

William was wearing body armor which protected his chest but the shot hit him in the back. The wound was located over his left lung. Technically, it was described as a left hemothorax with severe shock. There was very heavy loss of blood which was being drained constantly from his chest in great amounts.

I maneuvered the ship at high speed toward the carrier BENNINGTON while my Executive Officer relayed the doctor's description of William's injuries by radio to BENNINGTON requesting that their physicians and operating room be made ready for emergency surgery. Another helicopter was airborne in our vicinity ready for emergency medical evacuation to the more extensive hospital facilities in BENNINGTON.

Meanwhile, Dr. Lonergan was desperately trying to control the bleeding. When it became apparent that the fight to keep William alive was all but lost, the helo was called in. Eight men, the Doctor and the hospitalmen moved him carefully to the fantail while the helo approached. He passed away on the fantail at five minutes past eight in the evening from loss of blood and shock. Commander Kelly, my Executive Officer, Dr. Lonergan, Hospitalmen Newton and Dickson and several other grief-stricken shipmates were in attendance when he died.

Dr. Lonergan, our dedicated and capable physician, who worked so hard to keep William alive, is writing you also.

Please be assured of two things: Everything possible that could have been done by a medical team was done that night for your son. Have no lingering doubts in this regard. I have lost friends in action before and have asked that same inevitable question: "Was everything done for him?" It was. That he held on to life for as long as he did that evening was remarkable. Secondly, please know that those of us who were on board with your brave and valiant son that night will never forget him as long as we live.

Petty Officer Duggan gained consciousness only for an instant, shortly after he was placed upon the operating table. He asked only if the pilot had been hit.

On Sunday, ship's personnel gathered solemnly to conduct both Catholic and Protestant memorial services.

I have, in this letter, dealt only with the events that occurred on board this ship where your son's flight detachment had been stationed less than a week. I know that LCDR Brecka, who thought as highly of William, can better describe his brave actions while in the aircraft fighting to save a downed pilot's life.