NARRATIVE

KENNETH F. HOSTERMAN, O-2060518, Second Lieutenant, 740th Bombardment Squadron, 455th Bombardment Group (Heavy). For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as navigator of a B-24 type aircraft. On 23 March 1945 Lieutenant Hosterman participated in a bombing mission against the strategic tank works at St. Valentin, Austria, in the Linz Steyr area.

The aircraft first encountered trouble when within 50 miles of the primary at an altitude of 23,000 feet the manifold pressure on the number two engine began to fluctuate. Despite all emergency measures performed by the pilot, co-pilot, and engineer, the feathering circuit would not take effect and the propeller ran away causing excessive vibration and drag. Despite the desire to the contrary, the pilot was finally forced to turn back almost within sight of the target because the plane could not keep up with the formation. After leaving the protection of the formation and jettisoning the bombs the plane lost altitude to about 17,000 feet. Knowing full well the gravity of the situation and his inability to get the aircraft back to the base, the pilot turned to Lt. Hosterman for guidance realizing his capabilities in such moments of great stress. After cautioning the pilot to maintain all possible altitude, Lt. Hosterman set course through heavily defended enemy territory for Zara and he then personally supervised the jettisoning of all excess equipment from the plane. About fifteen minutes later the number three engine began to lose manifold pressure and with only two good engines and a partial third and the airspeed of 130 miles an hour with 10 degrees of flaps, the crew decided to try for the Russian lines. Despite numerous cloud formations that blocked his air to ground vision, this officer, immediately was able to pinpoint himself and set course for the nearest Russian lines. Then he called the crew members on the interphone and explained the territory and oriented them on just what to do when and if further power failure necessitated parachuting to safety.

After flying for half an hour the number three engine was brought back into use and after again conferring with the navigator the pilot decided to try for Zara once more since only a slight change in course was necessary. For the third time Lieutenant Hosterman was called on to change course and replot direction. Working busily the capable officer safely by-passed all enemy flak installations, and fighter belts, conserving fuel and using the shortest possible distance, so that the plane cleared the last mountain barrier and arrived over Zara at an altitude of 10,000 feet. He then saw to it that every crewmember was at his crash landing position. As a result of his correct estimate of the situation the entire crew was back at their base within twenty-four hours. A highly trained and provenly capable combat crew was saved for future operations against the enemy.