

Airway Flight into Bastogne on 25 December 1944 by 1st Lt. Donald G. Taflinger. Interview was conducted with Lt Taflinger of the 14th Liaison Squadron, 3rd Army, at XII Corps Hq in Luxembourg, Lux., on 29 January 1945. Interview was conducted by Capt. Dello G. Dayton.

On the 24th of December Lt. Taflinger lost one of his planes and a pilot. The following day, Christmas, he and his Squadron Commander, Major Wendell W. Bennett, went over to Army Hq (Lt. Taflinger has a detachment of 3 planes at XII Corps) to see if any information had been received relative to the lost plane and pilot. While they were at the 3rd Army Hq a request came in from besieged Bastogne asking for a surgeon. Those requesting the surgeon said there were too many men in Bastogne suffering from serious abdominal injuries for the doctors therein to properly take care of. Lt. Col Murray, G-3 Air of Army, asked Major Bennett and Lt Taflinger if they thought it would be possible to fly a surgeon into to Bastogne. After some discussion it was decided that it would be possible to fly a surgeon in with a Stinson L-1. (The L-1 is a type of Liaison ship that has a 295 HP motor; it has a large wing surface . This ship has the ability to land and take off in a very short distance and the capacity to climb almost straight up; it is a very slow ship however. Nevertheless it possessed the necessary characteristics for the mission in question.)/ Both Major Bennett and Lt Taflinger volunteered to fly the surgeon to Bastogne but finally Col Murray selected Lt Taflinger. An L-1 was sent up from the field at Nancy and landed on the fighter air strip at Luxembourg where Lt. Taflinger and the surgeon, a major, met it. As soon as the plane was refueled Taflinger took off. It was about 1615. (Over the air strip were some fighters which had been ordered to escort the liaison plane to Bastogne. The plane flew at an altitude of about 6000 feet, went to Arlon and then directly into Bastogne. There was some enemy flak but none of it fell near the plane. (Lt Taflinger discovered after he had got started on his flight that the radio in the plane would not work. He had left so hurriedly that he had failed to check it. Fortunately he had no use for it.).

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When the L#1 *g*ot over Bastogne it dived down steeply and located an air strip that was used by the artillery liaison planes about Bastogne. (Lt Taflinger said they had thought at army that this field was rather badly demolished but actually it was in pretty fair shape.). As soon as the plane landed a jeep driver of the 101st A/B arrived to pick up the surgeon. After they departed Lt. Taflinger took off for the return trip. He rose almost vertically above Bastogne and on gaining some altitude discovered that his fighter escort had left him. (He said they had got low on gas). Since it was already dusk the Lt decided to return to Luxembourg without the fighter escort. He accomplished the return trip without incident and landed in Luxembourg just ~~xxx~~ as it was getting dark. For his flight into Bastogne Lt. Taflinger was awarded the Silver Star. (The Lt. said that he was informed the surgeon performed 75 operations on Christmas day after he arrived in Bastogne. The surgeon was awarded the DSC).
