

CONFIDENTIAL

ENCOUNTER REPORT

LT. MERLE J. GILBERTSON

- Handwritten:* New File
- A. Combat
 - B. 30 January 1944
 - C. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group
 - D. 1210
 - E. Vicinity of Osnabruck
 - F. Clear - 10/10 clouds at 6,000 - 3/10 clouds at 36,000.
 - G. Do 217
 - H. One (1) Do 217 DAMAGED
 - I.

I was leading my wingman home due to difficulties he encountered in flying his aircraft at high altitude. From 22,000 feet we sighted E/A off to starboard at about 15,000 feet. The E/A was quite some distance away which ruined any element of surprise I might have had. With 2 Radii lead and range about 150 yards I opened fire. About one second later the E/A half rolled and attempted to dive away. I followed firing several bursts and had to use combat flaps to keep from over running. A dark object about the size of an ordinary wing flap seemed to come off the right wing of the E/A near the wing root. My speed had increased by now to the point where I was forced to pull out. Coming out of the dive I again turned after same E/A who was heading towards Germany. The E/A immediately dove into the overcast.

I Claim: One (1) Do 217 DAMAGED.

- J. Ser No of A/c: 42-67819
- A/c Markings: LC-P
- Ammunition Expended: 480 rounds 50 caliber
26 rounds 20mm Cannon.

/s/ Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
1st Lt., Air Corps,

/s/ Joseph R. Genest
JOSEPH R. GENEST,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

A TRUE COPY:

Handwritten: Gerald F Costello
GERALD F. COSTELLO, 408
Captain, Air Corps,
ASst A-2, 67 FW.

(D-3)

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Authority NND 745005

By JG NARA Date 3-11-11

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PILOT'S PERSONAL ENCOUNTER REPORT

1ST LT. MERLE J. GILBERTSON

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH FIGHTER COMD.
REGISTRY No. <u>208302</u>
COPY No. <u>2</u>
A-2

- A. Combat
- B. February 5, 1944
- C. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group
- D. 1126
- E. Bourges Airfield
- F. Clear
- G. He-111 and FW-200
- H. One (1) He-111 destroyed, shared with Lt. Frakes and Lt. Morris

I. Flying Yellow No. 3 at 18,000 feet heard Group Leader tell Rebuke go down for bounce on aircraft taking off from field below. Four or five P-38s were in turn firing on FW-200 flying at 50 feet. As last P-38 broke off flame and smoke was coming out of right inboard engine. I cut across the circle and opened fire with about one radius lead at 300 yards. Strikes appeared all over the target. After about five seconds of firing the entire target burst into flame. I flew through the smoke and saw FW-200 crash.

After this we made turn to port and saw He-111 about 200-300 feet off ground. Three P-38s fired at this ship and I slid under third ship and as he broke off I opened fire at 250 yards dead astern and closed to 50 yards firing a five-second burst. Strikes seen on He-111 on both fuselage and right wing root. Tail assembly and right wing seemed to disintegrate and large pieces of wing flew back over my plane. Saw He-111 cartwheel flaming and crash and then explode.

I claim one (1) He-111 destroyed (shared with Lts. Morris and Frakes pending assessment of film).

- J. Flying plane LC-P
Serial No. 42-67819
Ammunition expended: 150 rounds of 20mm cannon.
800 rounds of 50 caliber.

/s/ Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE J. GILBERTSON
1st Lieut., Air Corps

/s/ Francis W. Barkley
FRANCIS W. BARKLEY
1st Lieut., Air Corps
Intelligence Officer

A TRUE COPY

Gerald F. Costello
GERALD F. COSTELLO
Captain, Air Corps
Ass't A-2, 67 FW

(D-1)

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Authority NNID 745005
By JG NARA Date 3-11-11

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PILOT'S PERSONAL ENCOUNTER REPORT

Captain Merle J. Gilbertson

HEADQUARTERS
EIGHTH FIGHTER COMD.
REGISTRY No. 29990-20
COPY No. 1
A-2

- A. Combat.
- B. 5 August 1944.
- C. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group.
- D. 1215.
- E. N.W. Hamburg.
- F. CAVU.
- G. Me-109.
- H. One (1) Me-109 destroyed.
- I.

"I was leading Red Flight at 28,000 feet on bomber escort mission in northeast vicinity of Hamburg. Bandits were called in at about 3 o'clock high to the lead box. We immediately increased our climb and headed over in supposed direction of enemy activity. I called my flight and White Leader, that we were dropping tanks and attacking one of three gaggles composed of from 15 to 20 Me-109s. We were now at about 30,000 feet with the enemy slightly below us and down sun from us. My flight experienced great difficulty in releasing their combat tanks and after diving down into the melee I found my flight had lost me. As soon as I'd get my sights on a target there would be 2 or 3 e/a on my tail which made it necessary for me to discontinue my attack and break into the enemy. This continued for one to one and half minutes with me getting no shooting in whatsoever. Twice I was forced to definitely break into blue nosed Mustangs which in my estimation were mistaking me for e/a. Due to the presence of more Mustangs and P-38s the fight was soon dispersed over a greater area. I finally managed to draw a fair lead on a lone Me-109, range about 300 yards with an angle off of about 30 to 40° at about 18,000 feet. I fired a mere split second burst, observed scattered strikes on cockpit and left wing root. Instantly the enemy appeared to go berserk. The Me-109 straightened out for a second, the left wing lowered and he went into two turns of a flat spin. From this it tumbled tail over nose for 3 or 4 turns and went into a gentle spiral losing altitude more rapidly. He had slowed down in the flat spin so I chopped my throttle to stay behind and followed him until he crashed into the ground. During the initial encounter I experienced no great difficulty in shaking the enemy from my tail from 28,000 feet down. They seemed to be generally milling around in a luffberry and everyone more or less following the leader."

I Claim: One (1) Me-109 destroyed.

J.
Merle J. Gilbertson, Captain 44-13637 LC-G 217 rds 50 Caliber.

(D) Best Air

Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
Captain, Air Corps.
Francis W. Barkley
FRANCIS W. BARKLEY,
Captain, Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

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Authority NND 745005
By JG NARA Date 3-11-11

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PILOT'S PERSONAL ENCOUNTER REPORT

Captain Merle J. Gilbertson

- A. Combat.
- B. 16 August 1944.
- C. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group.
- D. 1000.
- E. Vicinity of Mulhausen.
- F. Hazy.
- G. Me-109.
- H. One (1) Me-109 destroyed.

I.

"I was flying Yellow 1 in vicinity of Mulhausen. Due to a previous encounter with the enemy my flight was all split up. At an altitude of approximately 19,000 feet and one o'clock from me I recognized a flight of four 109s climbing slightly and heading in general direction of the big friends. I pushed everything forward and gave pursuit. Had closed to maybe 1500 to 1000 yards when their #4 man half-rolled and went down for no apparent reason, I did likewise. Twice it appeared that he intended to level out but would immediately roll over and continue the dive. At about 7,000 feet the pilot bailed out, I throttled back, watched the 109 spin a time or two, crash and explode in a small wooded area. During the dive I had managed to close to approximately 500 yards, but expended no ammunition."

I claim: One (1) Me-109 destroyed.

J.

Captain Merle J. Gilbertson

44-13637

LC-G

No Ammo Expended.

1) Dec 2 air

Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
Captain, Air Corps.

Francis W. Barkley
FRANCIS W. BARKLEY,
Captain, Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

STATEMENT

"I was flying Yellow 3 in vicinity of Mulhausen. Off to my left and slightly above me was a Me-109 stooging around. I climbed toward him and when e/a saw me he split-essed, I followed. The next thing I knew, and before I could get in range to fire at this 109 another Me-109 came screaming past me, with a P-51 approximately 400-500 yards behind, going down in a spinning dive, crashing and exploding in the edge of a woods. By this time I had lost the Me-109 I was chasing, so I called to the P-51 that had just past which turned out to be Yellow 1."

Rex E. Moncrieff
REX E. MONCRIEFF,
1st Lt., Air Corps.

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Authority NNID 745005

By JG NARA Date 3-11-11

C. [REDACTED]
CAPTAIN MERLE J. GILBERTSON O-730451

*Flaming B-17 plainly
visible attacked by FW 190
1st kill hit in
fuselage section*

A. Combat.

B. 14 January 1945.

C. 77th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group.

D. 1235.

E. Vicinity of Perleberg, Germany.

F. CAVU.

G. Me-109.

1-0-0 H. One (1) Me-109 destroyed - Shared with Lt. Starke.

SHARED

I.

"Leading ^{the} ~~Squadron~~ Squadron escorting V.G. 1-5 at 30,000 feet. In vicinity of Perleberg at 1235 Group Leader called in many suspicious contrails at 12 o'clock to the bomber trail. A few seconds later a combat wing (probably V.G. 1-3) appeared to be under heavy attack. Giving my Red Leader instructions to cover our bombers I drove up to the scene of action. By this time the sky seemed literally full of e/a, P-51s and flaming bombers. Slightly to the port and low I spotted an e/a making a pass on an already flaming B-17. Closing rapidly on the enemy, which turned out to be a Me-109, I opened fire at about 300 yards, zero deflection, altitude around 19,000 feet. Observed strikes on center section followed by black smoke and glycol. Due to my hi-overtaking speed I narrowly missed collision by dumping the stick, passing beneath, then to the port and up. As I passed beneath my canopy became covered with prestone (or whatever else he was streaming). Before I could again slide into shooting position my wingman had closed, was firing and getting many strikes. Said 109 streamed more black smoke and began steep dive earthward."

Claim: One (1) Me-109 destroyed - Shared with
Lt. Starke.

J.

Captain MERLE J. GILBERTSON 44-14822

LC-A 300 rds 50 Caliber.

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DOD Dir. 52009, Sept. 27, 1958
NCWN by 27 date 9-7-72

Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
Captain, Air Corps.

Francis W. Barkley
FRANCIS W. BARKLEY,
Captain, Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

H. Parlee

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CONSOLIDATED ENCOUNTER REPORT

MAJOR MERLE J. GILBERTSON 0-730451
CAPT. LOWELL E. EINHAUS 0-767167
CAPT. EDWIN C. JENNINGS 0-661215
CAPT. CHARLES H. COLE 0-725682
1ST LT. FREDERICK (NMI) LARSEN 0-470948
1ST LT. WILLIAM C. FAY 0-827185

1ST LT. REPS D. JONES 0-675708
1ST LT. PHILLIP L. SCHALLO 0-688850
1ST LT. GARTH L. REYNOLDS 0-692198
2ND LT. GLEN R. HALL 0-818375
2ND LT. EDWIN R. PITZ 0-827272
2ND LT. JOHN P. STARKE 0-820343

- a. Combat.
- b. 9 February 1945.
- c. 77th Ftr Sq, 20th Ftr Gp.
- d. 1315 to 1335.
- e. Esperstedt, airfield, Germany.
- f. Clear on deck, 5/10 cloud cover at 5000 feet.
- g. FW 190 - Me 109 - Me 410 - Me 110 - u/i s/e biplane.
- h. 3 FW 190s destroyed - Major Gilbertson
 - 1 Me 109 destroyed - Lt. Jones OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Lt. Starke OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Capt. Edwin C. Jennings ? POSSIBLY ONE DAM
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Schallo OK
 - 1 s/e biplane destroyed - Lt. Larsen ?
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Larsen OK
 - 6 FW 190s destroyed - Capt. Einhaus - ?
 - 6 FW 190s destroyed - Capt. Cole OK
 - 3 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. William C. Fay. ONE DEF. TWO ?
 - 3 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Jones OK POSSIBLY MORE
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Reynolds OK
 - 2 FW 190s destroyed - Lt. Pitz OK
 - 1 FW 190 destroyed - Lt. Hall OK
 - 1 Me 410 destroyed - Lt. Schallo MANY HITS (OK ?)
 - 1 Me 410 destroyed - Lt. Starke MANY HITS (OAM)
 - 2 Me 110s destroyed - Lt. Reynolds OK
 - 1 FW 190 damaged - Capt. Cole OK
 - 1 FW 190 damaged - Lt. Hall OK
 - 1 Me 110 damaged - Maj. Gilbertson
 - 1 Me 110 damaged - Lt. Pitz OK
 - 1 Me 410 damaged - Lt. Hall OK

Other ground targets:

- 1 locomotive dest - Maj. Gilbertson OK
- 1 hangar destroyed - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 1 hangar destroyed - Lt. Jones OK
- 2 hangars destroyed - Lt. Larsen
- 2 hangars damaged - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 1 admin. bldg. damaged - Capt. Einhaus - ?
- 6 huns killed - Capt. Einhaus ?
- 20 freight cars damaged - 77th Squadron.
- 1 gun emplacement & personnel damaged - Capt. Jennings.

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)

745005
By 7 NARS, Date 10/31/77

1. After our squadron had escorted the bombers around their target at Lutzkendorf, we dropped down to strafe on a heading of 260°. Just east of Esperstedt airfield a long train was strafed by Major Gilbertson and his section. The engine was destroyed by Major Gilbertson but the freight cars would not burn and therefore are claimed as damaged only.

Right after this Lt. Larsen who was flying Yellow 4 was first to see about 80 plus e/a, 3/4 of which were s/e (mostly 190s) and the balance t/e aircraft. He made a pass on the field as he called the planes in to the squadron. The squadron then strafed the field for 20 minutes from 1315 to 1335 making one pass from east to west, 2 passes from north to south and as many as 5 passes were made by some pilots from south to north. The light flak was very intense but not accurate. 38 planes were destroyed on the ground and 5 damaged. 4 hangars, 1 large and 3 blister types, were destroyed and 2 were damaged. 1 gun emplacement and personnel were damaged, 1 administrative building was damaged and 6 of the Huns were killed.

(Over)

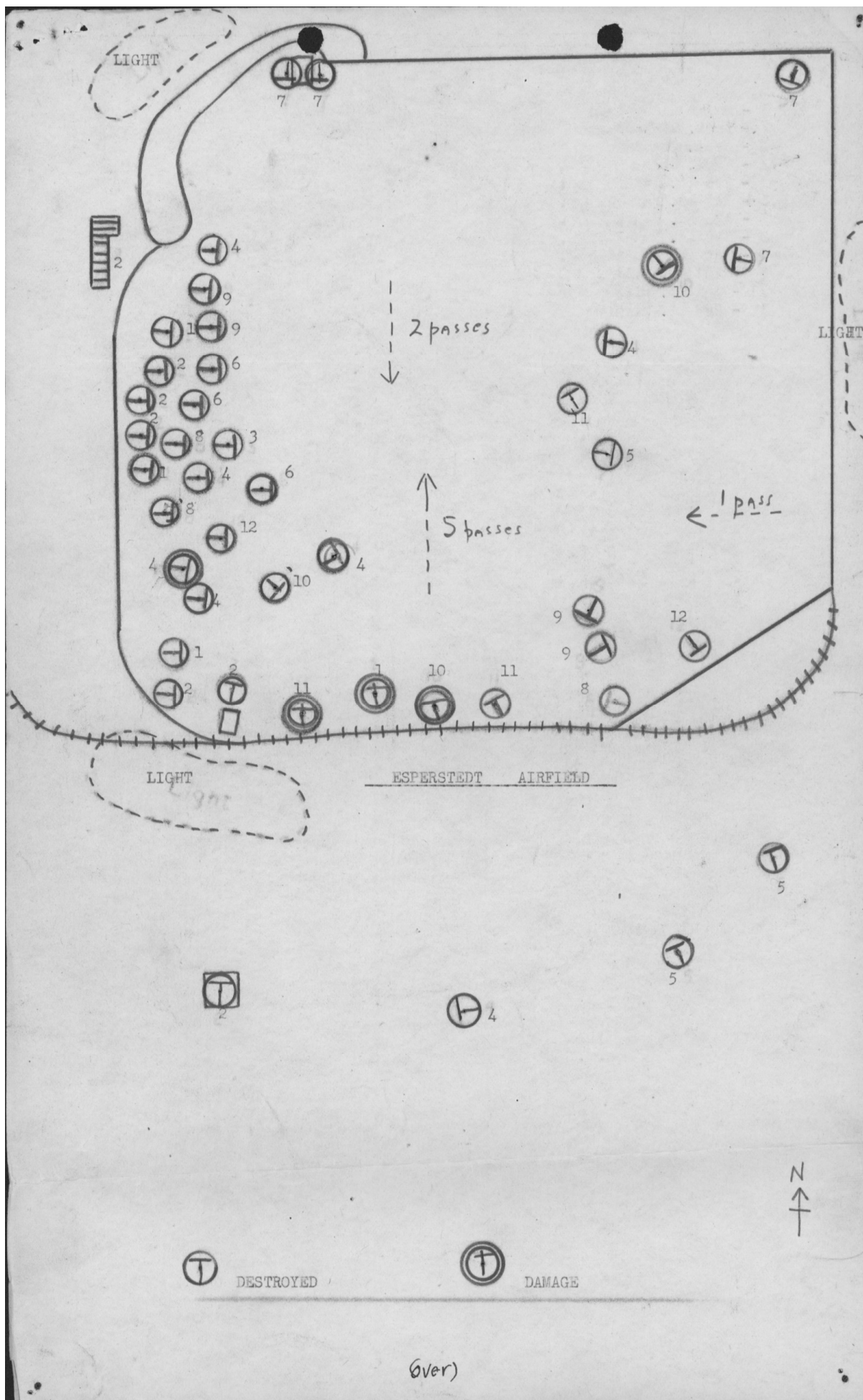
All the planes -- especially the FW 190s -- appeared to be brand new and burst into flame readily. Capt. Cole who was leading Red section took pictures of the field with his K-25 camera after his ammo had run out. We are enclosing these pictures which reveal many planes on fire even though the field was still under attack after the pictures were taken.

There were revetments to the south with roads from them leading to the field and dispersal areas. There were many light flak emplacements south of the field as well as on the eastern side and in the southwest and northwest corners.

j.	Ser No of A/C:	Markings of A/C:	Ammo expended:
Gilbertson	44-14822	LC-A	1600 rounds 50 cal.
Einhaus	44-13918	LC-V	1300 rounds 50 cal.
Jennings	44-13798	LC-W	1279 rounds 50 cal.
Cole	44-11324	LC-U	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Larsen	44-15605	LC-M	1480 rounds 50 cal.
Fay	44-11566	LC-Q	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Jones	44-14823	LC-F	1800 rounds 50 cal.
Schallo	44-14975	LC-K	1460 rounds 50 cal.
Reynolds	44-15321	LC-S	1500 rounds 50 cal.
Hall	44-14824	LC-P	750 rounds 50 cal.
Pitz	44-14598	LC-L	1670 rounds 50 cal.
Starke	44-13803	LC-P	1760 rounds 50 cal.

Merle J. Gilbertson
 MERLE J. GILBERTSON,
 Major, Air Corps,

Joseph R. Genest
 JOSEPH R. GENEST,
 1st Lieut., Air Corps,
 Intelligence Officer.



PILOT'S PERSONAL ENCOUNTER REPORT

MAJOR MERLE J. GILBERTSON O-730451 1ST LT.
WALTER E. UMLA JR. O-832945 F/O JEROME ROSENBLUM
T-63522

- A. COMBAT.
- B. ¹⁶~~17~~ APRIL 1945.
- C. 77TH FIGHTER SQUADRON, 20TH FIGHTER GROUP.
- D. 1650.
- E. CHAM AIRFIELD, GERMANY.
- F. CAVU.
- G. U/I S/E A/C.
- H. ONE (1) U/I S/E A/C DESTROYED MAJOR GILBERTSON.
TWO (2) BUILDINGS DAMAGED LTS. UMLA, ROSENBLUM.

I. "LED SQUADRON TO CHAM AIRFIELD IMMEDIATELY AFTER LAST C.G. BOMBED, ^{Rosenblum} AT ABOUT 1650. WE CIRCLED THE FIELD IN PREPARATION FOR AN ATTACK AFTER CHECKING THREE OTHER FIELDS IN THE VICINITY. I TOOK WHITE SECTION UP SUN TO A POINT ABOUT SEVEN MILES FROM THE FIELD LEAVING RED SECTION TO PROVIDE TOP COVER IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY. WHITE SECTION LET DOWN TO THE DECK FROM ABOUT 8,000 FEET, WITH ABOUT 450 MPH INDICATED. A CLUMP OF TREES PREVENTED ME FROM BRINGING MY GUNS TO BEAR ON A FRESHLY PAINTED ME 109. A FEW YARDS BEYOND THIS A/C WAS A CANVAS SHELTER RIGGED ON FOUR STAKES WITH A S/E A/C BETWEEN ME AND THE SHELTER WITH ONE S/E A/C BENEATH THE CANVAS. DUE TO THE HIGH SPEED AT WHICH WE WERE TRAVELLING I WAS ABLE TO GIVE THE A/C BESIDE THE SHELTER A MERE SPLIT-SECOND BURST-LIKEWISE BEING UNABLE TO OBSERVE RESULTS. THE SHELTER PROVIDED A BETTER TARGET AS I OBSERVED NUMEROUS STRIKES. PULLING UP TO THE RIGHT AFTER CROSSING THE FIELD WE OBSERVED A GOOD FIRE BURNING WHERE THE SHELTER HAD BEEN. WORK SHOPS WERE ALSO BURNING ABOUT 150 YARDS FURTHER ON. I CIRCLED THE FIELD AT ABOUT 8,000 FEET AFTER THE ATTACK AND TOOK ABOUT 6 PICTURES WITH MY K-25 CAMERA."

CLAIMS: ONE (1) U/I S/E A/C DESTROYED
BY MAJOR GILBERTSON.
ADDITIONAL CLAIM PENDING FILM ASSESMENT.

TWO (2) BUILDINGS DAMAGED - LTS. UMLA,
ROSENBLUM.

DECLASSIFIED
DOD Dir. 52009, Sept. 27, 1958
NCWN by 27 date 9-7-72

MAJOR GILBERTSON	44-14822	LC-A	270 RDS 50 CALIBER.
1ST LT. UMLA	44-72107	LC-N	240 RDS 50 CALIBER.
F/O ROSENBLUM	44-11335	LC-C	180 RDS 50 CALIBER.

Merle J. Gilbertson
MERLE B. GILBERTSON,
MAJOR, AIR CORPS.

(CONFIRMATION ON OTHER SIDE)

CONFIRMATION OF CLAIM

OF S/E U/I A/C

"WHILE PRECEEDING ACCORDING TO PLAN TO STRAFE AIRFIELDS NORTH AND EAST OF REGENSBURG, MAJOR GILBERTSON STARTED TO LET DOWN FROM 10,000 ~~FEET~~ FEET, AWAY FROM CHAM, CONSIDERED TO BE THE BEST FIELD AFTER RECONNAISSANCE OF THE AREA. PASS WAS MADE WITH EIGHT SHIPS LINE ABREAST, WITH THE SUN TO OUR BACKS, ON THE DECK AT A SPEED OF ABOUT 450 TO 500 MPH. I WAS FLYING MAJOR GILBERTSON'S WING AND SAW HIM SET A LARGE SINGLE ENGINE AIRPLANE, WHICH I COULD NOT IDENTIFY, ON FIRE AND ALSO A CANVAS TARPULIN BEHIND THE SHIP WHICH SEEMED TO BE A TEMPORARY HANGAR SHELTER. THERE WERE CONCENTRATIONS OF FLAK SEEN AT EDGES AND NEAR CENTER OF FIELD BUT NO AIRPLANES WERE HIT."

WCMH p2
DOD D1
600 800 03 1020
DECLASSIFIED

Robert A. Page
ROBERT A. REGE,
1ST LT., AIR CORPS.

Joseph R. Genest
JOSEPH R. GENEST,
1ST LT., AIR CORPS,
INTELLIGENCE OFFICER.