

**THE LIBERATOR “WARCHAMP” OF THE AMERICAN PILOT LOREN REID:
Crashed Mai 27, 1944 in Altenkessel**

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As told in the previous chapter, a second Liberator was hit by anti aircraft artillery on Mai 27, 1944 at the same time as the Leiningen ship. That was the four engined Liberator “Warchamp” of the Pilot Loren F. Reid, which was also stationed with the 389th Bomb Group in Hethel. The burning bomber dropped onto one of the semi-detached houses in the street then named Sudetenstrasse, now called Grosswaldstrasse, in Altenkessel, whereby one man was killed and three children injured. The fuselage lay between the houses, one wing in a garden. While coming down on their parachutes, the men were shot at from the ground. Five of them were immediately arrested on Lumpenberg Hill near Altenkessel and handed over to the police.

The very same day three of the crew, copilot Karpinko, waist gunner Brun and tail gunner Ward were retrieved dead out of the ruins under the supervision of an anti aircraft artillery unit of Saarbruecken. Karpinko’s parachute had been cut by his own tumbling aircraft, so that he sped down without parachute. Brun and Ward probably did not make it out. Three days after the crash a strong odor of decay was noticed at the site. The fire brigade of Altessel then found the corpse of waist gunner Clark. All four dead were buried in the cemetery of Altenkessel. Karpinko and Clark have been moved to the American military cemetery in St.Avoid in Lothringen, while Brun was transported to the USA.

Today only the upper top gunner Robert Staton and the radio operator John Burns are alive. The author has a short report by Staton in hand. He writes: *“When we were hit, I heard no order to bail out. Radio operator John Burns stood below me and pulled me by the trouser leg, as a sign, that I should get out. Pennington, Gardner and Nozynski jumped through the hatch under the nose. Reid, Karpinko Burns and I left the bomber through the bomb bay. I needed some time to get down from the top. Obviously the bomb bay had also been hit by the anti-aircraft defence. At any rate it stood in flames, when I finally got there. I jumped with my parachute under my arm and put it only on, while already falling through the air. My face, head and my hands were burnt. When I came closer to the ground, I was taken under fire, like the other crew too. As far as I know, nobody was hit, but we all had holes in our parachutes. Before I reached the ground, I could see, people running from all directions toward my landing site. They were armed with all sorts of gardening tools. I lay on the ground, surrounded by these people. One of them hit me with the handle of a hoe. Then soldiers came and took me to a building, where also Gardner, Nozynski, Pennington and Burns were held. None of my comrades had burns. Red Cross nurses treated my burns and wrapped me in gauze. Next morning my eyes were so swollen, that I could no longer see. That day we were put on a train and taken to Frankfurt.”*

Not all soldiers of WW II succeeded to put their bad experiences behind them. Radio operator Burns would have liked to send a report to the author too, but is still suffering from post traumatic symptoms. He writes: *"During the five decades after the war, I avoided every thought about my war experiences. Therein I succeeded until December 1994. At this time the media started their reports of the 50th Anniversary of the end of the war and reports about the holocaust, war episodes etc. That led to my being plagued by nightmares and flash backs and becoming emotionally instable. I was told, it would be helpful to write and talk about my experiences. Right now I am unable to do either without increasing my problems."*