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The Liberator "Penthouse for Ten" by the American pilot Harry McGregor: Crashed on August 9, 1944 on Dickenberg near Püttlingen¹

By Klaus Zimmer, 1999

function	Surname	Service-Degree	Remarks
pilot	Harry B. McGREGOR	Captain	please; was from Grapevine, Texas
Copilot	Richard H. CLARK	1st Lt.	please; came from Hollywood, California
Navigator 1	Edward E. PIERGIS	2nd Lt.	please; was from Lorain, Ohio
Navigator 2	Max A. NEWELL	1st Lt.	please; was from Darby, Montana
Bombardier	Raymond F. SHINDER	1st Lt.	please; came from East Hartford, Connecticut
Flight engineer	Leon A. PETERSON	T / Sgt.	please; was from Modesto, California
Radio operator	Clay L. YOUNG	T / Sgt.	fallen, came from Greensboro, North Carolina
Ball turret shooter	Carl J. FORESTER	S / Sgt.	+ 30.03.1994
right side shooter	Floyd J. LILES	S / Sgt.	+ 04/29/1968
left side shooter	Bruce B. McGAUGHY	S / Sgt.	please; was from Barrington, Illinois
Rear gunner	Earl G. WELLS	S / Sgt.	please; was from Gulfport, Florida

The attack

On the morning of August 9, 1944, over 800 American heavy bombers and almost 700 escort fighters set out for the Stuttgart and Munich areas, mainly to attack armaments factories and airfields. But the machines got into serious trouble because they flew right into a bad weather front. T. visual and radio contact with each other lost. Most bombers therefore looked for secondary or casual targets to get rid of their cargo and then return to England. In this way, one hour before noon that day, machines also appeared over Saarbrücken that were targeting the shunting yard there.

First a small formation of 34 flying fortresses of the 1st Bomber Division, which had turned back via Strasbourg, dropped their bombs. Then 147 Liberators of the 2nd Bomber Division followed between 10:52 and 11:40. The local air raid protection management spoke of a "very serious terrorist attack, probably the heaviest ever." Three people were killed, 1660 were

the homeless, and the damage to property was enormous.²

The crash

The deputy leadership machine of the The 2nd bomber division was the Liberator "Penthouse for Ten" of pilot Harry B. McGregor, stationed with the 466th bomber group in Attlebridge. Because of their important function, a second navigator was on board, so that the crew consisted of 11 men. On that day, the Saarbrücken flak fired "medium strength, but very accurately," according to an American report. The "Penthouse for Ten" was also hit, causing engine no. 3 to catch fire and the right wing between this engine and no. 4 to break off. The machine then lay on its back and spun down. Two parachutes opened. The right side shooter Floyd Liles reports: "The mission was supposed to take us to Stuttgart, but was redirected to Saarbrücken on the way. We flew in the deputy command machine.

he. Our machine received several hits from anti-aircraft guns, one of which hit the fuel tank in the right wing, which went up in flames. Forrester, our turret shooter, threw out 'chaff' [tin foil strips to jam the radar], and near the photo hatch, McGaughy, the left gunner and photographer, was preparing to take pictures of the target approach. I was on the intercom on the right side of the fuselage. The system was dead and I did not get an answer from the rear gunner or from the front of the aircraft. The tail gunner was evidently leaving his position.

The right wing broke off and the machine spun out of control. McGaughy jumped off first, followed shortly after by Forester. While I was putting on my umbrella, I was hit in the head by a flak splinter and knocked out. I have no clear memory of how I got out. When I opened my parachute, debris fell beside me and I could see billows of black smoke in the air, probably from the falling engines.

All I saw was one other parachute, Forester's. We both ended up in a place near Saarbrücken and were captured almost immediately. We thought our bomber had exploded and that McGaughy's parachute had failed. "

The Liberator hit the ground at Dickenberg, Püttlingen district, 2 km south of the village, on the boundary with Völklingen, as a description puts it. As the machine crashed into an area with hard ground, the individual parts shattered into numerous pieces. The partly burned dead were partly scattered in the vicinity of the crash site. One sat on the floor with his head bowed on his unopened chest parachute. The bones protruded from his back and the internal organs were visible. Another, whose parachute was only partially open, lay on his back with his arms outstretched. Other crew members were hanging out in the surrounding trees.³

Subsequently, on August 11, 1944, the Völklingen factory worker Walter Zimmer submitted the wallet of the radio operator Clay L. Young to the police there, which he had found on the day of the crash. In order not to be accused of looting, he had to provide an explanation for the delay. Zimmer stated that he had not been able to deliver the material earlier, partly because of the numerous air alarms, and that an anti-aircraft soldier he had offered it to refused to accept it.

The loss of the Penthouse for Ten came as a shock to the 466th Bomber Group's station in Attlebridge. Pilot McGregor had been seen as a role model by everyone. One who knew him described him as follows: "Captain Harry McGregor was a

Pilot like he is in a picture book. He had more flying hours than anyone else and had an authority we never questioned. (...) He spoke with a slight, dragging Texan accent. When I think back to him, I picture him like Jimmy Stewart, the actor and B-24 pilot. Harry was one of those. Always upright, so we said. He was unbearable - a dormant pole in a land of insecure young fliers. (...) You felt comfortable with good old solid Harry. (...) The news of the shooting down caused a shock on the ward, especially with the few of us who were left of the original group. Wow! How would we do it if Harry hadn't made it? "And the military doctor Dr. Hoff noted in his diary:" Today I lost the old Mac and its amazing crew, the last old original crew. That is certainly a major blow. A wing was shot down and they fell to the ground, burning. That is hard!"^{4th}

The 9 dead of the McGregor machine were all buried in the cemetery in Püttlingen and reburied after the war. Bombardier Shinder and Navigator Newell rest today in the American military cemetery in St. Avold, Lorraine.⁵

The parachutists

We know very well about the parachute landing of the men who made it out of the plane. As Liles and Forrester unanimously reported after the war, the left side shooter Bruce B. McGaughy jumped out first. They explained that McGaughy was one of the Fallen by the fact that his parachute had not opened. In fact, eyewitnesses in Schwarzenholz observed how "an elongated object" fell out of the bomber flying low in the direction of Köllerbach. Eyewitness Hedwig Scherer: "We initially thought this object was a bomb. But it was one of the inmates, because a parachute opened at a height of around 20 to 30 m and the man slammed onto the ground on the street in front of the school in Schwarzenholz, breaking his leg allegedly a 19 year old American. At first he was threatened with pitchforks and scythes by residents who rushed over to him, but then he was protected by a local soldier. They finally drove him to the school building in a pull cart. "The braking effect of a parachute that only opens at a height of 20 to 30 m is low, so it is difficult to imagine that someone would survive such a fall. We can assume that McGaughy will initially be alive, but then died of internal injuries. The reference that appears several times in the German crash documents also points to this point of view. The braking effect of a parachute that only opens at a height of 20 to 30 m is low, so it is difficult to imagine that someone would survive such a fall. We can assume that McGaughy was initially still alive but then died from internal injuries. The reference that appears several times in the German crash documents also points to this view of things. The braking effect of a parachute that only opens at a height of 20 to 30 m is low, so it is difficult to imagine that someone would survive such a fall. We can assume that McGaughy was initially still alive but then died from internal injuries. The reference that appears several times in the German crash documents also points to this view of things.

stated that "8 dead" had been found in the rubble. The ninth dead was probably McGaughy, whose body was not in the rubble and about whom the authors of the documents, which were produced immediately after the crash, were not yet aware. The entries in the Püttlingen cemetery register also point to this fact. There the following burials for the crash on August 9th, 1944 are registered for the second row of the cemetery:

No. 16: Richard H. Clark No. 17:
Clay L. Young No. 17: Leon A.
Peterson No. 18: two other
inmates No. 19: Earl G. Wells

No. 19: Edward E. Piergis
No. 20: Max A. Newell.

So McGaughy is not among those named. It follows immediately after these entries, without specifying the date and place of death:

No. 20: an inmate unknown.

The latter buried person could possibly have been McGaughy, whose body may have arrived "late" and without accompanying documents.

The second American to jump out of the "Penthouse for Ten" was the ball turret shooter Carl J. Forester. He must have been the second parachutist the people in Schwarzenholz saw. He landed in the forest near the Mariengrotto, was immediately captured and also taken to the school in Schwarzenholz. There the German soldier mentioned above gave him a cigarette, but a policeman from a neighboring town knocked it out of his mouth.

If you connect the landing sites of the men who landed in or near Schwarzenholz, the line precisely describes the direction to the crash site of the Liberator on the Dickenberg near Püttlingen.

The third and final skydiver was the right side shooter Floyd J. Liles. The home chronicle of Elm and Sprengen reports that at the end of the summer of 1944 a parachutist who had come from a bomber that had crashed near Püttlingen was led through the town. He was picked up near the "Morgenstern", at the end of Püttlinger Strasse in Knausholz, in the direction of Püttlingen, and taken to Elm by members of the NSDAP. "And while he was being led through the village, he was badly mistreated by them. When he asked for water, he was even denied that request. A shameful, hateful scene! The soldier was later picked up by members of the Wehrmacht and by freed from terror." This process (which happened slightly differently in detail, as reported in the Chronicle) was the subject of extensive investigations by the American military authorities after the war. They also investigated the episode with the one out of the mouth

beaten cigarette in black wood. The events in Elm-Sprengen and Schwalbach then had a judicial aftermath, while in relation to the events in Schwarzenholz there was probably not enough evidence for an indictment.

It should also be mentioned that Forester and Liles finally both found each other at the Püttlingen gendarmerie, where the head of the department Schmidt made a takeover report.

The trial in Dachau^{6th}

The "Schwalbach" case (mistreatment of Floyd J. Liles) was heard from December 20 to 23, 1945 before a military court in Dachau, which tried to reconstruct the events. There were numerous contradictions in the testimony of witnesses, especially about who, where, to what extent and how often had kicked or hit the American who had jumped off. What follows is what the court finally considered to be proven.

According to this, "on or around August 1, 1944 in or near Schwalbach, Germany, an American aviator landed with a parachute in the branches of a tree in the forest at Blast; the branches broke, he fell to the ground and was taken by the Germans. Those who had captured him were led out of the forest. Meanwhile a large crowd had formed. The accused Ferdinand B., Master of the Gendarmerie, appeared, took the lead, grabbed the plane by the collar, shook him, pushed him around, kicked several times in the buttocks, and then handed him over to someone named Schuld, who drove him on his motorcycle to the nearby east shaft pit." "Guilt was also the master of the gendarmerie and subordinate of the defendant Ferdinand B. At the east shaft he met some flak soldiers from Bous, who had gone in search of parachutists by bike, to whom he then handed over to the prisoners and who lingered there with the angry crowd and the American. In the meantime, Ferdinand B. also arrived at the east shaft and joined them. The plane finally had to go with raised hands and guarded by the two police officers and the flak soldiers in the direction of Schwalbach to the police station. Various forms of mistreatment then took place on the way there, with the defendants Heinrich Re., Heinrich Ru. and Johann T. who kicked and hit the American until his face and one eye swelled up and he began to bleed from his nose. Meanwhile, the defendant Ferdinand B. not only allowed the people to

Ferdinand B. pointed out in his defense that Himmler had instructed the police "not to do anything to protect captured planes from the population". B. denied mistreating the prisoner. From the east shaft onwards, the American was no longer in his but in the care of the flak soldiers. Nor does he remember spurring people on. If he made comments in this regard, it was "a great stupid thing". The witness Hugo Langenfeld exonerated B. insofar as he stated that he had never mistreated the American, but only pushed him around a few times. B. had nothing good to say about the witnesses who incriminated him. He described a witness as "not trustworthy", a witness was as "

this had fallen to the ground. Langenfeld saw this very differently and argued that the victim's shoelaces or the cords from the legs of the aviator's clothing had got caught in the spokes of his bike, causing the man to stumble without falling. He tried several times to untangle the cords until he finally succeeded. Nor could he have been the author of the observed beatings because his right arm was paralyzed and he had to hold and push his bicycle with his left arm.

Langenfeld also reported that he had tried to talk to the American about his name and origin at the Ostscht. that this did not lead to success because of the language problems. At the police station in Schwalbach, the prisoner's nosebleed had stopped and he was in a condition to be interrogated. When he asked for water, the police refused to do so, but he went several times to neighboring houses and brought the man water to drink. The latter was also confirmed by two witnesses.

The defendants Johann T., telephone operator, and Heinrich Re., Telephone operator on the pit, pleaded guilty, but both stated that they had acted on the instructions of co-defendant Ferdinand B. Heinrich Ru., Miner, also admitted his guilt.

The clerk Hugo Langenfeld from Hülzweiler, who had been discharged from hospital and from military service a few days before the event after being shot in the lung and rushed to the place of capture in the forest near Sprengen, also fell into the mills of American military justice. He was accused of hitting the American and deliberately pushing his bike against him from behind several times until

The defendant Ferdinand B. explained the refusal to give the thirsty man water by saying that the police had not been allowed to give anything to prisoners. But he did not prevent anyone from bringing water.

The court delivered the following verdicts: Ferdinand B: 4 years imprisonment; Heinrich Re. : 1 ½ years in prison; Heinrich Ru. : 2 years in prison; Johann T. : 1 ½ years in prison; Hugo Langenfeld: 1 year in prison.

In a review of the verdict, all verdicts were confirmed unchanged with the exception of the prison sentence pronounced against Langenfeld. He was acquitted.

See also: Zimmer, Klaus, "Bomber crashes in the Second World War in the area of the Saarbrücken city association", in: 50 years of the study group for regional studies in the historical association for the Saar region. V. 1949 - 1999, Ottweiler, 1999, pp. 204 - 232)

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1. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, MACR 7382; Documents Werner Eckel, Limbach.
 2. Eckel, Luftkrieg, pp. 140-144; Freeman, War Diary, p. 320.
 3. Communication from Kurt Friemond, Wehrden and Norbert Balzert, Altenkessel.
 4. Chronicle of the 466th Bombing Group, p. 102 (reported by Louis Loevsky, North Caldwell, New Jersey).
 5. Püttlingen cemetery register (communicated by Helmut Jung, Aßweiler).
 6. National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, RG 338: War Crime Case Files 12-2150 (photocopy by Jan Hey, Hengelo, Netherlands).