

CANADIAN AIRMAN'S HEROISM

The Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command has officially commented on the "courage and efficiency" of a Canadian sergeant who is the wireless operator in a Whitley bomber.

The sergeant helped to give first aid to the wounded tail-gunner, put out fires aboard the aircraft, and, although wounded himself, helped to bring the damaged bomber safely home. He did not mention his own injuries until the aircraft had landed and the crew had been interrogated.

His captain, a New Zealand Pilot Officer from Christchurch, formerly a farmer and civil servant, told how the Whitley was caught in searchlights after dropping its bombs over Hamburg.

"We were attacked by a fighter, and anti-aircraft fire was concentrated on us," said the captain. "The 'flak' did the most damage. We were hit all over the place, and the tail-gunner told me on the inter-com. telephone that he was wounded. The wireless operator and the second pilot were going to the help of the gunner, when an incendiary shell exploded inside the aircraft. Small fires sprang up, but the wireless operator coolly put them out one by one with his feet and his hands before they'd a chance to get going. We didn't know it at the time, but he had been hit in the thigh by a piece of incendiary 'flak'. He and the second pilot dragged the gunner from the damaged tail turret, and dressed a wound in his back and gave him a shot of morphia. This wasn't easy, because I was taking avoiding action all the time, swinging the aircraft about."

When the wireless operator returned to his set he found it had been damaged. This was all the more serious because the bomber had been forced down to 600 feet and the navigator wanted a wireless "fix" to put him back on the right course. Despite the pain in his thigh he scrambled about locating the fault in the set, and putting it right. He was then able to put through signals and help the navigator.

The tail-gunner was taken to hospital on landing, and is now recovering, although his wounds were serious. When the wireless operator admitted he was injured four stitches were put in his thigh.

The sergeant wireless operator was making his ninth operational flight. He is 27, and comes from Port Stanley, Ontario. He was a mechanic and a minor before joining the Royal Canadian Air Force.