In May 2017 continuing internet search for South Park High School identified students who lost their life in service, additional information was located with regard to Michael F. Egan from several websites and sources.

In May, a message was sent to the McIver’s Grant Public Library, Dyersburg, TN via their Facebook page asking if they had any information regarding the crash that took the life of Lt. Michael F. Egan on November 12, 1944 near Halls, TN. The request was circulated to the Genealogy staff at the library as well as the Dyersburg Army Air Field / Veteran’s Museum near Halls.

On June 23, 2017 a call was received from Mr. Tim Bivens, Historian of the Dyersburg Army Air Field. During the ensuing conversation he related that he had much information on the crash that killed Lt. Egan.

He said that there had been two survivors of the crash, the pilot Max Anderson and the co-pilot Fred N. Samuels. He continued that he had corresponded with each about the incident. Anderson, he said, would respond to letters but not telephone calls and described him as a “recluse”.

The discussion turned to Michael Egan, South Park High School and South Buffalo. I forwarded pictures of Egan from the DIAL (1943) and remembrance information from DIAL 1946 and 1947, along with photos of the memorial outside of South Park. Mr. Bivens sent a picture (infra) of Crew 7956 which includes Lt. Egan, which he took with his cellphone¹.

¹ The names and crew positions are annotated on the back of the photograph sent by Mr. Bivens.
Fred Samuels, on the other hand, was a frequent visitor of the Dyersburg Museum, attending Air Shows in 2000 and 2006, until his death in 2007.

Mr. Bivens said that during one visit he took Samuels to the site where the plane crash occurred. He was unable to recognize any of the area as they had taken off in the dark and also that he had no memory of the crash itself, waking in the hospital.
Mr. Bivens provided information on the crash, to include copies of three local news articles. The first, dated November 13, 1944, reported the crash and identifying six members of the crew of ten who were killed including Lt. Michael Egan. The second, of November 14th, reported that a seventh crewman had died and the third, of November 15th reported the death of the eighth crewman.

Cleared for takeoff, at 2235 the B-17F, #42-6032 piloted by Anderson and his crew began to roll and took off. One minute later, approximately 2000 feet beyond the end of the North-South runway it crashed, exploded and burned on impact.

A photocopy of a two-page Army Air Forces, Report of Major Accident for this crash was provided by Mr. Bivens is included.

It was also reported that the “wreckage was scattered over a large area of a local farm” and that along with a cornfield, a cotton field and several farm animals were killed on the ground destroyed by the crash and responders.

Lt. Egan’s death certificate reports the time of the crash was 10:36pm on Nov 12, 1944. It also relates that he was removed to Buffalo, NY on Nov 13, 1944 via J.W. Curry and Son, undertakers from Dyersburg, TN.

Newly available information from articles in the Buffalo Evening News provided additional insight regarding Michael Egan. It was learned that he and 411 classmates graduated from South Park on June 22, 1943 in a ceremony held at Kleinhans Music Hall. Egan earned a Science Diploma with honor from the Engineering and Science program.

An article newly located on the internet reports in part that following graduation in June 1943, Egan enlisted in July "as an aviation cadet and completed his course in aerial navigation in Tennessee." The article also related that he and his family came to Buffalo in 1940 with his father’s job on the New York Central railroad.

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2 Mail copies, June 23, 2017
4 State of Tennessee Certificate of Death, Reg. No. 45012, Morton Golden AAF, Dyersburg Tenn, 11/13/44
5 www.fultonhistory.com
6 Buffalo Evening News, November 13, 1944
It was reported\(^7\) that Aviation Student Michael F. Egan had been newly assigned to Arkadelphia, AR. In this assignment, cadets were taught the mechanics and physics of flight and required the cadets to pass courses in mathematics and the hard sciences. Then the cadets were taught to apply their knowledge practically by teaching them aeronautics, deflection shooting, and thinking in three dimensions.

Another article\(^8\) reported that Lt. Michael F. Egan graduated in the largest class “in the history of the AAF Navigation School at San Marcos, Tex” on August 28, 1944. As a graduate, he received his wings as an aerial navigator and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant.

Lt. Michael F. Egan was returned home to Buffalo, NY. Shortly before his death in a letter\(^9\) to his parents he said, "I'm happy I chose the AAF— it's a great outfit." Following a funeral from St. Thomas Aquinas Church, he was buried in Section RR, Lot 350, Grave 1, in Holy Cross Cemetery, Lackawanna, NY. He was 19 years old.

Special thanks to Tim Bivens, Historian of the Dyersburg Army Airfield and McIver's Grant Public Library, Dyersburg, Tennessee.

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\(^7\) Buffalo Evening News, September 20, 1943
\(^8\) Buffalo Evening News, August 31, 1944
\(^9\) Courier Express, November 14, 1944, Pg 14
ARMY AIR FORCES
REPORT OF MAJOR ACCIDENT

Use this form in accordance with AAF Reg. 02-14 and "Aircraft Accident Investigator's Handbook" issued by Office of Flying Safety, Headquarters, AAF.

Fill in all spaces except where otherwise indicated.

If additional space is needed, use additional sheet(s) and identify by proper section letter and subsection number.

Section A - GENERAL INFORMATION

1. PLACE OF ACCIDENT - State, County, Name Town, and if known, Address.
   Tennessee, Lauderdale, Nails, three miles north

2. WAR COLLISION WITH OTHER AIRCRAFT - Reason for such collision.
   B-17 No. 54-2236 DAF, Dyersburg, Tennessee

3. AIRCRAFT NO. - 42-6032

4. AIRCRAFT MODEL - B-17

5. AIRCRAFT SERIAL - P-DO

6. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - 046

7. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - DAF, Dyersburg, Tennessee

8. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - 046 (223 BU CTS4H)

9. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Squad

10. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Group No. and Type

11. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Wing

12. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Wing

13. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Squad

14. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Type

Section B - AIRCRAFT

1. AIRCRAFT NO. - 42-6032

2. AIRCRAFT MODEL - B-17

3. AIRCRAFT SERIAL - P-DO

4. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - DAF, Dyersburg, Tennessee

5. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - 046 (223 BU CTS4H)

6. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Squad

7. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Group No. and Type

8. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Wing

9. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Wing

10. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Squad

11. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - Type

Section C - OPERATOR (Person in control at time of accident)

1. LAST NAME - ANDERSON

2. FIRST NAME - MAX

3. MIDDLE INITIAL - A

4. RANK - 2nd Lt

5. BRANCH - USN

6. SERIAL - 0-777078

7. SPACE - S

8. DATE - 1922

9. RATING - Pilot

10. TYPE - FY-11-23 HBC Class

11. HOURS - 0-777078

Section D - OPERATOR'S FLYING EXPERIENCE (Indicating civilian)

1. FLYING TIME - 183:00

2. HOURS TEN TYPE - 75:35

3. HOURS DUAL OR COMPLT - 64:00

4. HOURS TEN MORE - 33:05

5. HOURS DUAL OR COMPLT - None

6. HOURS TEN MORE - None

7. HANDS-ON HOURS - None

8. TOTAL HOURS - None

Section E - PERSONNEL INVOLVED (Including operator and all other persons, whether in plane or not)

1. NAME - ANDERSON, Max O.

2. SERIAL - 0-777078

3. GRADE - 2nd Lt

4. BRANCH - USN

5. CODE - A

6. TYPE - P-DO

7. SERIAL NO. - 0-777078

8. ORG. ASSIGNMENT - AAF

9. AIRCRAFT COMMAND - 42-6032

10. MAJOR - 2AF

11. PARACHUTES - None
2nd Lt Max O. Anderson, pilot, in B-17F airplane 42-6032, was scheduled to perform a night high altitude bombing mission. The airplane was cleared for take-off and commenced its take-off roll at approximately 2235 GMT, and crashed at 2236, approximately 2000 feet beyond the end of the North-South runway. The airplane exploded and burned following impact.

The proficiency of the pilot is considered slightly above average in this type of aircraft, and he is in third phase combat crew training. The airplane took off on runway 35 with wind South, three MPH. Take-off was made in this direction to obtain the maximum in visibility due to light smoke emanating from the south end of the airfield. There are no obstructions within the 40-1 glide angle at the North end of the runway. The North-South runway was the only one in use due to the remaining two runways being closed for major repairs. Horizon reference lights consisting of four 100 watt lamps spaced 400 feet apart are located approximately 2½ miles beyond and perpendicular to the end of the runway. Though beneficial, this installation does not provide the desired horizon reference due to almost total darkness existing in this locality during night time.

It is apparent the pilot, after making a night take-off, permitted the airplane to fly back into the ground. There are factors which may prove or disprove the possibilities of fire in the air, engine failure, lack of sufficient horizon reference and the failure of the pilot to concentrate on instruments during a night take-off. These factors are enumerated below.

Though one of the witnesses stated he believed the airplane exploded before crashing, no tangible evidence of this could be found after viewing the terrain from the point of impact back along the flight path of the airplane. Erratic instrument readings and control settings were found though they may or may not be of significance due to the severity of the crash. These are shown in exhibits 3 and 9 attached hereto. Due to the position of the RPM controls, a test was made to determine if the pilot had possibly experienced propeller trouble causing a manipulation of the propeller pitch. It was found that the #4 propeller governor reached a maximum of 2700 RPM. This may be a contributing factor in the accident in that if the propeller overspeeded, momentary distraction of the pilot resulted, causing lack of attention to altitude and resulting in impact with the ground. Immediately prior to this flight the spark plugs were changed on the rear row of the #1 engine to correct 150 RPM left magneto drop reported on the Form 1A of the previous flight. Upon checking the ammeters and tach plugs, no evidence pointed to engine failure. Though the elevator trim tab control was set for a near maximum nose down condition and the trim tab itself was set for a nose high condition, it is highly probable these controls and tabs were forced into their positions due to the severe twisting action of the fuselage when it was torn apart in the crash.

Both the pilot and co-pilot, sole survivors of the crash, are unable to enlighten the Board on the factors involved in this accident as they received major injuries and are in a semi-conscious condition. They may, at a later date, be able to clarify the contributing cause factors mentioned above.

2. Recommendations

The installation of a modified system of horizon reference lights for use in total darkness take-offs be expedited.

3. Action Taken

A telegram originated by the Post Engineer this station, was forwarded to the Commanding General, Second Air Force, requesting a survey party be furnished this station to determine the necessary requirements for the installation of reference lighting as described in Headquarters, Second Air Force Letter, File No. 686-62FD, dated 19 October 1944.