

LaVerne Ellis Woods, T-40

27 January 1921 – 12 March 2016

(aged 68)



Although trained as a fighter pilot, on graduation Verne was assigned to the 8th Air Force to fly B-17s as a co-pilot. After further training he was sent to the 91st Bomb Group, 324th Squadron, based in Bassingbourn, England in early September 1943.



On Verne's 13th mission over southwestern France, his plane, the Black Swan, was shot down by two German FW 190 fighter planes. His co-pilot was killed instantly in the attack, but Verne and seven of the other eight crew members parachuted safely. With the help of French farm families, he was able to travel on a bicycle to a point close to the Spanish border before he was betrayed to the Gestapo. After spending a month in a Paris SS prison, mostly in solitary confinement, he was transported to a Luftwaffe POW camp in north Germany until the War's end. As the Russians

approached from the east, Verne and a fellow prisoner walked many miles west to the advancing British lines.

During the few months before the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, Verne volunteered to serve as a fighter pilot in the Japanese Theatre, but he was not called before the war ended.

