

Debriefing of Sgt. Gudet Singh, 104 Squadron, RAF Bomber Command

Date: 03 September, 1944

Lieutenant Harold Cromartie: Ok, Corporal Matthews, are you ready to transcribe?

Corp. Matthews: Yes Sir.

Lt. Cromartie: Very Good, lets begin. Sargent Singh, for the record, please state you name, rank and duty assignment.

Sgt. Singh: SINGH, Gudet, Sargent, tail gunner for Lancaster bomber MISS VERA, 104 Squadron, RAF Bomber Command.

Lt. Cromartie: Thank You Sgt. Singh. Now, can you briefly describe the mission of 27/28 August prior to the loss of 104 Squadron bomber MISS VERA.

Sgt. Singh: Shortly after take off, we were attacked by a single enemy fighter that came at us from six high. I did not see this enemy fighter. Our aircraft was hit by enemy gunfire. The intercom came on and our pilot, Mr. Turner, asked if anyone was hit. No one was hit and the engineer, Sgt. Bailey said there appeared to be no serious damages. The enemy fighter did not make a second pass at us. We encountered no more enemy fighters until we were heading back to England. We were not picked out by enemy spotlights and I believe we were on target with our bombs. After making turn for inbound journey, we were hit by flak. Again, our pilot, Mr. Turner, asked if anyone was injured. No one was injured. Sgt. Fitzcarter, our bomb aimer, reported the bombsight damaged. There was report that oxygen supply had been hit, but continued to supply oxygen to crew. Out over the Sea, our heat servicing the front of our aircraft suddenly quit. Mr. Turner announced that we were going to descend to a low altitude. Just as we were beginning to descend, an enemy fighter shot at us from underneath of our bomber. Again, no one was injured and no serious damages were inflicted to our bomber.

Lt. Cromartie: Ok, now please explain what happened for MISS VERA to be shot down. Oh, Corporal Matthews, have you taken down all of the testimony from Sgt. Singh? Do you need to have any clarification or repeat of his report?

Corp. Matthews: No sir, I have it all down so far.

Lt. Cromartie: Ok Sgt. Singh, please continue.

Sgt. Singh: Mr. Turner announced, on the intercom, that we were almost home. Then again, we were hit by enemy gunfire, a German Ju88 attacking from six level. Again, I did not see him until his shells were hitting us. I fired a burst at him and believe I hit him. A very short time later, we were again attacked by a Dornier 217 that came at us, again I did not see him, from six high. Suddenly, our aircraft shuddered, and it was announced that the port wing fuel tank was on fire and we needed to bail out fast. I quickly

unhitched myself from my turret position and made it to the rear escape hatch. Our mid upper gunner, Cpl. Andy Hilpert, was there and he said something to me that I could not hear and he jumped. I made sure I had on my life jacket. I grabbed my parachute release and tumbled from the aircraft. I counted to three and pulled the release and suddenly, I was floating down. It was a bad feeling while falling before the parachute deployed. I could see the level of the sea below me. I wiggled to turn just in time to see our burning aircraft veer downward and crash into the sea. There were several more parachutes visible, the white clear against the dark sky. I hit the water and went down below the level of the sea. This reminded me to deploy my life jacket, which I did. It shot me to the surface of the sea. Oh, the water was cold. I could hear an engine and began to yell and wave my arms the best I could. Luckily, I was heard or seen and shortly a boat appeared. It was a small fishing vessel. I was grabbed with a hook on a pole and dragged to the side of the boat where two men grabbed my arms and dragged me onto the boat. "Eh, aren't no cod fish," one said. "Nay, but it maybe a flounder," the other one said and they laughed. I lay on the deck cold, shivering, and dripping. "Ok you," lets get you outa thout sodden outfit and worm ya." I was taken to a small cabin, given a blanket and mug of hot tea. "Were there more of ya," one of them asked me. "Yes," I told him, six others. "Yah, we seen the burning plane. We were on our way back to port with our catch. War outta Grimsby, ya know." "Ah, I'm Stephen and me mate thar is Eddie." I told them I was extremely happy to meet them and Thanked them for saving me. "Aah, Ya ain't the first flyboy we's caught. Last month, we got us a Jerry! He was very grateful too, and said he was glad to be outta the war." With that, they left me in the cabin with more hot tea. Fisherman Stephen and Eddie spent some time searching for others from Miss Vera, but found only a Royal Navy patrol boat that was also searching. I was transferred to the navy boat, given more hot tea and a few biscuits and taken back to England. I was briefly examined by a doctor at a military clinic, given some new clothes and pronounced good to travel and sent to home base.

Lt. Cromartie: Corporal Matthew, please read back the transcript.

Corp. Matthews reads back the transcript.

Lt. Cromartie: Sgt. Singh, is there anything else you'd like to add to this debriefing at this time?

Sgt. Singh: No sir. Oh, only that I'd like to be able to again thank those fishermen who saved me.

Lt. Cromartie: Well, Sgt., I don't know that that is possible at this time. Their names may be in the Ok Sgt. Singh, thank you. You will be given a copy of this report to read over, and sign that your report is a true and accurate description of the events that led to the loss of MISS VERA and most of her crew. Your squadron personnel officer will be in touch with you concerning your next assignment. Again, Thank You, and Good Luck ta You.

Sgt. Singh: Thank you Sir !