



Valor, Guts, and Luck

William L. Smallwood

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During the Second World War, a B-17 tailgunner had a one-in-four chance of survival during his standard twenty-five-mission tour. *Valor, Guts, and Luck* is the story of Staff Sergeant Lowell Slayton (1923-2013), who beat those odds.

An underprivileged kid from Fargo, North Dakota, Slayton was a high school senior the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Drawn to the glamour of the "wild blue yonder" made famous by newsreels, he joined the Army Air Force. Eventually he found himself on an unlucky thirteenth mission to the main FW-190 fighter-aircraft plant in Oschersleben, Germany. After being hit by a rocket, his plane left the protection of the formation and was immediately attacked by a swarm of fighter-aircraft, resulting in damage that forced a crash landing in Germany.

Slayton, though wounded, survived the crash landing and spent time in three hospitals and two POW camps and then endured a 300-plus mile trek from Poland to western Germany during one of the coldest winters on record. Through Slayton's recollections, William L. Smallwood conveys the riveting tales of life in the Air Corps, aerial combat, and the horrific experiences of a prisoner of war. Through it all, Slayton's valor, guts, and luck made it possible for him to enjoy a homecoming after the war.

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