



7

Frank S. Payne

(Stories 21,22,23)

OPTION # 2

(O.K. to Check-out but not to be copied)

SHOT DOWN OVER WESTPHALIA
Hans-Dieter Musch

#21

“When you grow older, you think back and ask yourself what ever became of all the people you came in contact with during the terrible time of the Second World War.” The man who wrote and sent these words in a letter to Guetersloh several years ago, some 50 years after the war, is Frank S. Payne, an American citizen who was a captured pilot treated at the Guetersloh reserve hospital. Here is the story written by the US pilot about how he was shot down on February 16, 1945.

During our bombing mission there were only a few antiaircraft guns firing at us, but they were shooting very accurately. Our plane was flying on the left wing of the squadron leader, an extremely dangerous position...

Just when we were about ready to drop the bombs, I felt the shock of a direct hit up front below engine three. Bob Stuber, my copilot, told me that oil was running out of engine three and the oil pressure was dropping. After dropping the bombs, I felt the plane rise and a strong impact shook the plane as an antiaircraft shell struck back on the wing and exploded near engine four... Bob Stuber shouted to me that we had a fire on the wing behind engine four.

I saw the fire spreading on the wing... The loss of the outer wing would bring the plane out of control, with no possibility of escape. The decision to escape came quick and easily... I sounded the alarm and ordered the crew to jump... I threw myself headlong out of the escape hatch... My goggles were fluttering over my face. I pulled them down and put them away... When I fell out of the cloudcover, I knew it was time to open my chute. I pulled on the D-ring, but nothing happened. I pulled again, and felt a definite yank. I looked down at myself and saw that my sheepskin boots had been almost torn from my feet...

Now it was very quiet, no sound of engines roaring, no flight noise-- nothing. There was only the light swing of the parachute and a very peaceful feeling, knowing I was still alive but had an uncertain future ahead of me. You'll soon be in enemy territory, I told myself.

I came through the last clouds at about 4,000 feet and, as I drifted sideways, saw a small town at my right. I saw several larger warehouses with 2 or 3 sets of railroad tracks with parked freight cars. This small railroad station had just been bombed and was peppered with bomb craters.

People were running around like little ants, but they were aware of me... I was scared and a little angry, because I knew I had no chance of running away or any way of escaping. I held tight to my parachute straps and turned my back to the wind. I landed on the rails between a warehouse and a string of boxcars. What a way to end my mission with the 425th bomber group!

Here former 2nd Lt. Frank S. Payne ends his report, a story he didn't put down on paper for publication until November, 1990. Payne sent it to Guetersloh when he heard that his request for contacts had been sent on to the media. He was asking for contacts with people who were living at that time in Guetersloh or even working at the hospital where he was a patient. And in fact many older fellow citizens responded, people who in one way or another, directly or indirectly, had dealt with Frank Payne.

A lively exchange of letters followed between Frank Payne and Dr. Lotte Heller from Guetersloh. She was working then in the Guetersloh reserve hospital as an assistant field doctor under her maiden name Brummert and is sure that she assisted in operating on the downed US pilot. She was working at the time in the hospital's OR but cannot remember Payne in particular, saying that they didn't have anything to do with the follow-up care. But she knows that several wounded POWs had to have operations. "I was working as a surgeon," she says, "and things were done pretty much on the double in the last days of the war. A steady flow of patients was coming through. They were driven in to us, we operated on them, and then they were taken away and assigned to the wards."

The investigations in Guetersloh were unexpectedly helped along by people in Rheda-Wiedenbrueck. A former Armed Forces pilot there is a student of World War I history and is interested also in the fate of pilots during World War II. He read about Frank Payne's wishes and did some research on his own. It is he who did the professionally accurate translation of Payne's report on the downing of the plane and also the precise reconstruction of Payne's landing. "He must have come down right by the underpass at the Rheda train station!"

The investigator from Rheda even found eyewitnesses who remember the parachutist from February 16, 1945. Ernst-Ludwig Niemann, who was living in Rheda then, likewise made a contribution with his letter to Guetersloh. In it he writes: "After I observed from my parent's home a parachutist in the air and saw that he was about to land any time, I rode my bike over to Nonnenstrasse. There the downed pilot came down, about 20 meters from the underpass on the bank of the Rheda-Oelde railroadbed, up as high as the Broeckelmann residence.

Frank Payne from the state of Oregon, USA, has since received several letters from Germany. But above all he has awoken many memories with his inquiry in Guetersloh that would otherwise not have been recorded.

In the fall of 1997 the old gentleman together with his wife had the opportunity to visit the scenes of his memories.

(Translated by Robert L. Martin)

HANS-DIETER MUSCH'S LETTER OF 11/11/97. HE WAS PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR FOR THE CITY OF GÜTERSLOH BUT IS NOW RETIRED.

MUSCH'S 3 PAGE ARTICLE ABOUT MY ARRIVAL IN GERMANY ON 2/16/45 AND MY RETURN VISIT IN SEPT. 1997. THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN JULY 1945 AT 1000 NORTH HOLLAND, PORTLAND, OREGON.

NICOLE PRAHL'S NOTE OF 3/19/98 AT SILVERTON HIGH SCHOOL. NICOLE PRAHL WAS A 16 YEAR OLD EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM LIEPLIG, GERMANY.

A TWO PAGE COPY OF NICOLE PRAHL'S TRANSLATION FROM GERMAN TO ENGLISH OF MUSCH'S STORY OF MY TWO TRIPS TO GERMANY IN 1945 & 1997.

MY COUSIN ROBERT MARTIN'S TWO PAGE TRANSLATION FROM GERMAN TO ENGL. OF MUSCH'S STORY OF MY TWO TRIPS TO GERMANY IN 1945 & 1997

FRANK SCOTT PAYNE
1477 SALLAL RD.
WOODBURN, OR. 97071



Stadt Gütersloh

Der Stadtdirektor

22

Stadtverwaltung Postfach 2955 33326 Gütersloh

Mr.
Frank S. Payne
14 77 Sallal Rd.

USA-Woodburn, DR. 97071

f. Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit
Amt
Auskunft erteilt Hans-Dieter Musch
☎ (05241) 82 2262
Telefax (05241)-82 2139
Gebäude Berliner Str. 70
Zimmer 301

Ihr Schreiben vom
Ihr Zeichen
Mein Zeichen
Datum 27.11.1997

Dear Mr. Payne,

thank you for your nice and interesting letter from 15th of October. I gave it our mayor, Mrs. Unger, and she enjoyed it very much.

Today I send you a small brochure with a report about your "adventure" in Gütersloh in 1945. You know it from our newspapers, in which I have published the same report nearly two years before. I hope, you and your wife will like the book and show it all your friends.

My best regards to you and your wife and all your friends, which are interested in your visit in Germany.

Truly yours



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Truly yours

Abgeschossen über Westfalen

„Wenn man älter wird, denkt man zurück und fragt sich, was mit all den Leuten geschehen ist, mit denen man während der schrecklichen Zeit des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Kontakt kam.“ Der dies vor einigen Jahren, rund fünfzig Jahre nach Kriegsende, zu Papier brachte und als Brief nach Gütersloh schickte, heißt Frank S. Payne, ist amerikanischer Staatsbürger und war als kriegsgefangener Pilot Patient im Reservelazarett Gütersloh.

Hier der Bericht des US-Piloten über seinen Abschluß am 16. Februar 1945: Während des Bombeneinsatzes waren nur wenige 88-mm-Flakgeschütze im Einsatz, dafür schossen sie aber sehr genau. Unser Flugzeug flog auf dem linken Flügel beim Staffelführer des Geschwaders, eine äußerst gefährliche Position. . .

Gerade bereit, die Bomben abzuwerfen, bemerkte ich eine Erschütterung, verursacht durch einen Volltreffer vorne, unterhalb des 3. Motors. Bob Stuber (der Kopilot, d. Red.) sagte mir, daß Öl aus dem Motor 3 ausläuft und daß der Öldruck fällt. . . Ich fühlte, wie das Flugzeug nach dem Abwurf der Bomben hochstieg, und dann durchrüttelte ein starker Stoß die Maschine, als ein Flaktreffer hinten in der Tragfläche, bei Motor 4, einschlug und explodierte. . . Bob Stuber rief mir zu, daß wir ein Feuer in der Tragfläche hinter Motor 4 hätten.

Ich sah, wie sich das Feuer in der Tragfläche ausbreitete. . . Der Verlust der äußeren Tragfläche würde das Flugzeug außer Kontrolle bringen, ohne die Möglichkeit zum Ausstieg. . . Es war eine schnelle und leichte Entscheidung für den Ausstieg. Ich löste den Alarm aus und befahl der Mannschaft auszusteigen. . . Ich warf mich kopfüber aus der Fluchtluke. . . Meine Schutzbrille flatterte über mein Gesicht, ich

zog sie herunter und verstaute sie. . . Als ich aus der Wolkendecke fiel, wußte ich, daß es Zeit wurde, meinen Fallschirm zu öffnen. Ich zog am D-Ring, ohne daß etwas passierte. Beim nächsten Versuch spürte ich einen unverschämten Ruck. Ich schaute an mir hinunter und sah, wie meine Schaffellstiefel fast von meinen Füßen gerissen wurden. . .

Es war jetzt sehr still, keine dröhnenden Motorengeräusche, kein Fluglärm – nichts! Nur leichtes Pendeln am Fallschirm und ein sehr friedliches Gefühl, wohl wissend, daß man noch am Leben war, aber eine unbekannte Zukunft vor sich hatte. Du wirst dich sehr bald mitten im Feindgebiet befinden.

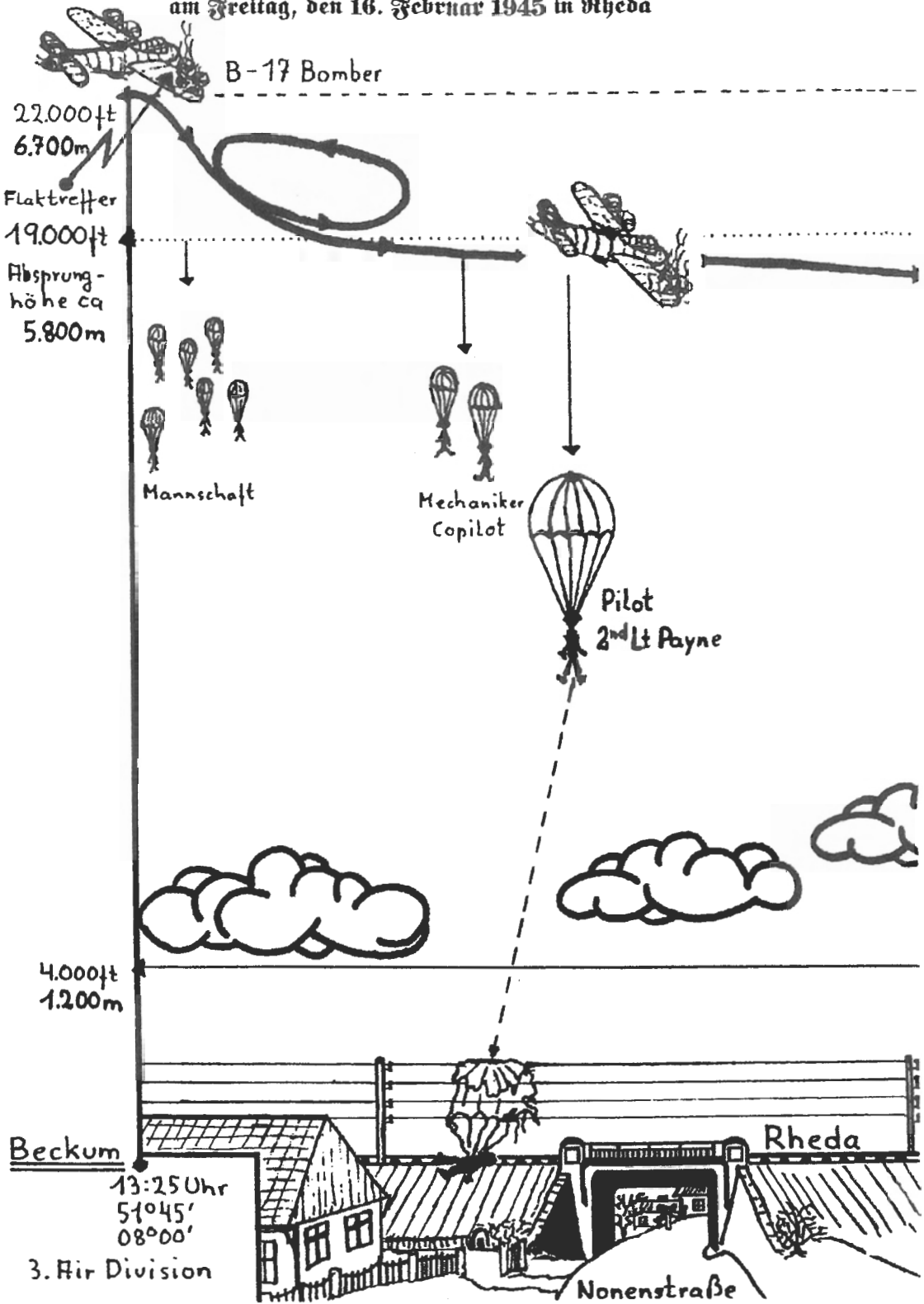
Ich tauchte aus den letzten Wolken in ca. 4 000 Fuß (135 Meter, d. Red.) auf und sah, seitwärts dahintreibend, eine kleine Stadt zu meiner Rechten. Ich bemerkte mehrere größere Lagerhäuser mit 2 oder 3 Eisenbahngleisen, auf denen Güterwagen standen. Dieser kleine Bahnhof war kürzlich bombardiert worden, da er mit Bombenkratern übersät war.

Menschen liefen herum wie kleine Ameisen, die sich aber meiner bewußt waren. . . Ich war ängstlich und ein bißchen zornig, denn ich wußte, ich hatte weder eine Chance zur Flucht noch eine andere Ausweichmöglichkeit. . . Ich hielt mich an den Fallschirmriemen fest und drehte mich mit dem Rücken zum Wind. Ich schlug auf die Eisenbahnschienen zwischen einem Lagerhaus und einer Reihe von Kastenwag-

Nach Aussagen von Augenzeugen



Zeichnerische Darstellung der Fallschirmabsprünge aus der B - 17 am Freitag, den 16. Februar 1945 in Rheda



Kriegseinsatz mit der 425. Bombengruppe so zu beenden.

Hier endet der Bericht des ehemaligen 2nd Lt. Frank Scott Payne, den er erst im November 1990 für eine Veröffentlichung zu Papier gebracht hatte. Payne hat ihn nach Gütersloh geschickt, als er hörte, daß seine Bitte um Kontakte mit Menschen, die damals in Gütersloh lebten oder sogar in dem Krankenhaus arbeiteten, in dem er 1945 versorgt wurde, an die Medien weitergegeben worden war. Tatsächlich haben sich danach viele ältere Mitbürger gemeldet, die auf irgendeine Weise direkt oder indirekt mit Frank Payne zu tun hatten.

Ein reger Briefwechsel hat sich zwischen Frank Payne und Dr. Lotte Heller aus Gütersloh entwickelt. Sie, die damals als gebürtige Lotte Brummert Feldunterärztin im Gütersloher Reservelazarett war, ist sich sicher, den abgeschossenen US-Piloten mit operiert zu haben. Sie arbeitete damals im Operationssaal des Lazaretts, kann sich aber an Payne im einzelnen nicht mehr erinnern. *(Wir hatten ja mit der Pflege nichts mehr zu tun)*, weiß aber, daß etliche kriegsgefangene Verwundete operiert werden mußten. *Ich war als Chirurgin eingesetzt*, sagt sie, *und es ging in den letzten Kriegstagen ein wenig hoppalahopp. Das war ein einziges Durchgehen von Patienten. Die wurden uns reingefahren, wir haben die operiert, und dann wurden sie wieder hinausgeschafft und auf die Stationen verteilt.*

Ganz unversehens wurden die Recherchen in Gütersloh aus Rheda-Wiedenbrück unterstützt. Ein ehemaliger Bundeswehrpilot beschäftigt sich dort mit der Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges, interessiert sich aber auch für Fliegergeschicksale im Zweiten. Er las von Frank Paynes Wünschen und forschte auf eigene Faust nach. Ihm ist nicht nur die fachlich korrekte Übersetzung des



2nd Lieutenant Frank Scott Payne mit seiner Frau Lillian nach seiner glücklichen Heimkehr im Juli 1945.

Payne-Berichts über den Abschluß des Flugzeugs zu verdanken, sondern auch eine genaue Rekonstruktion der Landung von Frank Payne. Am Bahnhof Rheda, genau an der Unterführung, muß er heruntergekommen sein!

Der Forscher aus Rheda hat sogar Augenzeugen aufgetrieben, die sich an den Fallschirmspringer vom 16. Februar 1945 erinnern. Einen Beitrag lieferte auch Ernst-Ludwig Niemann, der damals in Rheda wohnte. Er schrieb nach Gütersloh: *Nachdem ich von meinem Elternhaus in der Luft einen Fallschirmspringer beobachtete und ich erkannte, daß die Landung unmittelbar bevorstand, fuhr ich mit dem Fahrrad zur Nonenstraße. Hier ging der abgeschossene Pilot etwa 20 Meter von der Unterführung an der Böschung des Eisenbahnabschnitts Rheda-Oelde in Höhe des Wohnhauses Brökelmann nieder.*

Frank Payne aus dem US-Bundesstaat Oregon hat inzwischen einige Briefe aus Deutschland erhalten. Vor allem aber hat er durch seine Anfrage in Gütersloh viele Erinnerungen wachgerufen, die sonst nicht zu Papier gebracht worden wären.

Im Herbst 1997 hatte der alte Herr Gelegenheit, zusammen mit seiner Frau die Orte seiner Erinnerungen zu besuchen!

Dear Mr. Cott Payne,

Thank you very much for your participation in our Oral History interviews. We all really appreciate your willingness to share your experience from World War II. I especially enjoyed to listen to the 'side' that fought against the Germans and finally got in contact with the enemy... but still survived.

Of course, I'm also happy that you found some friends in a few Germans and I hope that your friendships will last as long as possible.

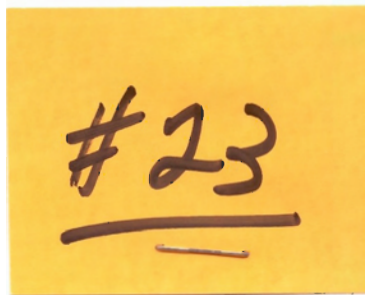
Again, thank you very, very much for giving me and other students such a good view into the war actions and your 'war life'.

Sincerely,

Mike Fable

Silverton, March 19th
1998

Shot over Westfalen



“When you get older you look back and ask yourself what happened to all the people with whom we had contact with during WW 2.” Fifty years after the end of the war, a man named Frank S. Payne an American citizen and pilot captured in the war as patient in the reserve military hospital Guetersloh, brought his thoughts to paper and wrote a letter to Guetersloh.

This is a report by the US pilot about his launching on February 16th, 1945:

There were only a few 88 mm antiaircraft guns active, during the bombing mission, but they shot very accurate. Our airplane flew on the left wing of squadron leader, a really dangerous position...

Just about ready to drop the bombs, I recognized a shock caused by a direct hit in front, underneath the third engine. Bob Stuber (the copilot) said to me that oil was running out of engine 3 and that the oil pressure was sinking... After dropping the bomb, I felt how the plane rose, and then a strong push shook the machine as an antiaircraft hit struck the wing and exploded on engine 4...

Bob Stuber shouted to me that we had a fire in the wing right behind engine 4.

I saw, how the fire spread in the wing... The loss of the outer wing would bring the plane out of control, without a possibility to exit... It became a quick and easy decision for the exit. I released the alarm and demanded my crew to exit... I threw myself headlong out of the escapegate... My safety glasses fluttered over my face, I took them off and stowed them away... As I fell out of the cloudcover, I knew that it was time to open my parachute, I pulled on the D- ring, but nothing happened. With the next try I felt an impudent yank. I looked down and saw, how my squadron boots just about pulled off my feet...

Now it became really quiet, no roaring engine sound, no flight noise - nothing! Only the light swing on the parachute and a very peaceful feeling, well-known of being alive, but having an unknown future in front. Pretty soon you will find yourself within hostile area.

I came through the last clouds in 4000 ft and saw sideslipping a small town to my right. I recognized many bigger warehouses with two or three railroad tracks where freight cars were located. This small railroad station had just been bombed, since it showed many bomb craters.

People were running around like little ants, but who had been aware of me... I was scared and a bit mad, because I knew that I would neither have any chance of escape nor another alternative. I held on to my parachute belt and turned my back towards the wind. I hit the ground on the railroad tracks between a warehouse and a freight car. A tough way to finish my war mission with the 425th bomber group like that.

Here the report of the former 2nd Lt. Frank Scott Payne, who had brought all this to paper for publication in November 1990, stops. Payne had sent it to Guetersloh, as he heard that his request to find contact with the people who had been living in Guetersloh at that time or even worked at the hospital, where he was taken care of in 1945, was given to the media.

Actually many older fellow citizens who either had direct or indirect contact with Frank Payne announced themselves.

An exciting letter exchange developed between Frank Payne and Dr.



Heller from Guetersloh. She who was born as Lotte Brummert was “fieldunderphysician” in the reserve hospital of Guetersloh, is sure herself of being involved with the operation of the shot down US pilot. In those days she was working in the operation room of the hospital, but he can't remember the details about Payne. *(We didn't have anything to do with the care), but she knows, that several injured prisoners of the war needed operations. I was used as a surgeon, she said, and in the last days of war everything went whoops 'n' quick. It was only a pass through of patients. They were driven inside to us, we operated on them, and then they were taken outside and distributed to the wards.*

The investigations in Guetersloh were unexpectedly supported from Rheda-Wiedenbrueck. A former Armed Forces pilot works there with the history of World War 1, but is also interested in the bomber fates of the Second World War. He read about Payne's wishes and investigated on his own. To him it is not only due the professional correct translation of Payne's report about the launching of the plane, but also an exact reconstruction of Frank Payne's launching: At the railroad station in Rheda, exactly on the underpass, he must have come down on!

The researcher from Rheda could even find witnesses who remember the parachutist on February 16th, 1945. Once living in Rheda, Ernst-Ludwig Niemann delivered contribution. He wrote to Guetersloh:

After I've seen a parachutist from my parents' house and I recognized that he had to land pretty soon, I took my bike and rode to the street 'Nonenstrasse'. There the shot down pilot went down about 20 meters from the underpass on the slope of the railroad section Rheda-Oelde at the altitude of the apartment Broeckelmann.

Franke Payne from the State of Oregon in the United States already got a few letters from Germany. Above all, through his inquiry in Guetersloh many memories awaked which wouldn't have been brought onto paper.

In fall 1997 the old gentleman had the opportunity to visit the places of his memory with his wife.

Manfred Walter from Rheda-Wiedenbrueck reconstructed within hard research the jump out of the American bomber:

Drawing of parachute jump out of the B-17 on Friday, February 16th, 1945 in Rheda