

Bombers Hail One-Man Air Force

Four-O-First crew members, returning from the mission to Oscherleben, were talking in Hollywood terms about the courage and daring of a lone P-51 pilot in and around the target area.

The unidentified Mustang pilot was all by himself when one of the wing formations was attacked by a swarm of 30 to 40 German fighters. Instead of turning tail and abandoning the wing in the face of impossible odds, the P-51 pilot sent his plane right into the midst of the Jerries. And for the next 20 minutes the Fortress crews were treated to one of the greatest exhibitions of sheer courage they have ever witnessed.

Estimates vary with individuals as to the number of Jerries he shot down before he was lost from view. One tail gunner claims he saw him knock out a "positive" six. Others say three to five Jerries, but all agree he did a wonderful job.

"It was a case of one lone American against what seemed to be the entire Luftwaffe," said Lt. Col. Allison C. Brooks, who led the Wing the Mustang pilot defended.

"Singlehanded, against those terrific odds, he covered the Wing all by himself.

"He was all over the Wing, across and around it, and my gunners tell me he definitely shot down two of the enemy fighters while they were watching him. Later, other pilots told me they saw him get more.

"We last saw him chasing a Jerry down through the clouds. His display of skill and courage in the face of those odds was magnificent."

"For sheer determination and guts it was the greatest exhibition I've ever seen. They can't give that boy a big enough reward."

Lt. Col. Edwin W. Brown, pilot and squadron commander, was equally lavish in his praise.

"We don't know who he was," said Brown, "but there isn't a one of us who wouldn't like to shake his hand. He's my idea of a hero.

"The sight of him out there, all alone, surrounded by all those Jerries, trading punches right and left, is something I'll never forget.

"His action typified the spirit that is going to knock the Luftwaffe out of the skies."

It was noted that each crew, upon returning to the home field, was anxious to tell the story of the fighter pilot's bravery. One Fortress station in the Midlands, in particular, will give him the key to the field, hangars, planes and all, if he ever visits their base . . .