

*2Lt Lawrence A. Eckard*

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Lawrence Eckard was born May 7, 1925 to Sidney Robert and Maude R. Miller.

Lt Eckard entered service from Pennsylvania. He joined the 668th BS in January, 1945 as B/N. Soon he was assigned to Lt Chalmers crew. SSgt Kim Fortner was the third to join the crew as gunner.

February 14, 1945 was the first time the 668th flew two missions from Airstrip A-69. The morning mission was the group's 204th Mission. Six six crews flying from the 668th joined the 669th, 670th and 671st Bomb Squads in line for take off.

Pilot 1Lt John J Chalmers, B/N 2Lt Lawrence A. Eckard and Gunner SSgt Kim Fortner flew in A-20 #43-22512. Mission #204 was destined to be the last mission for the 43-22512 crew.

The target was the prime mover depot at Mechernich Railway Depot in Germany. The weather was clear, perfect flying weather. These heroes of war made it to the target, but the mark proved to be a "hot" target. Heavy accurate flak was encountered. The gray flak wall that protected the target was dense and steady, but Chalmers plowed through. The whole formation received hits from the ground. Chalmers' crew knew when they felt the hard jolt and movement of the plane that they had been struck and they were in trouble. Chalmers dropped from formation. He was last seen going down in flames. A parachute was seen by other crews in the formation. The ship crashed near Remagen. An eye witness said the plane was on fire, and that no chutes were seen.

All of the planes in the formation received flak damage in varying degrees of severity that day. After a three-hour trip back, the rest of the formation managed to return safely to the base.

The results of the mission were undetermined as the bombs were dropped on PFF. Pictures later revealed that the bombing was "superior", the bombs were dropped with exact precision. Enormous explosions, colored by smoke and fire gave testimony to a successful mission. Thus ended the day with the last plane coming in to land at dusk.

The 668 record recorded, "We lost three of the best men an outfit could have, and will really miss them. Lt. Eckard was new to the squadron, and for his brief stay, he made a lasting impression. Lt. Chalmers was an old hand at the flying racket with over 1500 hours to his credit. His Gunner, SSgt Kim Fortner had been with him a long time, and they were a pair hard to beat. And so the war goes on."

Lt Chalmers was captured and transferred to the Interrogation Center West at Oberursel on 16 February 1945. Gunner SSgt Kim Fortner was also taken POW.

2Lt Eckard is buried at Margraten. He had flown 3 missions.

Lt Eckard's mother, Maude, died March 1, 1945, just two weeks after her son was killed.