

The Ultimate Back Seat Driver!

By Jim Diamond

I have been asked several times recently about the story of the copilot that landed a B-47 from the rear seat with the canopy and the navigator's hatch both gone. I'm sure that everyone in the Strategic Air Command's B-47 operations in the late 50's has heard of this incident.

Early this year some visitors to this site and I decided to re-visit this story. Firstly we had to recall what his name was and found out that it was Jim Obenauf, that didn't take very long. Then we tried to remember where it happened, which we recalled it must have been at Dyess AFB. There was nothing at the Dyess AFB Internet Site to give us any leads, so checking with the web master there, he thought there had been a newspaper article in the Abilene Reporter-News about this incident. A check with the paper on their Internet Site told us they had an archive in the Austin Texas Library. A check there hit some pay dirt. They found the article and sent it to me. I decided then we needed to find this guy! Several leads dried up – until I was going through our B-47 Association database looking for someone else and there was Jim Obenauf's name and phone number! He had been a member of our organization all along. A quick call to Jim gave us an offer of a copy of the story in the SAC Combat Crew magazine about the incident and a couple of current pictures.

Below are the two newspaper articles. After that I have the Combat Crew article describing this amazing flight and heroic deed.

First article is the morning after the landing and the next article a day later with some more details.

Tuesday Morning, April 29, 1958

Dyess B-47 Lands Despite Explosion

2 Men Jump; No One Hurt

By WARREN BURKETT
Reporter-News Staff Writer

All four crew members of a Dyess AFB B-47 are safe after a midair explosion over the Panhandle.

Two men parachuted into the Panhandle area about 10:30 PM Monday night. They were Maj. James M Graves, Aircraft Commander, and First Lt. John P. Cobb, Navigator

Bringing the plane into Dyess in spite of the explosion damage were First Lt. James M Obenauf, Pilot, and Major Joseph B. Maxwell, Instructor–Navigator.

Lt. Obenauf drew praise from Col. Louis A. Rochaz III, for the landing of the plane with canopy and navigator's hatch gone.

Similar praise was given by Col. Anthony J. Perna, 341st Wing Commander, and other officers of the wing. The plane belonged to the 10th Bomb Squadron.

Lt. Obenauf and Maj. Maxwell landed the plane at Dyess about 12:15 AM.

The two parachutists, Maj. Graves and Lt Cobb, landed safely on the ground and were being returned to Abilene by the Highway Patrol, base officials said.

The condition of Lt. Obenauf and Maj. Maxwell were described as good about 1:30 AM Tuesday morning by Col. Frank V. Sturdivant, 819th Air Division Commander.

The men, though injured, were taken from the plane to the hospital by ambulance and were put under sedation.

Base officials said they would continue investigation of the cause of the accident Tuesday before giving out any details on the cause.

Wednesday, April 30, 1958

Pilot's 'Impossible' Feat Saves Major in B47 Nightmare

By WARREN BURKETT
Reporter-News Staff Writer

A 24 year old pilot at Dyess AFB Tuesday was credited with doing the impossible and saving the life of a flying companion high over West Texas Monday night.

He is James E Obenauf of the 341st Bomb Wing's 10th Bomb Squadron. Lt. Obenauf, from Grayslake Ill., lives at 126 Nebraska Rd.

With Lt. Obenauf in the Dyess AFB hospital is Major James B. Maxwell, 32 of 1140 Matador St., a Navigator Instructor whom Lt. Obenauf brought back alive by flying a burned and crippled B-47

Stratojet Bomber single handedly. Lt. Obenauf made a landing previously considered impossible by the Strategic Air Command.

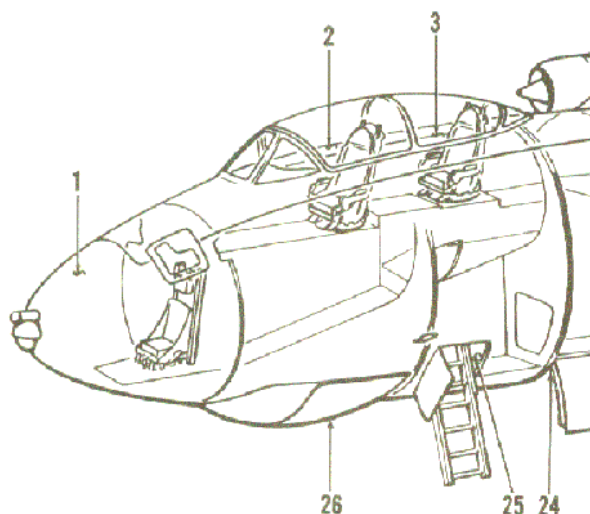
It Happened this way:

Monday, about 8 PM the B-47 took off from Amarillo AFB on a routine training mission to Denver, Colo. Said Col. Anthony J. Perna, Wing Commander. At 10:45 PM over the Panhandle towns of Dalhart and Stratford, near the northern border, the Aircraft Commander received a warning of a fire and explosion in the plane.

Bailout!

Maj. James M Graves, whose crew was in the SAC Bombing competition last fall ordered a bailout after sending the pilot's "Mayday" distress call on his radio. In the nose of the plane was the Navigator Lt John P. Cobb, 25 of 105 Maine Rd. Abilene, and Elko, Nev. Beside Lt. Cobb was Maj. Maxwell. Lt. Obenauf occupied the rear seat, behind Maj. Graves of the Pilots cockpit.

Lt Cobb was blasted through the navigator's hatch by a powder charge rigged to his seat. The two pilots began their ejection procedure, Col. Perna said, by blowing off the canopy to the cockpit. Then the powder charge to the pilots seats refused to work Maj. Graves, the forward man, moved through the crawlway to the navigators compartment and dropped through the escape hatch.



- 1 OBSERVER'S COMPARTMENT
- 2 PILOT'S COMPARTMENT
- 3 COPILOT'S COMPARTMENT
- 24
- 25
- 26

For those who may not be familiar with the layout of the B-47 crew positions see above. Please note the B-47 Navigator was also called the Observer. The IN (Instructor Navigator) and/or 4th man, who

during takeoff and landings was positioned just below the copilot on the step and above the crew entry ladder. This was commonly called the 4th man's position. During flight the extra crewmember could walk forward to a position just behind the navigator or exchange seats with other crew members depending on who was receiving instructions or training.

Maj. Graves and Lt. Cobb parachuted bruised but unhurt near Dalhart and spent the night there.

However 30,000 feet up in the air a new drama formed.

Unconscious

Lt. Obenauf prepared to follow Maj. Graves out of the bottom escape hatch Col. Perna said, but found that Maj. Maxwell had not escaped, Instead, the blast of incoming wind apparently had thrown Maj. Maxwell against the rear of the cabin. His helmet was gone and he was unconscious from lack of oxygen.



AS THE CP ALSO STRUGGLED TOWARD THE LOWER HATCH, HIS FOOT STRUCK SOMETHING. IT WAS THE SSG INST NAVIGATOR --- OUT COLD!!!

Steps on Instructor Navigator

The three by four foot hatch was too small for the men to go through together, and Col Perna said it would have been almost impossible for Obenauf to have opened Maxwell's parachute.

Instead he elected to try another almost impossible feat

Lt. Obenauf climbed back into the his rear pilots seat and elected to fly the plane down at 450 miles per hour, in below freezing temperatures with an open cockpit. Dyess officials said Lt. Obenauf radioed Civil Aeronautics Administrations towers, nearby airbases and another B-47 crew in the area.

These put him back on course, and Lt. Obenauf elected to try to return to Dyess AFB where he was familiar with the runway.

Anxious Scene

Col. Perna said the Sweetwater Air Defense Command radar station kept Lt. Obenauf on course through their radar screen until he was in touch with the Dyess AFB control tower. Assisting was Webb AFB's radar also.

Maj. Doyle Reynolds, in charge of wing training, talked Lt. Obenauf down while another plane circled the area to aid if needed. In the control tower a tense group of officers including the top commanders of the base worked to figure out landing data needed by Lt. Obenauf, who was still setting on the live powder charge of the ejection seat.

Base officials called the landing perfect. It had been considered impossible to do from an open cockpit because a bulkhead in front of the pilot makes it impossible to see forward unless the pilot leaned out to the side where wind and sand would blind him. Col. Perna said it was hard enough to land a plane from the rear cockpit under normal conditions.

Both Obenauf and Maxwell are hospitalized for treatment of shock, frostbite and wind burned eyes. Their condition is reported good, and Lt. Col. Lawrence Sutherland, hospital commander, said they would be released in a couple days. Lt. Cobb and Maj. Graves were on their way back from Dalhart late Tuesday.

Eye Patched

That wind just blew his eyelids right back said a hospital official as he watched Lt. Obenauf lie tiredly in the darkened hospital room. A patch covered his right eye.

The wives of the two men were nearby. "We are so lucky," said Mrs. Obenauf, mother of a son, David 10 months. Agreed was Mrs. Maxwell, mother of Gary, 8, John, 7, Tim, 5, Joe, 2 and a baby 10 months.

Maj. Maxwell said "if he hadn't let down when he did from 32,000 ft. to 15,000 I wouldn't have been alive but a few minutes."

Damage was confined to the exploded right outboard jet engine and parts of the plane that caught fire. The whole episode lasted about an hour and a half, from 10:45 PM Monday until the landing at 12:15 AM Tuesday.



Obenauf and Maxwell in Hospital

Impossible Ended: First Lt. James E Obenauf, left of the 10th Bomb Squadron, 341st Bombardment Wing, rests his wind burned eyes after doing what the Strategic Air Command considered “impossible,” flying and landing a B-47 from the rear seat of an open cockpit after a series of midair malfunctions. In bringing the plane back to Dyess AFB he saved the life of Maj. Joseph B. Maxwell, right, a navigation instructor unconscious from the lack of oxygen and unable to leave the crippled aircraft. (Photos by Lloyd Jones Studio)



Mrs Maxwell & Obenauf

Smiling Now: Mrs. Joseph B. Maxwell, left of 1140 Matador St., and Mrs. James Obenauf of 126 Nebraska Rd. have a lot to be happy about with their husbands safely inside the Dyess AFB hospital room after a harrowing midnight ride aboard a crippled B-47 flown by one man, Lt. Obenauf.

The Strategic Air Command Combat Crew Magazine

August, 1958

THE DECISION OF A LIFETIME

What can we learn from the incident at Dyess that will help the next Crew

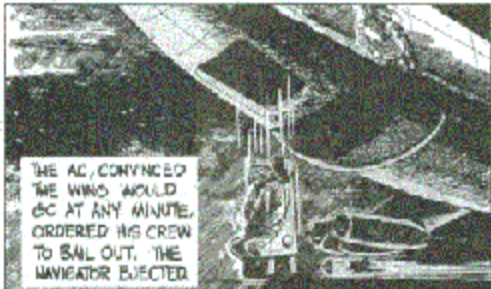
THE FACT that First Lieutenant James E. Obenauf, copilot in the 341st Bomb Wing at Dyess Air Force Base, landed a B-47 from the back seat, without a canopy and with beaucoup other problems, to save another crewman's life, is not news. Every man in SAC knows about it. But the point in recovering the ground is simple: What did we learn? What knowledge can this crew impart to all SAC crewmen that may someday make them better prepared for a similar emergency?

The following account will not constitute a complete story, but if you haven't seen that, may we refer you to the back cover of last month's Combat Crew or to the story in most any of a dozen popular magazines.

MAN AGAINST ODDS

"SINK SUFFERY" '58

A 34th BW B-47, ON A NIGHT SSG MISSION, WAS CRUISING AT ALTITUDE NW OF AMARILLO. SUDDENLY A VIOLENT EXPLOSION ROCKED THE AIRCRAFT AND FIRE LIT UP THE RIGHT WING.



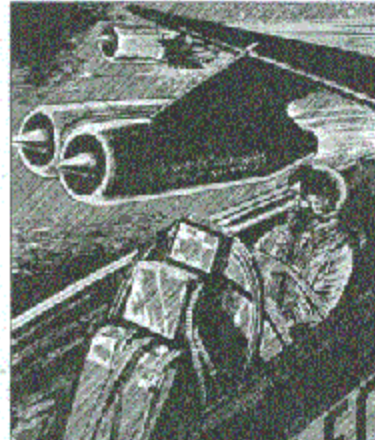
THE AC, CONVINCED THE WING WOULD GO AT ANY MINUTE, ORDERED HIS CREW TO BAIL OUT. THE NAVIGATOR EJECTED.



THE AC AND CP WENT THROUGH THE EJECTION CYCLE. THE CANOPY BLEW BUT NEITHER SEAT WOULD FIRE!! THE COCKPIT WAS A ROARING MASS OF CONFUSION WITH WIND BLAST THROUGH THE LOWER HATCH AND CANOPY OPENING. THE AC CLIMBED DOWN FROM HIS SEAT AND MADE HIS WAY OUT THE MAIN HATCH.



AS THE CP ALSO STRUGGLED TOWARD THE LOWER HATCH, HIS FOOT STRUCK SOMETHING. IT WAS THE SSG INST NAVIGATOR --- OUT COLD!!!



THE CP THOUGHT FIRST HE WHEN HE COULD REVEK GET THE SSG NAV OUT BEFORE HE TOO BECAME IMPRONED. HE CLIMBED BACK INTO HIS SEAT AS HE HOOMED UP. HE LOOKED AT THE FIRE. NO 5 ENGINE WAS STREAMING FLAME. THE WING LOOKED INTACT, SO HE OUED THE AIRCRAFT AND SHUT DOWN NO 5.



ROGER IS THIS VS. JAMES OBENAUF HE UNDERSTANDS

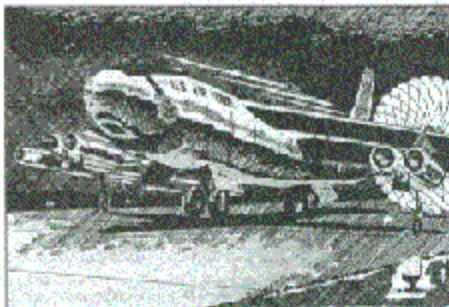
HE PUTS AN ADVANCE IN HIS OPERATIONS

THE CP LEFT OFF AT 1500. THE FIRE SUBSIDED. NON FLYING FROM THE BACK SEAT HE WAS BEING WRIPPED BY THE SUBSTREAM. HE SAT IN A SEAT THAT WOULD FIRE AT ANY MOMENT. THE SSG NAV WAS CONSCIOUS NOW BUT TOO SLOBBY TO GET HIS CHUTE PACK ON. HE KEPT TRYING.



YES, WE'VE POWER. WE HAVE HIM IN THE PATTERN NOW. HE'S DOING A GREAT JOB.

THE CP KNIVED HIS PREDICAMENT TO ALTIS TOWER AND GCI SITES. THEY GAVE HIM A STEER TO DRESS. HE WANTED TO TAKE IT HOME. DRESS WEATHER WAS 1500' OVERCAST. GCI SOON HAD HIM IN CONTACT AND BROUGHT HIM AROUND THE PATTERN FOR AN APPROACH. THE LONG FLIGHT WAS NEARING ITS CLIMAX.



NOW THE PROBLEM OF LANDING JOHNS AROSE. THE CP INSTRUCTED THE IN AND HE REACHED AROUND THE AC'S SEAT AND TURNED ON THE LIGHTS. LANDING THE B-47 FROM THE BACK SEAT, WITHOUT A CANOPY. AT NIGHT, AND ON 5 ENGINES WAS A FULL ISSUE OF PROBLEMS BUT LT. JAMES E. OBENAUF PUT THE MACHINE DOWN WITH PROFESSIONAL SKILL.

For his outstanding response to an aircraft emergency, Lieutenant Obenauf has been presented the GFI award because he was the first CP to recover the 34th Bomb Wing's B-47.

USAF PERIODICAL 62-2 AIR FORCE
Rolph Printing & Litho. Co., Omaha, Neb.

So, with thanks to Lieutenant Obenauf, Col. Anthony J. Perna, Wing Commander; Major James M. Graves, AC; Maj. Joseph E. Maxwell, IN, and 1/Lt. John P. Cobb, N, we are going to extract

highlights from their narratives and recommendations so that other crewmen may gain the greatest possible advantage from the experience.

From Lieutenant Obenauf's Narrative

"... twenty minutes past Amarillo there was a huge explosion . . . you could definitely hear it. The aircraft shuddered and rocked and the right wing appeared to be engulfed in flames. It was shooting flames and sparks 30 to 40 feet in every direction. The AC gave the "bail out" order twice over the interphone. The first man I know of that left the aircraft was the observer ... I tried to eject. My ejection seat failed. I went all the way through the seat sequence. The control column stowed, the seat bottomed, the canopy left, and I just couldn't trigger it off.

Approximately the time the observer, Lieutenant Cobb, bailed out. Major Maxwell was already in the IN position in the fourth man slot up near the observer. He was blown back head first and hit somewhere near my position. Immediately after this he seemed to shake his head and went forward. I assumed he was all right.

Since I could not eject, I immediately tried to get out of my seat. I had an awful lot of trouble because my survival kit kept catching on everything. I got down to the escape hatch, pulled the master lever but the pressure door did not operate . . . helmet bags, flight lunches, and other things were caught in there. I was then going up to the observer's hatch to bail out when I noticed that Major Maxwell was still lying in the aisle. I assumed he was hypoxic, so I immediately climbed back up in the seat and checked on the fire. If it was too bad, I was going over the side. But I thought if there was half a chance of going on I would stay with the aircraft.

The fire seemed under control. It was confined to No. 6 engine, so I actuated the throttle to cut off and it did turn the fire down to a bright glow all over the engine. I immediately started a descent... to get to lower altitude so that Major Maxwell would wake up and bail out and I could get out.

At approximately 11,000 feet my oxygen cut out and I was unable to read the liters in the converters because of dust in my eyes and wind blast. I could not see my instruments accurately. I was mostly flying by feel. I leveled off about 10,000 feet. Major Maxwell started shaking his head and I started hitting him on the head and convincing him to bail out. Apparently he could not find his parachute.

For at least 20 minutes I tried to talk him into bailing out. Finally I checked the engine and there was no more red glow.

I had been giving maydays over the radio but I realized that my interphone cord had been disconnected, so apparently I was a little hypoxic myself. I connected my interphone cord and immediately gave a mayday, the position, and that the other crew-members bailed out. Altus DF picked up my mayday. Also, Eyelash 32 was in the air and he was telling people on the ground exactly what I could do from the back seat. Ground was asking me to squawk mayday, etc., and he convinced them that I couldn't do it from the back seat.

Decision ...

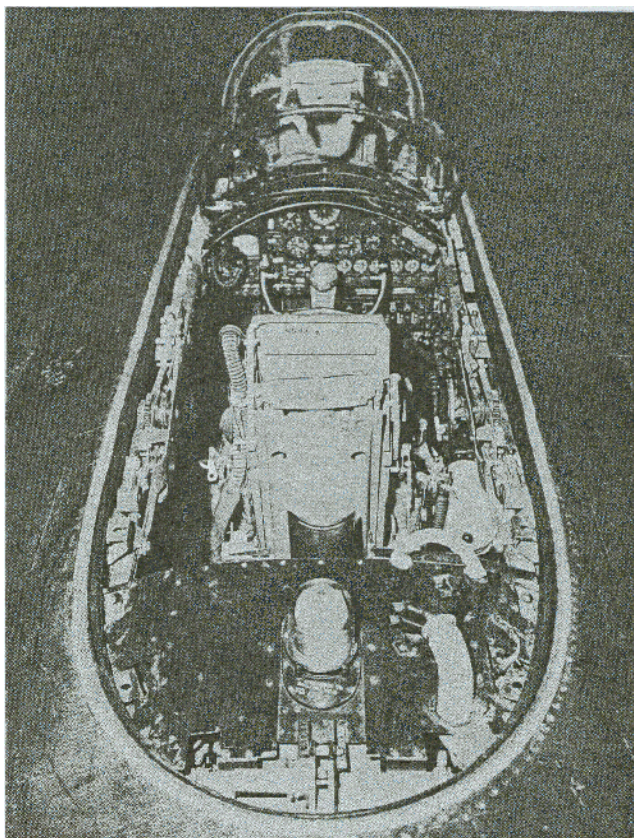
I kept descending until I got down to 5500 feet and Altus gave me a heading for, Dyess. I tried to maintain that heading but couldn't see the directional indicator. I had no idea what my heading was and so I realized more or less this was a gyro out steer which worked out fairly well until Fat Chance GCI picked me up; but he was coming in so garbled I was unable to read most of his transmissions. Finally Dyess DF and Reese DF got me into the station.

Major Maxwell was now half-conscious and I convinced him to try to turn on the landing lights. He made eight or ten attempts before he finally turned them on. Coming into the GCA pattern they ran me into some moderate-to-severe turbulence and made it very difficult to fly the airplane. A couple of times I caught myself in 40 and 50-degree banks, with the airplane practically out of control. Coming around the GCA pattern I had no idea what my airspeed was but I was flying a constant 88 percent power setting. I could not see my airspeed indicator but I think it was a little bit slow because I encountered slight buffeting and stalls so I moved it up to about 94 percent.

Then GCA lined me up on final but I couldn't hold any heading since I just couldn't make out the directional indicator. GCA advised me I was too far to the left. I knew I just couldn't go around because I couldn't see much any more and I couldn't see the airspeed indicator. I was flying final approach by just feel, so I made up my mind the only thing to do was to go on in.

The round-out was ... I just stepped it down until I hit the ground and I immediately pulled the brake chute. After that everything seemed normal. I chopped No. 1, 2 and 5 immediately after touchdown and started knocking off everything as far as electrical goes. Immediately upon stopping I cut the

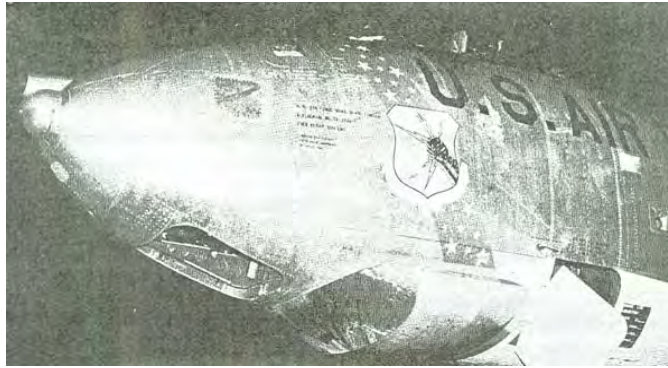
other engines and was very cautious about getting out of my seat because I was almost sure it was going to trigger. Exit from the aircraft was okay and I would say I was on the ground about 20 seconds when I went completely blind due to the wind blast."



The Canopy separated cleanly from the aircraft and this view shows how the back seat is exposed to the slipstream blast.



This Photograph shows the cockpit area in a tech order view.



This photo shows the B-47 after landing; Navigator's hatch and canopy gone.

From Interview Between Colonel Perna and Lieutenant Obenauf

Obenauf: As soon as the canopy went I couldn't see anything.

Perna: Was your seat low enough? Do you think it came near hitting you?

Obenauf: No, I remember that canopy going right straight up in the air as far as I could see.

Perna: Did your cockpit lights stay on?

Obenauf: As best I could tell, they were all on.

Perna: Your visor was up and your mask was on or off?

Obenauf: My visor was up and my mask was on. I had full intentions of using my ejection. sequence. I squeezed it and that didn't work, and I thought maybe I hadn't pulled the handle hard enough and I yanked real hard and pulled the handles, tried the left one hard and tried the right, one hard, and tried to squeeze the trigger again.

Perna; Had your column stowed?

Obenauf: Yes, sir, By this time I made up my mind that I had to get out of there for the flames were getting up the fuselage.

Perna: You released the (pressure) door, and did it slide down?

Obenauf: No, sir. It jammed ... a helmet bag was jammed in the door. I must have had hypoxia because it wouldn't have taken much imagination to figure out why that door was jammed. I didn't try at all to unjam it.

Perna: Were you on oxygen or off?

Obenauf: I was on normal oxygen. I didn't put it on emergency. I thought I would try to go to the observer's hatch and jump out. I assumed Major Graves ejected. That is when I saw Maxwell.

Perna: Were the lights on in the crawlway then?

Obenauf: Right, sir. I couldn't have seen without lights- I was half-blinded from dust. Perna: Did you have your gloves on?

Obenauf: That is something I did immediately after I climbed back into the seat. My hands were getting cold. I think I had one glove on. I always keep my right glove off so I can write, I remember I was thinking, I've got to get this glove on. I had it right in my pocket.

Perna: When you got back in the seat you had to unlock the column?

Obenauf: Yes, sir. I tried to engage the column once and I had trouble, and I tried again and I got it the second time..., I remember I engaged it and the wheel was cocked real funny and I disengaged it and did it again.

Perna: The airplane was still on autopilot?

Obenauf: Yes, sir.

Perna: And, it was still burning at this time?

Obenauf: At this time I realized that the fire wasn't half as bad as we had originally thought. It was just on the outer section of the wing.. I didn't know it was just the engine; I just knew it was outboard.

Perna: Did you stopcock the engine then or later?

Obenauf: I don't think I stopcocked it then, sir; I didn't realize it was an engine fire. I couldn't see the engine itself.

Perna: Were you able to hold your head against the slipstream or was the windshield breaking it all for you?

Obenauf: By maintaining close to 200 knots, the stream was much less.

Perna: Did you knock it off autopilot right then?

Obenauf: I was still on autopilot till I looked the situation over. I must have been hypoxic; there was a period in there before I got the oxygen on emergency. It seemed like a matter of minutes before I started descent.

Perna: When did you stopcock the engine?

Obenauf: It was some time during my descent. I said to myself, "I've just gotta start thinking," I had an awful time forcing myself to think. The engine burned itself out in about five minutes."

Perna: Did you fasten the safety belt when you got back in the seat?

Obenauf: No, sir. I couldn't fasten it; I had an awful time trying to find anything. I just couldn't think I had an awful time trying to maintain control.

Perna: Did you put the gear down?

Obenauf: No, sir I was going to put it down but in my mind I kept thinking that I couldn't bail out with my gear down. I think it would have been better if I had let it down.

Perna: How much speed did you pick up?

Obenauf: I think it was about 280 to 300.

Perna: At what speed were you when you started this decent?

Obenauf: About 230 knots, sir. Major Graves had it set in Idle, because when I climbed up in the cockpit the first thing I did was try to pull power back but it was already at idle.

Perna: Did you land with your safety belt undone?

Obenauf: Yes, sir.

Perna: What altitude did you level out at?

Obenauf: I remember one time at 11,000, That is where I lost my oxygen I was on 100 percent emergency and I couldn't breathe; I had to go back to normal oxygen in order to keep breathing. I didn't dare to take the mask off for that was really protecting my face.

Perna: Was there any debris in the air or any weight besides the dirt?

Obenauf: I saw something, that flew up and went over me. I thought it was a sextant. Our clipboard also came through there.

Perna: Did you ever get Major Maxwell on the interphone?

Obenauf: Yes, sir. I told him to hit me on the leg to acknowledge anything I said to him.

Perna: You switched to guard on your UHF control box?

Obenauf: Yes, sir. I switched before I ever called. I thought I was transmitting maydays but I wasn't even connected. That is another thing that indicates I must have been half-hypoxic.

Perna: Could you see the airspeed indicator?

Obenauf: I could tell where the needle was; I could tell within 15 or 20 knots

Perna: Did you ever get pitched up off the seat when you hit rough air?

Obenauf: No, sir, I never once hit any trouble. I was being held down more than pushed up; in fact, I was getting pushed hard backward.

From Recommendations of Major Graves, AC

—The survival MD-1 kit is considered too bulky and heavy for egress through an alternate escape hatch.

—The green ball to discharge the emergency bailout bottle should be mounted in a more accessible position.

—All loose equipment in the aircraft should be provided storage space where it can be fastened down.

—The instructor-navigator needs a secure folding type seat next to the crew navigator so that he will not be dislodged from his position when the canopy or navigator's ejection hatch leaves the aircraft.

—The fourth man should be required to wear a back-pack-type chute with manual arming device at all times.

—The walkway lights could be wired into the alarm bell or ejection sequence so they would come-on

bright.

—That lights be mounted on aircraft commander's instrument panel to indicate when the, copilot or navigator have ejected.

—That, a louder alarm bell be installed. Crew members should not expect to hear the alarm bell after the canopy has left the aircraft and interphone communications will be weak and hard to understand.

—The recommended maximum speed for egress through the navigator's hatch could be raised to 250K indicated.

—The absolute necessity be re-emphasized for bailing out head-first facing forward due to the abrupt snap when the body hits the slipstream.

—The instructor-navigator needs a secure folding type seat next to the crew navigator so that he will not be dislodged from his position when the canopy or navigator's ejection hatch leaves the aircraft.

—It should be emphasized an engine or wing fire on one side of the aircraft can give a very definite indication of a fuselage fire on the opposite side of the aircraft even in perfectly clear weather.

From Recommendations of Lieutenant Cobb.

—The alarm bell cannot be heard over the general noise level of the aircraft.

—Darkness adds to the confusion in an emergency as well as being psychologically disturbing.

Recommend that crawlway lights be wired into the alarm bell so that they will come on when the alarm bell is rung.

—Recommend that the bailout bottle be rigged so it will supply oxygen upon actuation of the ejection seat and/or separation from the aircraft.

—The steel safety clip now on masks should be inspected before every flight and any lessening of tension by the clip should the clip be changed.

—Crew members should insure that they carry gloves in an accessible place on their person for use during parachute descent.

—Pilots should be issued a clear pair of goggles for use in case of loss of canopy.

—Parachute training refresher should be incorporated into the local survival training.

—Recommend that for immediate bailout the forth man exit through the navigator's ejection hatch rather than trying to make it back to the entrance hatch

—The survival kit should not be fastened to the parachute harness except over water or areas where ground survival is definitely critical, until it is equipped with a quick release mechanism.

It must be appreciated that the recommendations of these crew members stem from their experiences under one set of circumstances. We have printed most of them to give SAC crewmen the benefit of their reactions. These recommendations are under study for consideration of final

acceptance; however, many factors of varying circumstances must be applied before emergency procedures or equipment can be altered. The next emergency may not be exactly like the last.

Colonel Perna said: "One of the most vital highlights of this incident is the value of training. Almost all individual crew members actions were reflex or subconscious during this emergency and the degree of training and crew knowledge was the difference between success and disaster. The aircraft commander followed the recommended procedures in ordering the crew to abandon the aircraft when it was obvious to him that there was a fire in the fuselage. It is important to note that all crew members did the correct thing at the correct time from a thorough knowledge of the aircraft and frequent practice of emergency procedures. This incident reflected the tremendous ability and initiative of Lieutenant Obenauf in maintaining his pilot ability and proficiency and is a tribute to the manner in which Major Graves has trained his crew."

Again, Combat Crew thanks to the men who have related their experiences "so that others may live"



After receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross Lt. Obenauf is being congratulated by his wife and fellow crew members

Jim Obenauf retired from the Air Force in 1974 with the rank of Lt. Col

Among his career assignments were Dyess AFB, TX from 1956 to 1962 (B-47s). Grisson AFB, IN, where he flew in the B-58 from 1962 to 1970. Commander, 9th SOS DaNang, AB, Viet Nam in 1970. Commander, 100th OMS, Davis-Monthan, AFB, AZ from 1971 to 1972. Director, Recon Maintenance, 15th AF, CA from 1972 to 1974.



After retirement from the Air Force, Jim returned to his hobby of manufacturing furniture and cabinets from 1974 to 1994. He has been involved in consulting for furniture building and design from 1994 until the present. He and his wife have lived in Tucson since he retired from the Air Force in 1974. From these recent photos Jim seems to have enjoyed a leisurely ride on a cruise ship as well as being quite comfortable in a seat that's not rigged with a powder charge !!!

