
A Review Of The Film 12 O'clock High: Why Team Work, Communication And Having a Single Goal Is Important

12 O'clock High

How much could an American air force bomber boy actually take? Constant exposure to war took an incredible mental toll on men in their position. These young adults were asked to grow up fast and get the job done. Initially the crewmen didn't have any idea what bombing missions consisted of but they were expected to perform to the best of their ability, essentially making them "guinea pigs" of the war. The bomber boys' chance of survival is up to pure luck. A variety of If the odds didn't stack up in their favor, they wouldn't be making the trip back home.

As shown in the film, the bombing missions had serious mental and physical affects on the bomber boys. Nobody other than the crewmen could truly understand what it's like up 23,000 feet in the air with Luftwaffe in pursuit. Aside from the possible physical injuries such as frostbite, shrapnel, bullet, and flak wounds the crewmen were often mentally scarred. Some of them became emotionally distressed to the point where they couldn't speak or function properly. For instance, when one of the bomber boys in the film returned from a mission he was unable to verbalize what he had witnessed. When he attempted to give his post flight report he lost it and stormed off. Truly understanding the content of a mission after hearing its description is difficult to begin with, in the film we don't even hear his own personal account of the mission.

Towards the end of the film, General Savage piloted a B-17 on a mission and experiences what it's like to be up in the air in full combat. He became human and realized how dangerous the missions were. The generals didn't value the boys' lives, they did what they had to do to win the war. Despite the content of the missions, the bomber boys were still sent off on mission after mission, pushed until they reached their maximum effort. Ironically, the bomber boys were essentially guinea pigs yet had such a profound impact on the war as a whole. In a sense they were just numbers on a piece of paper, sent off to beat the Nazis. They were pushed to the brink in order to determine how much an Air Force bomber can take.

The bomber boys' chance of survival was up to pure luck. Once they were up in the air everything is was up to chance. Countless variables could've changed the course of a mission and ended lives. Weather, Bomber malfunction, or Luftwaffe resistance that particular day could be the difference between life and death. Survival while flying through flak fields was up to pure luck in itself. It was impossible for the pilots to predict where flak would hit a particular time. It's incredible that the crewmen were willing to fly out and put their lives on the line mission after mission to defeat the enemy. It's unlikely that they actually thought about the variables that decided their fate but that doesn't mean they weren't apparent. The weather may have been bad one day and forced the bombers off course, leading to casualties. A slight change in the mission plan could've led to

horrible loses. If the bomber boys weren't zoned in and on top of their game throughout the mission, they would decrease their chance of survival. They had to remain calm and never panic even though their lives were on the line. Any excessive or loud talk on the microphones could have negatively affected the team's mission. In the film, one crewman was yelled at

during a mission because of how he spoke into the microphone. The crew must work as a unit, communicate, and stick to the plan, anything other than that was unacceptable.

In the end, the bomber boys were sent off on missions that had never been done before and expected to deliver. The crewmen were pushed to the extreme both mentally and physically until they reached their maximum effort. Many of the boys were physically injured and most were mentally scarred. While in combat up at these high altitudes their chance of survival was dependent on a variety of uncontrollable variables. Their fate was essentially up to pure luck. With the odds of survival against them the bombers got the job done and changed the course of the war.

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