

Paso Robles Press

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AIRMAN DIES AS CHUTE FAILS



SMOLDERING RED HOT engine parts and crumpled aircraft metal were strewn over an area of from 400 to 500 yards in the rain-soaked field where a crippled B-26 light bomb-

er crashed yesterday killing one airman. In the left foreground can be seen an unopened parachute. (Paso Robles Press Photos).



THE LARGEST PIECE of the crippled B-26 light bomber that crashed on the Steinbeck ranch Wednesday, in a heavy downpour of rain, was the tail section. The rest of the plane was

scattered from the point of impact over an area of 400 to 500 square yards with one of the wheels being thrown within 150 yards of the Archie Ferry farm house.

Four Bail Out Safely As B-26 Crashes In Storm East Of PR

One airman was killed and two were injured Wednesday afternoon when the five-man crew of a crippled B-26 bomber bailed out over the George Steinbeck ranch, approximately seven miles east of Paso Robles.

The plane, a propeller-driven light bomber, developed mechanical trouble while en route from Biggs Air Force Base, El Paso, Tex., to Mather Field, near Sacramento.

Biggs AFB identified the dead man as T/Sgt. Fred D. Kilby of

Route 1, Wilkesboro, N. C. His parachute failed to open.

SERIOUS INJURIES

Maj. John W. Fortner, pilot of the plane, suffered serious injuries and is still hospitalized in Paso Robles War Memorial District Hospital. Hospital officials said Major Fortner suffered fractured ribs and shoulder and possible lung and back injuries when he failed to clear the plane as he jumped after ordering his crew to bail out ahead of him. S/Sgt. O. J. Fazio suffered leg injuries and Capt. S. W. Wigley of Oklahoma City and Lt. Robert E. Nilsson of Monroe, Utah, were held in the hospital overnight for observation. The last three were released this morning.

First report of the crash came from Mrs. Percy Weaver, who lives on the ranch. She heard the plane coming down out of the low, rainy overcast and saw it crash and burn in an empty field, approximately 150 yards north of old Highway 41.

City and county police officials, including Chief Elmer Morehouse and Fire Chief Maynard French of Paso Robles, and Sheriff Paul Merrick, converged on the scene.

FOUND QUICKLY

Three of the men were found shortly after the crash and it was first feared the other two had failed to leave the ship. A fourth was found within an hour. The body of the dead man was spotted by a Union Oil plane and recovered by Don Wolf and Frank Volpi, members of a ground searching party.

Major Fortner, the pilot, said he ran into snow and ice at flying altitude and became thoroughly lost when his radio compass failed. He ordered the crew to bail out when the gas supply became dangerously low.

Interviewed at the hospital Wednesday night, Captain Wigley said "I'm tickled to death to be on the ground. All I can say is that the good Lord must have been looking out for me."

He said the order to abandon ship came suddenly. "Yes, it happened real sudden. All at once we got the bail out signal and I didn't waste any time hitting the silk," he said.

\$66,000 Taken In Pennsylvania Bank Robbery

WILLIAMSPORT, PA. — (UP) A tall, slender young bandit, wearing a trench coat and tinted glasses, escaped with \$66,000 in cash today after he held up the Williamsport National Bank five minutes after it opened for the day.

The big haul was announced by Police Inspector, Fred Ziegler, of Williamsport following a bank inventory. The bandit's loot first was placed at \$37,000 and then at \$43,000.

The sharp-featured bandit told a woman teller "don't get funny" during the robbery which took only a few minutes.

He pointed a small, foreign make automatic pistol at Mrs. Jack Fowler, a teller, and ordered her to fill a brown gymnasium bag with currency.

He watched as she stuffed money in the bag, murmured "that's enough" when it was partially filled, and then fled up a flight of stairs leading from the building foyer.

City and state police, FBI agents and sheriff's deputies searched the building and rooftops in a vain hunt.