

**Crash of American Thunderbolt pilot
Eugene C. Crafton jr.
3rd February 1945, Käshofen**

Combat Report by 1st Lt. Robert E. Bunde

"After joining formation from our original strafing mission we proceeded to head home. At Zweibrücken we found more trains which lead and yellow sections proceeded to strafe. I had joined with Lt. Michela to form red section previously and we did a left turnabout of about 200 degrees, crossing the railroad east of town. I was slightly behind and to the left of Lt. Michela, and Lt. Crafton was on the right wing. I saw a burst of flak between our two elements and called it in over the RT. I turned to the left and then heard Lt. Crafton say that he was hit and on fire. As I turned to the right, I saw white smoke being emitted by his plane and then a sheet of flame from the belly about the trailing edge of the right wing. Lt. Crafton asked for a heading home, but his plane began to slow down and it appeared to be almost stalling. It then did a wing over to the right and plunged straight into the ground. Lt. Crafton parachuted just as the plane started to dive, and his chute appeared to open all right. Our altitude at the time was about 3500'."

Combat Report by 1st. Lt. Donald A. Michela

"Forty mm opened up at us east of Zweibrücken and as I looked around Lt. Crafton was streaming white smoke. As I was about to call him he called the flight leader and asked what heading to take for home because he was on fire. I saw flame spurt from the right side of the cockpit. He started to fly the heading when I observed the ship head for the ground. He seemed to be o. k. and I saw him moving in the harness as if to control the direction. I did not observe him hit the earth."