

Ottinger, David

"AAF's Liberators Can Take It", Says Wounded Local Flier

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HEADQUARTERS 13TH AAF, ○

Southwest Pacific.—The 13th AAF's husky Liberators can take "a h--- of a pounding" without giving in, a Bethlehem, Pennsylvania flier testified when his plane flew back from a Philippines raid with nine 20 millimeter cannon shell holes in the wings and shrapnel scars all over the fuselage and nose.

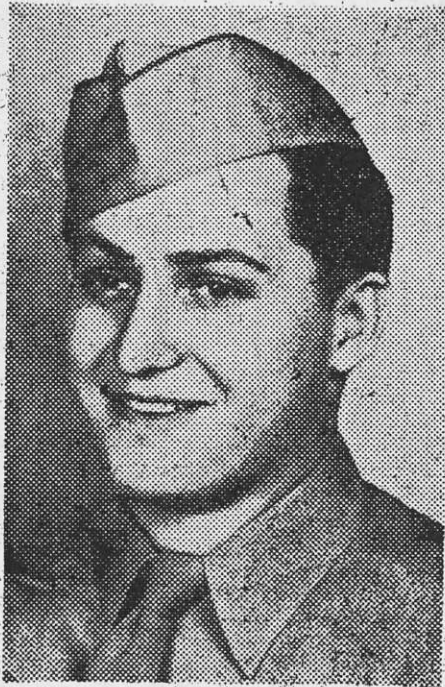
Technical Sergeant David E. Ottinger, ASN 13113732, 65 Warren Street, Bethlehem, was radio operator on the Liberator. He was wounded slightly by a steel fragment, but did not know it until he got back to his base and removed his flying suit.

Lead ship in a strong 13th AAF formation attacking Bacolod air-drome on Negros Island in the central Philippines, Ottinger's plane was singled out by four Jap fighters for a bitter sky duel. Three of the Nips streaked out of the clouds a few minutes after the Liberator dumped its bomb load squarely on the Bacolod runway. They sent 20 millimeter shells crashing into the tail of the big, lumbering bomber.

Staff Sergeant Roland G. Carson, Boulder, Colorado, the tail gunner, was pierced in the head and legs by steel fragments as a shell from the first Zero exploded in his compartment. Without waiting to inspect himself for injuries, Carson fought off the three Zeros with his twin 50 calibre machine guns. One enemy fighter banked sharply to avoid the fire, and was shot down by a pair of nearby P-38s that flew escort for the bomber.

As the last of the three Zeros finished its pass at the Lib's tail, an-

Wounded Flier



T-SGT. DAVID OTTINGER

other Jap attacked head-on. A 20 millimeter shell slammed into the pilot's compartment and exploded three feet from the heads of Major Kenneth D. Casper, Humboldt, Kansas, the pilot, and First Lieutenant John W. May, Jr., Los Angeles, California, the co-pilot. Miraculously, neither was hurt, although a fragment flew through the fuselage and hit Ottinger's knee.

When the Liberator landed at its home strip at an advanced 13th AAF Dutch East Indies base, Ottinger and other crew members surveyed the damage and agreed luck had flown with them.

In addition to the holes in the wings, tail and nose, fires had skimmed the wings. Tremendous backwash from the props had put out the flames before they could cause serious damage, however.

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