

Mission on June 14/15 1944, to Condé-sur-Vire (Normandy, France)

During the briefing, there had been mention of possible enemy fighters in the air. Upon returning, Manschot's crew had a few things to say about that. Guus Knapp as well as sergeant Diets, both gunners, mentioned seeing a ME109 and a ME210 (Messerschmitts), which they had not been able to ditch all that easily. Guus told the story something like this: "At first I could not believe my eyes when I saw a plane behind us that was not one of ours. This is why plane recognition is so important, because at the very moment that guy assumed an attacking position, both Diets and I realized they were German fighters. Manschot then handled that Mitchell as if it were a fighter, turning it on its side, flying in twists and turns I had previously thought were totally impossible. We also went into some sort of dive, and that was very creepy, as we were already flying quite low. When he (Manschot) said that our bombs were inhibiting the maneuvering, we dropped them. Diets and I were most excited when one of those fighters came alongside us and we were able to shoot at it, even if our chances of hitting it were minimal, it would have scared them off. But had we been forced to fight it out with them, we surely would have lost.

The only damage mentioned in the flight report was damage caused by bombs to the bombing doors. But in fact, the Germans had won, as no bombs were thrown....

Ref: page 157 "D-Day 320 was erbij", H.J. E. van der Kop

June 14/15 1944 (at night) – target Condé-sur-Vire (ammunition storage)

12 Mitchells. The only results observed were: 2 bombs across the railroad tracks in the target area, and 1 bomb among 40-50 stationary motorized vehicles. No returning ground fire.

Mitchell 176 (Manschot) was attacked at 03, 08 hrs. at 6000 feet by two enemy fighters. The plane was slightly damaged as a result. The fire was returned with one short fire blast from the main gunner, result unknown. (see separate "Combat Report", further down)

3 planes did not bomb because of the following reasons: Mitchell 176 was attacked by enemy night fighters, Mitchell 190 could not locate the target area, and Mitchell 204 because of airplane congestion in the target area.

Ref: Squadron 320 memorial book, J.P. Kloos

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK							
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT							
By <u>320 SQUADRON, R.D.F.A.S.</u>							
SECRET							
PAGE No. <u>9</u>							
FOR THE MONTH OF <u>JUNE</u> 19 <u>44</u>							
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES.
				Up	Down		
1944. Night. 17/18 June	MITCHELL II. PR204-S.	W. van Rossum, P.O. v. d. Kop, H.J.B. Gauldenkottling, W. v. Lingen, H.J.A.	RAIROD.	01.35.	04.40	Detailed to attack ammunition dump at Conde sur Vire, with 500 lbs bombs. Results: Only results observed were of two sticks across railway lines in target area, and of one stick among 40/50 stationary M.T. believed in target area, which was attached to two enemy aircraft (one of which was believed ME, 210) in target area at 03.03 hrs. 6000 feet. No flares. Weather conditions: 4-5/10th. at 4000 ft. generally over Peninsular.	
	PR192-H.	W. van Rossum, P.O. Gans, H.F.	RAIROD.	01.47	04.37	As above.	

"When it happened exactly is hard to say (in the first half of 1944). Jos returned from a mission in Northern France. He looked exhausted. Jos didn't mention the mission at all. He had had an encounter with three German fighters in Northern France (Messerschmitts, I'm not sure about the spelling). A fight to the death erupted. One moment Jos vertically stormed toward his attackers from below, while the next moment he let his plane drop like a brick, opened his bomb bay doors and figured out near-impossible ways to destroy his three attackers. His plane was heavily damaged. All the instruments were either broken or had been thrown overboard. Several gas tanks had been shot out. When Jos looked to his rear, he could see the whole wide world through a big gaping hole. With only a quarter of a gas tank left, Jos subsequently pulled off a most spectacular landing in England. The landing gear was no longer functioning. To taxi was out of the question. A so-called belly landing was done. Extremely dangerous, but apparently not when Jos was doing it. When word got out about the fight, Jos had to immediately appear in front of Vice Admiral Furstner, who congratulated him and said no one else had ever pulled off such stunts with a Mitchell".

This letter was written by Niek Vink, who at the time has just married Jos' sister Rie, and clearly did not hide his admiration for Jos' bravery and ability as a pilot.

Ref: description of Henk van Rossum