



### Personal info

Full name

**THORNDYKE, William K**

Date of birth

**17 December 1924**

Age

**20**

Place of birth

**Edgerton, Pipestone County,  
Minnesota.**

Hometown

**Pipestone, Pipestone County, Minnesota**

### Military service

Service number

**O-783650**

Rank

**Second Lieutenant**

Unit

**332nd Bombardment Squadron,  
94th Bombardment Group, Heavy**

Awards

**Purple Heart**

### Death & Grave

Status

**Killed in Action**

Date of death

**15 March 1945**

Cemetery

**American War Cemetery Ardennes**

Plot	Row	Grave
B	38	48

## Immediate family

### Members

**Keith Thorndyke (father)**  
**Grace (Woods) Thorndyke (mother)**  
**Lloyd Thorndyke (brother)**  
**Audree Thorndyke (sister)**  
**Marilyn thorndyke (sister)**

## Plane data

### Serial number

**43-38662**

### Data

**Type: B-17G**  
**Destination: Oranienburg, Germany**  
**Mission: Bombing of the marshalling yard**  
**MACR: 13028**

## More information

William Thorndyke attended Pipestone High School.

According to witness statements of crew members of other aircraft, this aircraft was hit by flak while on the bomb run, just before the target was reached. Seconds after the aircraft was hit, their bombs were released. When the formation turned westward, this airplane turned eastward and headed for the Russian lines. Much flak was being shot at the lone plane but no direct hits were observed. Number 2 engine was smoking. Two parachutes were seen leaving the plane and it is believed a third man was observed, but it could not be positively identified as coming from this aircraft. The first parachute out caught on the tail wheel and about three minutes later the crewman was seen to fall out of his harness and fall to the ground.

Surviving crew members also mentioned that Sgt Ashcraft's parachute was caught by the tail wheel.

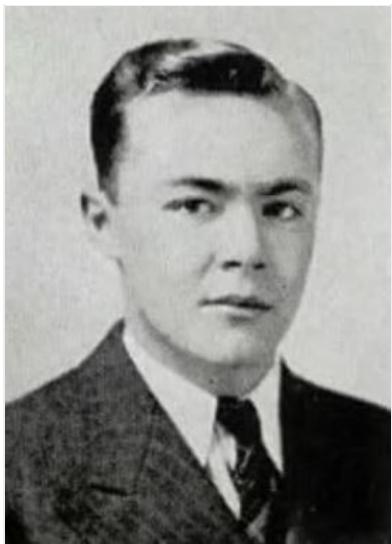
They also stated that the pilot, 2nd Lt Thorndyke stayed in the plane, thinking he could save it.

Six crew members were taken prisoner, four were killed in action: Navigator Harold E. Long Jr, Gunner Wilton J. Ashcraft, Pilot William K. Thorndyke and Co-pilot Theodore H. Esklund. They were buried in two coffins in a common grave at the community cemetery of Werneuchen on 17 March 1945 (see photo) by German soldiers.

On 2 September 1947 an American team disinterred the bodies. The remains were in very bad condition and two of the bodies could not be separated on disinterment. There was no identification found on these four remains, so they were evacuated to Ardennes Cemetery as four unknowns.

The mother of Sgt Wilton J. Ashcraft requested that her son would be buried as near as possible to his friend, William Thorndyke. This was done for the first burial on 4 October 1947 when Sgt Ashcraft was buried at block CC, row 7, grave 167 and Lt Thorndyke at grave 160.

## Photos



Source of information: Raf Dyckmans, Peter Schouteten, [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com), [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) - MACR

Photo source: Peter Schouteten, [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com)