~order~~ was given by the pilot. I left my seat and went into the lower hatch and saw the ~~handaxler~~^{navigator} just leaving. The ~~navigator~~^{bombardier} was kneeling the escape door.

The pilot had left his seat and had gone to the bomb-bay but the bombs were still in their racks and the doors were not open. I think he went back into the cockpit and put the plane ~~in~~ on APCE because the aircraft ~~had~~ lurched several times as if getting out of control; ^{however,} it was in smooth flight when I jumped. I was out ahead of Lt BOOTH who had ~~not~~ not finished buckling his chute. The pilot and engineer were coming into the lower hatch as I fell through the escape door.

OPENED CHUTE
BECAUSE OF
BODY SPIN

I delayed my jump from around 23000 feet to around 13000 feet, opening the chute at that altitude because I was in a terrific body spin which I could not control. The position ^{of} my body ~~was~~ when the chute opened must have been ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the cause of several ^{broken} ribs ~~being broken~~ because my harness had been fitted well.

MAY HAVE BEEN
FIRED UPON FROM
GROUND

There was a chute above me which I thought was Lt HARRIS and in the distance I counted five other chutes. Around 3000 to 5000 feet two bursts of light flak were fired from the ground; they whistled by ~~me~~ and ~~xxxx~~ exploded at a higher altitude. At 2000~~0~~ feet an Me 110 passed me ^{within range} on that level. ~~xxxx~~

HELPED BY
FARMERS

I had seen, from the air, farmers running toward me and, when I landed in a sugar beet field they surrounded me. I was in an awkward position, ~~xxxx~~ in hitting the ground, and fractured my ankle. The farmers put me on my feet and pointed to a wood, with gestures indicating that I should hide quickly. They took my chute and flying equipment and helped me for a few yards but I had to cover most of the distance alone. While I was running the three kilometers

SEES GERMAN
ARRIVING
ON SCENE OF
JUMP

to the wood I saw three German soldiers ~~crossing through~~ walking through the fields toward where I had landed. I stopped running while they were in sight, hoping they would think me a farmer if they looked in my direction. By the time I reached the wood I could hardly take another step because of the pain in my ankle. A farmer came out of the wood as I ~~approached~~ got near the edge, and, taking me by the arm, led me to Lt BOOTH.

JOINING CREW
MEMBER

The farmers made no effort to hide us immediately and seemed not in the least worried though we kept saying that we thought we ought to hide. We were told that ~~an~~ English-speaking person had been sent for and was expected at any moment. He arrived, satisfied himself as to our identity by asking some questions,

IMMEDIATE
AID

and, then went into a huddle with the other Frenchmen. They seemed at loss as to what could be done with us, and, while they were discussing it, another farmer arrived with ~~the~~ ^{to say} news that ~~some~~ ^{the} Germans were on their way to search the wood.

HIDDEN IN
CAVE

We were told to follow an old man who guided us very leisurely along the edge of the wood before we cut across some fields to another wooded area. There was a small rock cave in this wood which gave us excellent cover, and, we were left alone here after being told that someone would return in the afternoon. Several people came during the afternoon. Our Aids Boxes and First Aid kits were brought to us; ~~in addition to~~ ^{also} more food than we could eat. Between visits we lay quietly in the cave sleeping and whispering ~~and at no time~~ ^{what we talked; we} saw ~~any~~ Germans though we were told that they were searching the woods.

VISITED BY
A DOCTOR

The English-speaking man came to see us after dark to tell us that we ~~would~~ must spend the night in the wood but that we would be moved the next day. There were no more visits until the next afternoon when the English-speaking man brought a doctor to see us. The doctor spent the rest of the afternoon in our hide-out and after dark several Frenchmen appeared. They arranged a stretcher for me ~~(it~~ ~~was~~) and we were taken to a road where bicycles were given us. Before leaving the cave we changed into civilian clothes. After cycling about nine miles we were taken to a house where the rest of our journey was arranged.

Journey
Arranged

LT BOOTH'S STORY UNTIL JOINING LT SMITH:

After we were out of the heavy flak area, in the vicinity of PARIS, enemy fighters attacked from the nose. From then on I was busy firing my guns and did not know how severely damaged we were until I heard the order to ^{prepare to} bail out. I was about to replace my oxygen mask and helmet which I had removed ~~to~~ so that I could put on my chest chute, when ~~the~~ bombardier ~~opened~~ opened the escape hatch and jumped. Still fussing with my chute, I turned around once more and saw Lt SMITH getting ready to leave the plane. I ~~waited~~ ^{waited} two or three seconds and followed him, out.

I planned a delayed jump but after falling about 6000 feet down to 17000 feet I was in such a violent spin ^{that}, being afraid of losing consciousness, I pulled the rip cord. One chute was below me, ³⁰⁰⁰ ~~three~~ or ⁴⁰⁰⁰ ~~four~~ thousand feet, and the aircraft, with the left wing on fire, ^{falling} was in a slow spin some distance away. I saw it crash and burn. There was an Me 109 circling near the chute below me and when I got down to 5000 feet I heard the report of a large gun, ^{one} ~~one~~ shot went through the canopy of my chute leaving seven holes about the size of apples. Six Ju 88's took off from a field to the south of me and approached on level but did not disturb me. Before I got to the ground people were running toward the thinly wooded area into which I was falling. It was not possible to distinguish who they were, before I ^{hit} ~~got~~ ~~to~~ the ground.

My chute caught in the top of a tree but I dropped on down to the ground. As soon as I was out of the chute and had taken off my Maw West I ran to the edge of the forest and saw the Frenchmen searching along the wood because they had lost the exact location of my ^{chute} ~~fall~~ when I got into the wood. After looking them over I motioned to a young boy who called to a friend of his, and they came into the wood with the other Frenchman tailing behind after they realized I was the parachutist. A man asked ~~me~~ if I were American and shook hands with me when I said, "yes". I had to be introduced to all the Frenchmen, and, for a few minutes there was nothing but confusion while they ~~all~~ ^{both} tried to talk to me and ~~talk~~ among themselves at the same time. I tried to let them know that I wanted to hide, and, when they understood they told me that an English-speaking man was coming to talk to me. While we were waiting they asked if

PLANS
Delayed
Jump

FIRE AT
FRONT
GROUND

Shows Self
to Searching
FRENCHMAN

I had any American cigarettes. I did have some chewing gum to give them. While they were examining ~~him~~^{it} one man pointed out in the fields and we saw Lt SMITH hobbling in our direction. One of the Frenchmen went after him and brought him into the wood.

White

W.S. Holt

APPENDIX B:

- a. While passing ~~an~~ a large airfield in the vicinity of JUVISY evaders saw an Me 110
- b. Evaders were told, around 1 October, that a large bridge crossing the SEINE at CORBEIL had been mined by the Germans.
- c. At a famous chateau - the Chateau ~~Saint-Sauveur~~^{Saint-Sauveur} - about 450 motorcycle troops were in training for the Eastern Front. Troops were quartered in barracks around the chateau. Evaders heard this 1 October.
- d. Evaders saw several prison camps between BORDEAUX and DAX. The majority of prisoners ~~appeared~~ appeared to be negroes and were usually dressed in long brown coats.
- e. On 17 November Evaders saw many German troops and flat-cars loaded with trucks in the railway stations of BORDEAUX and DAX.
- f. Evaders were told that most aircraft around MILLY and ST GERMAIN ^(near MILLY) were Ju 88's used in combat training. Frenchman stated that an airfield at ETAMPES used a B-17 for some operational purpose. October 1943.