

# Lady Luck Flies With Riddled Yank Planes

A U. S. NINTH AIR FORCE BASE, France, Aug. 13.—(Delayed.)—(P)—Lt. Richard Kik Jr. of Kalamazoo, Mich., and Lt. Charles E. Rife of East Cleveland, O., were shooting up German tanks east of Mortain when Kik's Thunderbolt was hit by flak.

Rife called him and said:

"You're smoking."

Kik replied:

"Yes, I got hit pretty bad."

Capt. Henry Mazur of Lowell, Mass., flight leader and former West Point football star, cut in and told Rife to take Kik back to the base.

They had just started when two direct hits punched big holes in both wings of Rife's plane. He called to Kik:

"Now I've had it."

Kik advised:

"I can see the holes in your wings, but your engine isn't hit. Shove the throttle forward and keep up speed."

Rife answered:

"I don't think I can make it. My flap aileron are gone. I'm going to belly land."

"Listen, Rife, you can't. You've got a bomb hung under your wing. Get some altitude and bail out."

"I can't bail out because I've been hit in the back and I'm afraid it cut a hole through my parachute."

"You've got to keep going then. Keep cool, Rife."

They finally appeared over this French base. Ground personnel were chewing their nails.

Rife landed at 160 miles per hour. Kik, his engine beginning to blaze and spurting oil, was right behind him. As Rife climbed out of the cockpit three pieces of shell fragment fell out of his parachute. He was not hurt.