Lady Luck Flies With Riddled Yank Planes

A U. S. NINTH AIR FORCE
BASE, France, Aug. 13 —(Dela-
yed)—Lt. Richard Kik Jr.
of Kalamazoo, Mich., and Lt.
Charles E. Rife of East Cleveland,
O., were shooting up German
tanks east of Mortain when Kik’s
Thunderbolt was hit by flak.
Kik called him and said:
“You’re smoking.”
Kik replied:
“Yea, I got hit pretty bad.”
Capt. Henry Mazur of Lowell,
Mass., flight leader and former
West Point football star, cut in
and told Rife to take Kik back to
the base.
They had just started when two
direct hits punched big holes in
both wings of Rife’s plane. He
called to Kik:
“Now I’ve had it.”
Kik advised:
“I can see the holes in your
wings, but your engine isn’t
hit. Shove the throttle forward
and keep up speed.”
Rife answered:
“I don’t think I can make it.
My flap aileron are gone. I’m
going to belly land.”
“Listen, Rife, you can’t.
You’ve got a bomb hung under
your wing. Get some altitude
and ball out.”

“I can’t ball out because I’ve
been hit in the back and I’m
afraid it will cut a hole through
my parachute.”
“You’ve got to keep going
then. Keep cool, Rife.”
They finally appeared over this
French base. Ground person-
nel were chewing their nails.
Rife landed at 160 miles per
hour. Kik, his engine beginning
to blaze and spurtting oil, was
right behind him. As Rife climbed
out of the cockpit three pieces
of shell fragment fell out of his
parachute. He was not hurt.