

The pilot reacted by throwing the Lancaster into the classic evasive manoeuvre of a steep diving turn, this time to port, and a partial sharp recovery. During this period, the B/A was instructed very forcibly to 'drop the bombs', fear of imminent explosion being a very real danger. Throughout, continuous cannon and machine-gun fire impacted and major damage sustained. All intercom and Nav. lighting was lost and the aircraft went into a virtually uncontrolled and violent descent. Despite this tremendous and involuntary loss of height and attitude, further damage was inflicted, particularly to the port wing where the port outer engine ceased to function. During this headlong fall, the ~~speedometer~~^{A.S.I.} reading on the Navigators table was seen to be hard up against its 'stop'. (As I recall, this would indicate a maximum speed of 400 knots).

N.B. Simple arithmetic based upon 400 mph, a vertical drop of say 8,000ft. (very conservative) and an angle of descent of 45° would show that the total duration of the entire episode would be 20-25 secs.

After what seemed to be an eternity, the pilot began to regain control of the aircraft, the G forces being exerted forcing both the W/O and the Navigator to their knees, from which position 'sparks' were noted passing overhead.

Personal Account - Navigator

Upon the attack being launched, there was first a feeling of overwhelming ~~biterness~~^{resentment} that this could be happening to oneself. This was followed by the horrific thought that with a full bomb load, an explosion was imminent and that immediate evacuation was called for. In some panic, I reached for my parachute, normally stowed to the rear of my table. It was hard up against the 'ceiling' above my desk and I simply could not bring it down. At that precise time, I was engulfed by a feeling of complete impotence and total hopelessness. With this realisation, my personal crisis of despair simply evaporated to be replaced with a resigned acceptance, but with all senses fully functional.

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