

Lt. Werner Voss

GERMANY'S GREATEST TEENAGE ACE

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by
Walter A. Musciano

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INTRODUCTION

"His flying was wonderful, his courage magnificent, and, in my opinion he was the bravest German airman whom it has been my privilege to fight." These are the words used by the famous British Ace, Captain James McCudden, to describe Werner Voss. The reason for the Captain's complimentary opinion toward his enemy will become clearly evident as we examine the story of this teenage ace, Werner Voss.

Young Werner had lived in his home town of Crefeld in the German Rhineland all of his life. Crefeld was a textile manufacturing town twelve miles northwest of Dusseldorf. Like many boys in their teens he was interested in things mechanical and enjoyed motorcycles the best. The Voss family resided in a modest house at 75 Blumenthalstrasse and enjoyed the respect and admiration of their neighbors as one of the oldest families in town. Father Max owned a flourishing dye factory and it was planned that some day Werner, as the oldest of three boys, should some day follow his father into the business.

Werner Voss was born on April 13, 1897. His mother, the former Mathilde Pastor, sent young Werner to the Evangelic Lutheran Church

regularly. By his seventeenth birthday Werner was a good looking youth with dark hair, bright blue eyes, and a medium build. At this age he joined the local militia company which could be compared to the National Guard units in the United States. This was a cavalry outfit attached to the famous "Hussars" and Werner wore the colorful uniform with great pride twice a week and during the summer maneuvers.

On August 1, 1914 Germany declared war on Russia and Voss found himself in action on the Eastern Front with the Second Westphalian Hussar Regiment by November of that year. He was promoted to Private First Class on January 27, 1915 and became a Corporal on May 18. He received the Iron Cross Second Class for bravery in battle at this time.

As the war progressed it became apparent that the cavalry had little usefulness in trench fighting. Rather than be a foot soldier Voss applied for transfer to the newly formed Air Service and was accepted for Training on September 1, 1915. Werner Voss proved to be a natural pilot and learned to fly in record time. His unsurpassed ability at the controls amazed all who witnessed the eighteens year old's masterful flying. Much to his disappointment Voss was assigned to the role of flight instructor on February 12, 1916 and ordered to Cologne. The young man bore the distinction of being the youngest instructor in the German Air Service. But Werner wanted to be in action.

Voss was promoted to Sergeant on March 2 and transferred to Staffel 20 of Kampfgeschwader IV on March 10 where he flew on bombing and reconnaissance raids as an observer during the battle of Verdun. His restless spirit still was not satisfied; he longed to be at the controls of the lumbering two seaters. Voss' wish came true when he was finally awarded the coveted Pilot's Badge on May 28 in time to see action in the Battle of the Somme. The slow two seaters were "cold meat" for the swift Allied fighters and only skillful handling of the awkward planes enabled Voss to outlive the other pilots of his squadron! No forward firing machine guns were installed on the Aviatik two seaters. Voss with no opportunity to fire back at the English and French fighters was forced to rely on superior flying and evasive action to remain alive. Werner Voss became an officer on September 9, 1916 with rank of Leutnant in the Reserves after completing the reserve officer's training course at Lockstadt Camp.

The happiest moment of Voss' military career came on November 21 when he was transferred as a temporary replacement to Jagdstaffel 2,

the elite fighter squadron of the German Air Service. This was the famous "Staffel Boelcke" which was composed of the best fighter pilots in Germany including Baron Von Richthofen who became the teenager's flight leader. Voss shot down two planes on November 27 to begin his long string of confirmed victories and was awarded the Iron Cross First Class on December 19. His temporary appointment to Jasta 2 was changed to a permanent assignment on January 3, 1917. By March 17 his victory score stood at seventeen and he was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Royal House of Hohenzollern with Swords during his participation in the Battle on the Siegfried Line.

Flight Leader von Richthofen had quickly recognized the nineteen year old Voss' unusual talent. The two became good friends.

The two Aces went on leave together to Crefeld where von Richthofen met Werner Voss' proud parents. This was undoubtedly a great occasion for Herr and Frau Voss - to have their oldest son bring home the German Ace of Aces as his guest!

Yet it has been said that the Baron was jealous of young Werner's ability and realized that Voss was a threat to his number one position among the German Aces. When Richthofen was given command of his own Jagdstaffel No. 11 he had the Aces Schaefer and Allmenroder transferred, too. This move gave Werner Voss better opportunity to add to his mounting score. Previously with the Baron as flight leader, Voss had been prevented from flying alone or departing from organized attacks with the entire flight. Voss fought best when he could select his own method of aerial combat and not be encumbered with his squadron mates. He was truly an aerial individualist.

Werner Voss was one of those rare and daring pilots who flew solo patrols in addition to the required official sorties with his Staffel. He usually attacked any number of Allied planes he chanced upon during these unofficial excursions over the front. He invariably emerged victorious over at least one victim. He loved his airplanes and his mechanical interests were aroused by them. When Voss was not flying he would wear an old gray sweater and tinker with his fighter plane much to the surprise of the other officers and to the mechanics, too. In direct contrast to his casual garb when on the ground Werner dressed in most elegant fashion when he flew on patrol. He wore his best uniform, highly polished boots, and long leather flying coat. In addition to this Werner wore non-regu-

lation expensive silk shirts when he flew in action! When questioned about this attire Voss' reply was that there was always the possibility of being forced down and becoming a prisoner of war in which case he must look his best in case he happened to be seen by some pretty girls.

During his service with Jasta 2 Voss flew an Albatros D-III, one of the best airplanes in action at that time. Unlike von Richthofen, who had his Albatros painted flaming red, Werner did not alter the principal color of his plane from the standard factory scheme except for an all-white tail. He had red hearts, a white good luck swastika, and a green laurel wreath as a sign of victory, painted on the side of the Albatros fuselage.

On the morning of April 1, 1917 Voss flew his Albatros to the Jasta 11 airfield on a liaison mission to coordinate the operations of two leading German Staffels. He represented his commanding officer, Hauptmann Walz who was sick at the time. The Baron greeted Werner with warmth and friendship. This was their first meeting since von Richthofen left Jasta Boelcke to command his own Staffel. The Baron's feeling regarding the threat to his supreme position as the German leading Ace was beginning to bear fruit. Voss now was the number two German Ace with twenty-three victories, von Richthofen led the list with thirty-two victims.

The host offered to escort Werner back to the Jasta 2 airfield and they decided to fly along the front line. At about 13,000 feet altitude the pair spotted a flight of Sopwith 1½ Strutters and the Baron swooped to the attack. Voss did not dare interfere or to help the Red Knight otherwise he would insult his superior in rank and victories since the two seaters were regarded as "cold meat." When von Richthofen opened fire he hit one observer on his first pass. On subsequent passes he hit the instrument panel, then the fuel tanks, and finally the elevator controls but he missed the lone pilot each time. The apparent difficulty the German Ace of Aces had before he finally disposed of the English two seater surprised Voss.

Now, for the first time the youngster felt that he had the ability to equal if not surpass the Baron's score. Many latter-day experts agree that Werner Voss was, by far, the better combat flyer of the two and certainly fought with instinct rather than a preconceived plan. Voss improvised as he dueled while von Richthofen found himself in danger if his battle plans required revision during combat.

An outstanding example of the dash and daring of the young Ace and his complete disregard is illustrated by an incident the next day when Voss shot down a British B.E. two seater. His victim made a crash landing in the middle of "no man's land", but the crew scrambled out and ran to the safety of the Allied trenches. The young German on solo patrol feared that his victory would not be recorded without some tangible evidence since he was far from the German lines and knew that ground observers could not have witnessed the fight. Although a battle was raging below, he landed his Albatros on the battle scarred terrain barely missing the shell craters.

Voss leaped from his cockpit, dashed to the two-seater and removed its Lewis machine gun from the rear cockpit. By this time the Allied soldiers in the vicinity were firing rifles, mortars, and machine guns at the young daredevil. Before struggling back to his plane the youngster set the B.E. on fire to prevent its photos from falling into Allied hands. As he reached his waiting fighter he threw the souvenir into the cockpit, jumped in after it and took off over the heads of the firing infantrymen. Back at the Jasta 2 airfield Hauptman Walz warmly congratulated Voss, his squadron mates drank toasts to his daring until the wee hours of the next morning.

The "Ordre pour le Merite" was bestowed upon the nineteen year old Ace on April 8, 1917, just a few days before his twentieth birthday. After scoring twenty-eight official victories with Jasta Boelcke the German high command finally took notice of Voss' record and transferred him to Jagdstaffel 5 as leader on May 20, 1917. He scored six additional victories by June 4.

Baron Manfred von Richthofen had, on June 26, 1917, taken command of Geschwader No. 1 which was formed by grouping Jagdstaffels Nos. 4, 6, 10 and 11 under a single leader. This became the first German "Flying Circus" and travelled along the front to locations where they were most needed. This unit was to develop into the most feared and formidable fighter plane organization in the history of combat aviation. It was imperative that the Staffel leaders be men of tremendous ability in order to have the Geschwader function properly. Therefore Richthofen, who was an excellent judge of character and ability, selected his men with great care.

When Oberleutnant Frieher von Althaus was relieved of his command of Jasta 10 to become a combat instructor the Baron tapped Voss to join

the hand-picked pilots of the Geschwader as the new commander of Jasta 10 in July of 1917. This Staffel was equipped with red nosed Pfalz D-III and Albatros D-V biplanes. On occasion Voss flew an all silver Pfalz with red nose and body bands. By August 16 von Richthofen led the unofficial race for leadership with fifty-eight victories; Voss was still in second place with thirty-seven planes destroyed.

But the strain of leadership began to take its toll of the young flyer. Voss, like the French Ace Guynemer, was a fighter and not an organizer, the worry and responsibility of being a Jagdstaffel leader did not agree with the youthful Ace. His closest associates noticed a marked aging in Voss' appearance and manner which could not be attributed to maturity.

As improved Allied fighter aircraft appeared at the front they began to avenge the losses of "Bloody April". The German Air Service desperately searched for a suitable replacement for the Albatros and Pfalz fighters. Dutch airplane designer Anthony Fokker presented a triplane design to the German Air Service, the first two models were delivered to the Richthofen Geschwader on August 21. Number F1 102/17 went to the Baron. F1 103/17 was assigned to Jasta 10 and was taken by Voss who was most enthusiastic about this new Fokker Triplane. It was colored all silvery-blue with the red nose marking of Jasta 10. The young Leutnant took advantage of the face-like appearance of the Triplane cowl and had eyes, eyebrows and a moustache painted on the cowl front which perhaps gave a clew to his sense of humor.

Werner Voss first flew his new fighter on August 28. Apparently he was the first German Ace to recognize the superb maneuverability of the Fokker Triplane as a distinct advantage over the faster Albatros. The combination of an excellent pilot and a highly maneuverable airplane made the Voss-Triplane combination hard to beat. The small three winged craft became Werner's sole interest in life. He treated it as one would normally care for a pet. In short, he was obsessed with the new machine. Voss' first victory in the Tripe occurred on September 3; by the morning of September 23 his total number of victories stood at forty-eight - all in the short time of fourteen months. He was now only thirteen victories behind the Red Knight and the gap was closing!

On the Sunday morning of September 23, Staffel Leader Werner Voss was visited by his two brothers Leutnant Otto Voss and Unteroffizier Max Voss also in the German Armed Forces. The three chatted and Werner exhibited his airfield and equipment with pride. A photograph was taken of the trio standing before the nose of Voss' Pfalz scout plane. After lunch Otto and Max returned to their units. Little did they know that this was the last time they would see their beloved Werner alive.

Later that afternoon the young Hussar took off alone in his tiny silvery-blue fighter and headed for the front in search of his forty-ninth victim. As he approached Ypres, flying at an altitude of 18,000 feet, Voss sighted below him six two-seater Bristol Fighters escorted by a flight of S.E.5 fighters. Werner selected one of the escorting S.E.5 fighters as his target and began the attack. As he dived he spotted two flights of R.E.8 observation planes and two flights of Sopwith Camel fighters below the S.E.5 flight, but they were too far away to interfere. Then as he began firing his twin Spandau machine guns Voss became aware of other planes behind him! He spun around in his seat in time to see a flight of six S.E.5A fighters diving at him from above. The tiny Triplane broke off its attack to concentrate on the rapidly approaching biplanes. The new arrivals consisted of Flight "B" of number 56 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps led by Captain James McCudden, a leading English Ace and a skilled pilot.

Number 56 Squadron was one of the finest British squadrons in the war and Flight "B" was made up of the best pilots of the squadron! All of the six attacking pilots were Aces: McCudden, Mayberry, Lewis, Rhys-Davids, Bowman, and Hoidge. This group, stationed across the front lines from the staffels of von Richthofen's Geschwader, had chalked up a considerable number of German casualties. Now these experts had Voss in a trap preparing to finish him off in record time. McCudden and Rhys-Davids led the S.E.5A flight to the attack, McCudden approaching Voss from the right and Rhys-Davids from the left. How could the Triplane possibly escape this cross-fire?

If Voss dived to escape he would be surrounded by the Sopwith Camels below. He decided upon evasive maneuvers and went into a flat, half spin which took his pursuers by complete surprise...the bullets from each S.E.5A missed their mark. When the Triplane recovered from the violent maneuver it found itself surrounded by the six members of "B"

Flight joined by the S.E.5 that Voss had originally singled out. The battle narrowed down to seven English scouts against the lone Triplane, the remaining armada circling to guard the avenues of escape. This became one of the epic aerial combats of World War One. The silvery-blue Triplane twisted and turned and spread the English scouts over many miles of sky balking each attempt to shoot down the twenty year old youngster.

McCudden was the best marksman in the Royal Flying Corps; few German pilots escaped once they were caught in his gun sights. During the uneven battle McCudden twice managed to get behind Werner Voss but each time just as he was about to fire, the Triplane would flip away in another unconventional maneuver to attack one of the other English scouts. Throughout his combat career Captain McCudden hardly ever allowed himself to be led into a position where enemy bullets could pierce his plane. However, at one time during this battle Voss' twin Spandau machine guns raked both wings of the S.E.5A much to the Captain's disgust and surprise.

Suddenly a flight of eleven red nosed Albatros fighters appeared in the distance. Voss broke through the ring of S.E.5A scouts expecting to lead the Germans into the fight. The German group followed him until it was within firing distance of the English, then suddenly broke formation and deserted the brave youngster. Only one Albatros went to the aid of Voss. Its brave pilot was quickly shot down. Still another flight of Albatros scouts arrived and attempted to rescue the determined Voss but fresh SPAD and Sopwith Camel fighters cut them off preventing their intervention! The sky was full of airplanes, everyone watched with awe the spectacular flying ability of the lone Triplane.

For one moment Voss was caught in the crossfire of five converging S.E.5A scouts – a total of ten blazing Vickers and Lewis machine guns – but he managed to maneuver out of this trap which, to most pilots would have meant certain death. The English flyers began to realize that on this particular afternoon they were not opposing an ordinary pilot but rather a man-and-machine combination which operated as though it was a single unit. Several times Voss broke free and could have escaped but returned to the fight with what appeared to be even increased determination. The fearless youngster sent machine gun bullets into every one of his adver-

saries. His own plane was riddled but still in flying condition with no mortal wounds.

The uneven battle continued for ten minutes before the eyes of spell-bound spectators. When we remember that all action in such an aerial engagement happens with incredible swiftness, ten minutes is an eternity. The closing scene of this dramatic battle began when Second Lieutenant A.P.F. Rhys-Davids emptied his upwards-firing wing mounted Lewis machine gun into the madly maneuvering Fokker. He repeated this action, each time exhausting an entire drum of ammunition. The skilled English flyer, finally in a favorable position to use his cowl-mounted Vickers machine gun, quickly fired both Lewis and Vickers bullets into the Triplane's cockpit. The Fokker suddenly stopped its defensive gyrations and headed toward the West in a slow, gentle glide. The Englishman quickly reloaded his Lewis and continued to fire at the descending, apparently wounding Voss. As the Triplane slowed even more, the S.E.5A almost collided with it. At about one thousand feet altitude the silvery-blue plane stalled, then crashed into the ground on the Allied side of the front lines. It was 6:05 P.M. Werner Voss died at the age of twenty, the second leading German Ace. The gallant flyer was buried by the British with full military honors.

Every flyer in the conflict on that fateful afternoon agreed that Werner Voss was probably the finest pilot of World War One. Reminiscing about the epic battle McCudden wrote: "As long as I live I shall never forget my admiration of that German pilot, who, single handed, fought seven of us for ten minutes, and also put some bullets through all of our machines."

A retrospective glance into the character of this intrepid fighter pilot would probably reveal a perfectly normal teen-age youngster. Werner Voss was fascinated by his fancy military uniform and thought mostly of the romantic aspects of war. His love of machines, reflected by his interest in motorcycles and his fascination with his beloved Fokker Triplane, duplicated the normal behavior of most healthy young men of his time. Voss' tenacious attacks against overwhelming odds may have been motivated by a very stubborn trait. Some students of the 1914-1918 war claim that the young fighter was foolhardy and reckless to press the attack during his last battle. However, to the majority of avid air historians, even to those who have only a casual interest, Werner Voss remains the brave, unflinching, young story-book warrior, another Roland, Siegfried, or Achilles in modern dress whose exploits live on in the annals of combat aviation.

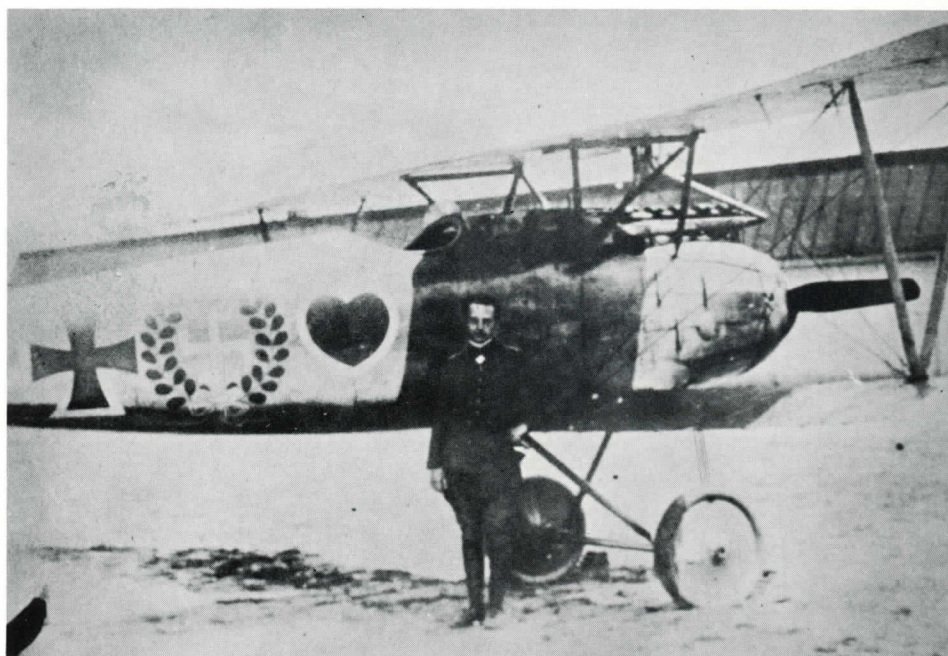


This studio portrait of the three Voss brothers, made when Werner was about six years old, was only recently released by the Voss family. As far as is known, this is the first time the photograph has been published. From the left the brothers are Otto, Max, and Werner.



Charles Donald Collection

At about the age of eleven Werner and Otto Voss posed for this portrait dressed in their sailor suits, an attire very popular during that period. Werner, the future Ace, is on the left.



N. H. Hauprich Collection

The markings on Werner Voss' Albatros D-III of Jasta Boelcke are seen in this photo with the Ace proudly standing alongside. The wings retained their regulation camouflage while the fuselage was natural wood. The entire tail was white. In these days the swastika did not possess any political meaning and was used as a symbol of good luck. In fact, numerous German and Allied pilots affixed this marking to their airplanes during the 1914-1918 war.



Charles Donald Collection

Frau Voss, the Ace's mother and the former Mathilde Pastor, waits as her son emerges from the cockpit of his Jasta 2 Albatros scout. Notice the red hearts on the fuselage. One of Voss' sisters waits at the left in this picture.

The occasion is Voss' arrival at his home town of Crefeld with his flight leader, Baron von Richthofen, when both Aces were on leave.



Charles Donald Collection

Young Werner is snapped by the camera as he fastens the straps of his flying helmet prior to taking off in his Jasta Boelcke Albatros D-III. The long leather flying coat covers his fancy dress uniform which he always wore when on patrol. The ancient good luck swastika symbol and red heart insignia are on the natural finish wood fuselage. This craft does not sport a heart on the fuselage top. Apparently this item was added at a later date.



Charles Donald Collection

Jasta Boelcke flight leader von Richthofen caught in a casual pose as he talks to Werner's father, Max Voss, immediately after landing at Crefeld on leave. The Baron was Voss' guest during his stay in Crefeld. Notice the Albatros D-III wing at the extreme right with which Jasta 2 was equipped.



Charles Donald Collection

Baron Manfred von Richthofen (right) and Werner Voss chat in front of the latter's Albatros D-III scout. This photograph appeared on a Sanke postcard and was widely distributed throughout Germany because it showed the two leading Aces of the Central Powers. The picture reportedly depicts the meeting on the occasion of Voss' visit from Jasta 2 to Richthofen's Jasta II on April 1, 1917. ...



N. H. Hauprich Collection

When Voss was transferred to the leadership of Jagdstaffel 10 in von Richthofen's Geschwader No. 1 he flew a Pfalz Scout similar to the aircraft shown here. The Pfalz lacked the speed of the Albatros but was very strong and was able to withstand terrific diving speeds from which it could quickly recover. The craft which bore a superficial resemblance to the Albatros is often confused with it.



Charles Donald Collection

Shortly after his promotion as Leader of Jagdstaffel 5 Werner Voss posed for this portrait. The coveted Pour le Merite hangs from his neck while the Iron Cross and other decorations are pinned to his tunic. This photograph signed by the Ace was presented to Bodenschatz who was adjutant to Baron von Richthofen.''



Leutnant Werner Voss is shown admiring his favorite mode of surface travel...his motorcycle. In pre-war days the Ace enjoyed riding and tinkering with these speedy machines. Now on the airfield of his Jasta 10 he speeds back and forth conducting routine official affairs using the motorcycle in lieu of a staff car.



Charles Donald Collection

Werner's parents and his sisters pose in front of an Albatros C-IX while the Ace stands in the rear cockpit. This plane was used by von Richthofen as his personal transport; the Baron evidently permitted Voss to use it in order to visit his family. At this time Werner Voss was in command of Jasta 10 which was part of von Richthofen's Jagdgeschwader.



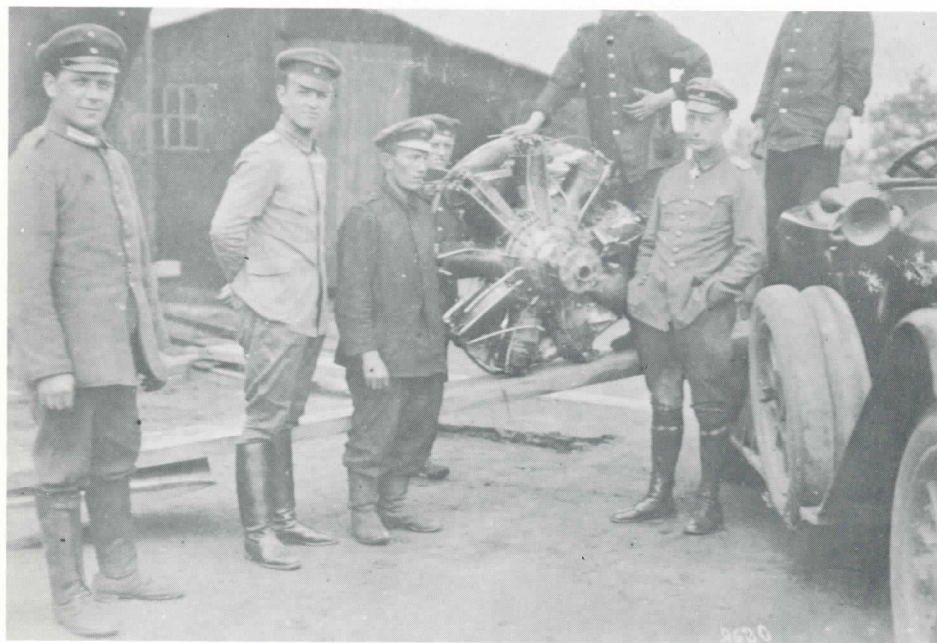
Charles Donald Collection

The red nose and fuselage bands are apparent on Voss' silver Pfalz D-III scout plane shown taxiing towards the hangar. The majority of Pfalz scouts were painted silver at the factory and remained this way because no method of camouflage had been prescribed. Notice the roughness of the terrain from which the staffel was forced to operate.



Charles Donald Collection

This candid view of Werner Voss catches the young pilot in a pensive mood as he wipes his oil smeared goggles with a handkerchief after landing in his Pfalz. The fighter in the background is in the process of being wheeled into the hangar. Observe the fur trimmed flying jacket despite the fact that this picture was taken in late summer. It must have cold in those open cockpits!



Charles Donald Collection

Mechanics unload a rotary engine taken as a souvenir from an Allied airplane that fell before Voss' flaming guns. The young Ace stands near the automobile; Eric Lowenhardt, also an Ace, is an interested spectator (second from left).



Charles Donald Collection

The young Ace, Voss, is shown seated in the cockpit of the prototype model of the Fokker Triplane prior to testing the new design. This first version of the triplane was designated V-3. The photo was made at the Fokker plant in Schwerin during July 1917 when Voss first saw the unusual fighter and realized its potentialities.



A. E. Ferko Collection

The young fighter pilot looks pleased in this photograph taken at the Fokker plant at Schwerin during initial tests of the new triplane. Voss was delighted with the demonstration and expressed great interest in Anthony Fokker's unusual design. Werner consequently was assigned one of the two first production models. Baron von Richthofen received the other.

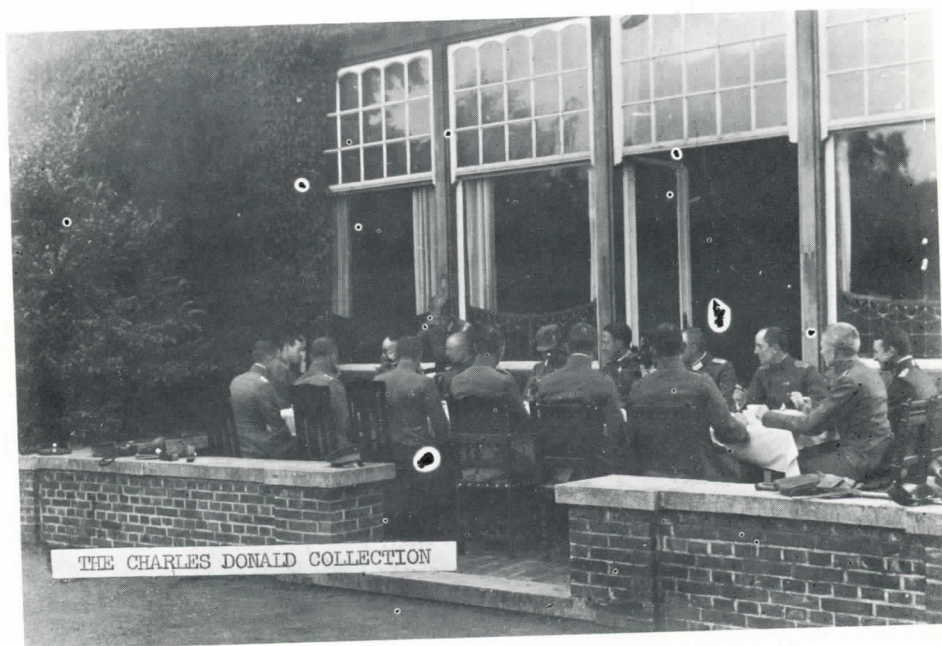


This line up of Jagdstaffel 10 aircraft includes Voss' Fokker Triplane at the extreme left, two Pfalz D-III scouts, and red-nosed Albatros scouts in the background. The photograph was taken on the occasion of a visit to Jasta 10 by Prince Otto of Hapsburg, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Leutnant Voss leads the inspection tour (his head can be seen protruding between the last three pilots standing at attention) between the Pfalz and the Fokker. Baron von Richthofen is sixth from right, the Crown Prince is passing the nose of the Pfalz. The Jagdgeschwader Adjutant Bodenschatz is third from right. . .



N. H. Hauprich Collection

Leutnant Werner Voss is seen alongside the silvery-blue triplane discussing the merits of his favorite plane with the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince. Note painted face on the red cowl. The Pfalz D-III in the background sports a cloudy green and mauve camouflage in lieu of the more common silver finish.



After his inspection of Jagdstaffel 10 the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince was feasted by Werner Voss and his Staffel members. The warm summer day encouraged outdoor eating so this private veranda was chosen for the affair. The Prince, still wearing his hat is seen at the center of the table lighting a cigarette. Staffel Leader Voss is seated to the right of the Prince; Werner's "Pour Le Merite" award is visible.

Nein!

*Lieutenant v. Res. Voss von der
Jagdstaffel 10 befindet sich auf der
viertägigen Fahrt nach:
Crefeld, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Schwerin.
Freigegeben am 11. Sept. 17.*

Lieutenant v. Res. Voss

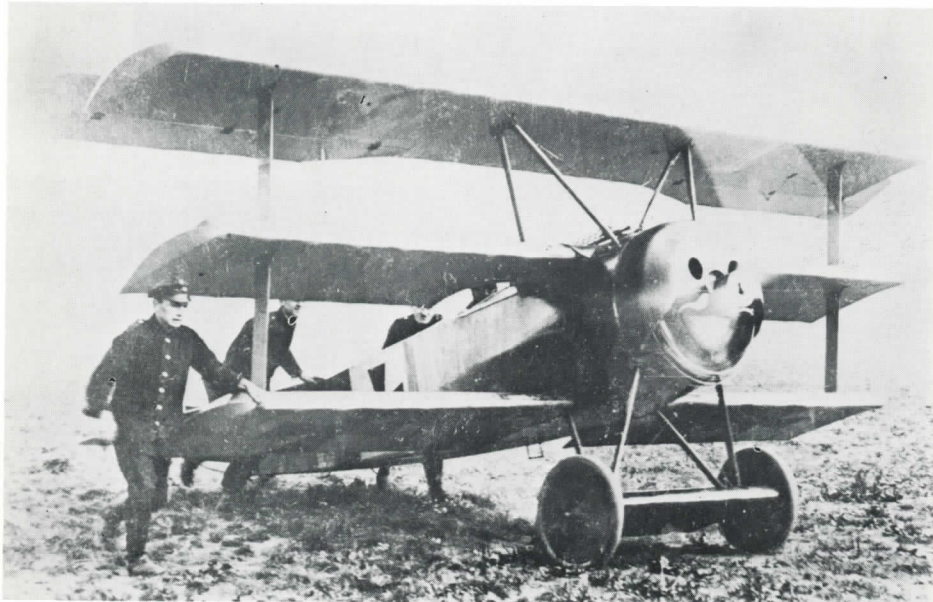
Charles Donald Collection

This document is a pass permitting Werner Voss to visit Crefeld, Düsseldorf, Berlin, and Schwerin. Note the Jagdstaffel 10 rubber stamp and the fact that Voss, himself, supplied the authorization signature.



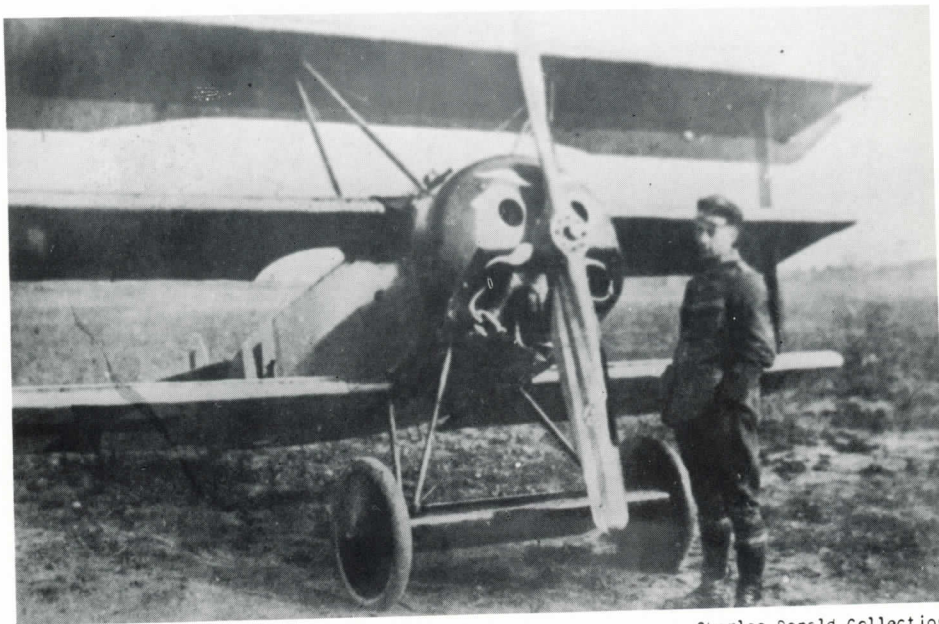
Charles Donald Collection

Werner Voss' pride and joy: the silvery-blue Fokker Triplane FI 103/17. The white eyes and eyebrows are clearly evident on the red cowl. Voss is in the cockpit, the mechanics are about to swing the wooden propeller to start the rotary engine. Notice the absence of wing tip skids under the lower wings. Final production models utilized skids to protect the tips on rough takeoffs and landings because the Triplane was not an easy craft to handle due to its extremely sensitive controls.



Charles Donald Collection

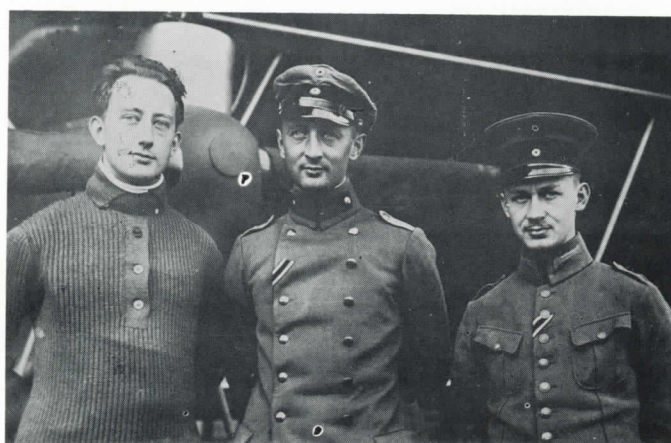
Here is Fokker Triplane FI 103/17 ready for take off with Leutnant Voss at the controls. At the time of his epic fight and consequent death Voss' Fokker Triplane was the only one in action. Baron von Richthofen's Triplane FI 103/17 had been destroyed weeks before, killing the pilot, Leutnant Wolff. Some researchers have claimed that Voss borrowed his triplane from a Staffel mate, others insisted that the entire complement of Jasta 10 consisted of Fokker Triplanes at the time of Voss' death. The official records prove that no other triplane was delivered until October 10, 1917; therefore these writers have been in error. When Voss crashed to his death, there were no other triplanes in action in the German Air Service.



Charles Donald Collection

Voss, the Leutnant and Staffel Leader, stands casually next to his fighter shortly before his last flight. Voss was fascinated with the craft and it was mainly due to his enthusiasm for the design that the triplane was ordered in quantity by the German Government.

*Von links nach rechts:
 Lt. Werner Voss, Lt. Otto Voss, Unteroff.
 Max Voss.
 Aufgenommen am Sonntag Morgen
 den 23. Sept. 1917 auf dem Flugplatz des Jagdstaffels
 10 in der Pfalz. Die beiden Brüder in der Jagdstaffel 10
 waren Leiter Lt. Werner Voss war.*



Charles Donald Collection

This photograph of Werner Voss and his brothers, Otto and Max, was the last taken of the great Ace. The two men visited their famous brother on the morning of the day that Voss flew his last sortie. The trio posed for the photographer in front of one of the Pfalz D-III scouts with which Jasta 10 was equipped. Notice the casual sweater that Werner is wearing. This was his favorite mode of dress when he was not flying.

Werner Voss, himself, recorded the occasion on the back of the photograph. The second photograph reproduces his writing which translates as follows:

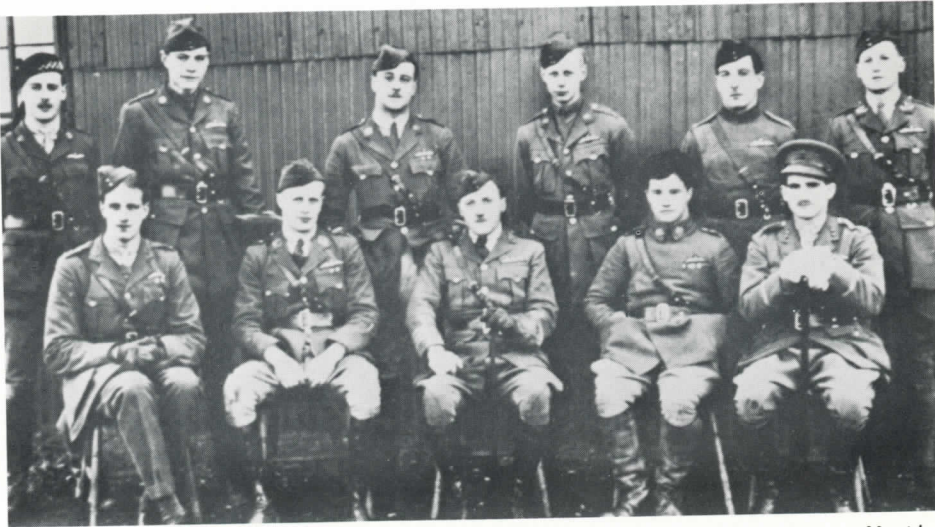
"From left to right

Lt. Werner Voss, Lt. Otto Voss, N.C.D.

Max Voss

Taken Sunday morning the 23rd of Sept. 1917 on the occasion of the two brothers visit to Jagdstaffel 10, commanded by

Lt. Werner Voss reserv."



A. E. Ferko Collection

Number 56 Squadron of the Royal Air Force was one of the finest scouting squadrons at the front during the war. Many Aces, including Albert Ball and James McCudden, were members of this group. Squadron Commander Major Bloomfield is seated here in the center of some of his pilots with Ball to his left. It was "B" flight of No. 56 squadron, led by McCudden, that shot down Werner Voss. Lt. C. A. Lewis (seated extreme left) and Lt. R. T. C. Hoidge (seated at extreme right) were members of "B" flight who fought the lone German for ten minutes.

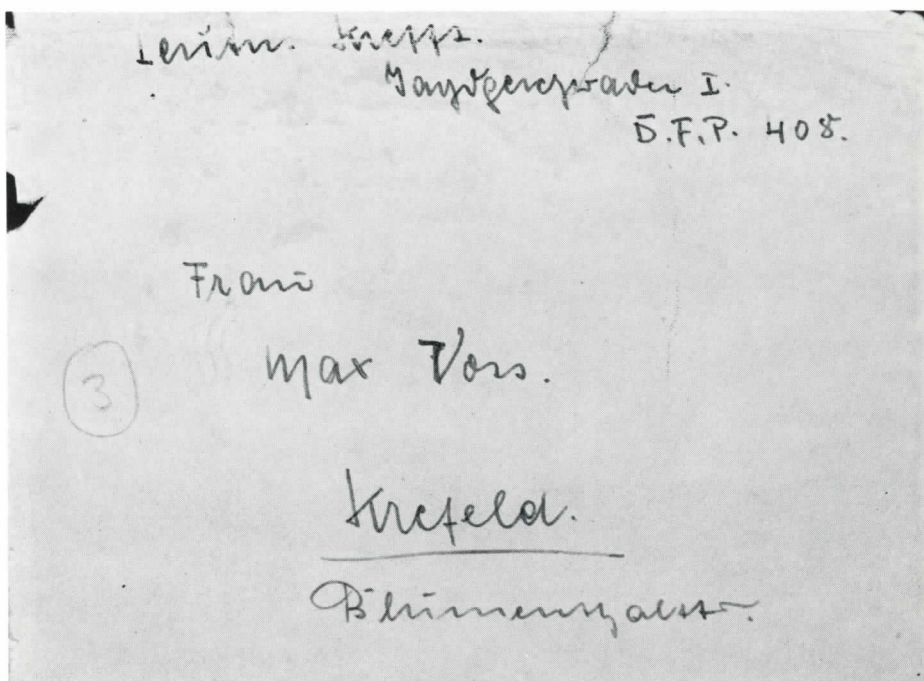


Imperial War Museum

Famous English Ace, Major James B. McCudden is shown seated in the cockpit of his S.E.5a scout machine. Of special interest is the wing mounted Lewis machine gun on the sliding rail. The gun was fired from the cockpit via a flexible cable which is visible in this photograph. It was a gun of this type that ended the flying career of Leutnant Voss.

McCudden who led "B" flight of No. 56 R.A.F. squadron against Voss for ten minutes had nothing but praise for the German's fighting ability. Most of the men in "B" flight were Aces with superb flying skill and extensive experience.

The camaraderie and sincere affection that the members of the Richthofen Geschwader felt for each other and their respective families is clearly illustrated by this letter received by Frau Voss three months after the death of her son. This was written by Leutnant Constantin Krefft who was the technical officer for Geschwader No. 1 and it is undoubtedly in reference to a Christmas present from the unit to the mother of the dead Ace which failed to arrive on time. Note that the letter is written with extreme politeness bordering on reverence. The English translation is as follows:



Charles Donald Collection

Envelope Translation -

"Leutnant Krefft
Jagdgeschwader I
German Field Post Office 408"

"Frau
Max Voss
Krefeld
Blumenthalstrasse"

29. XII. 17.

Liebe, gnädige Frau!

Verzeihen Sie, dass ich solange fernbleiben habe. Ich war fast die ganze Zeit mit Dienstreise und kam zu gar nichts. Auch überbringe Ihnen gerne die Weihnachtsgrüße. Ich habe gerade Briefbogen für die lange längste aller Zeiten, und Briefbogen für alle daselbst von mir. Entschuldigen die Verzögerung. Richtig hat es leider nichts anstreifen können. Empfangen Sie bitte nachträglich meine herzlichsten Weihnachtsgrüße. Ich werde wohl im Januar auf 2-3 Monate nach Berlinland kommandiert werden, und hoffe Sie einmal besuchen zu dürfen. Unser niedriger Böhmischer ist jetzt auch gefallen. Er würde krennend abgerufen, der arme Karl. Die ich kürzlich im großen Kamps-

quartier habe, ist aber jetzt doch zu dem Fliegen gekommen. Denn Sie muss zu Richtig darüber. Er muss seinem Willen nachgehen. Wenn er ausgebildet ist, will ich versetzen ihn zu einem Besonderen zu bringen. Wir haben jetzt fliegendes einen Winterzug und sam mehr Kräfte für Frühjahr. Richtig ist mit seinem Bruder nach Brest-Litowsk zu Jagdgruppen Ich hoffe am 10. I mit ihm in Berlin zusammen. Vielleicht können wir Sie mit der Rückfahrt antreffen.

Mit vielen, ergebenen Grüßen

von der Typ

Constantin Krefft.

Herzliche Grüße an Herrn Voss.

Letter Translation -

December 29, 1917

"Dear Madam:

Forgive me for having remained silent for so long. I have been travelling on duty nearly all the time and could do nothing.

Today Kraus is bringing you the wine-chest - I thought that Richthofen had settled the matter long ago, and Richthofen had thought that I had done so, hence the delay. Unfortunately I have not been able to hunt up any butter. Please accept my belated best wishes for Christmas. It is probable in January I will be sent on command to Germany for two or three months and I hope that you will allow me to call on you at that time.

Our capable Boehme is now dead too. He was shot down in flames, the poor fellow. At G.H.Q. I heard recently that Otto has been accepted by the Air Force after all. Do not feel too sad about this, he must follow his own solution. When he has completed his training I shall try to have him posted with our Squadron.

As far as flying is concerned we have now concluded our winter state of rest and are about to gather strength for the Spring.

Richthofen and his brother have gone to Brest-Litowsk for some hunting - I shall meet him in Berlin in the 10th of January. Perhaps we will be able to call on you on the return trip -

With many sincere greeting

I am your

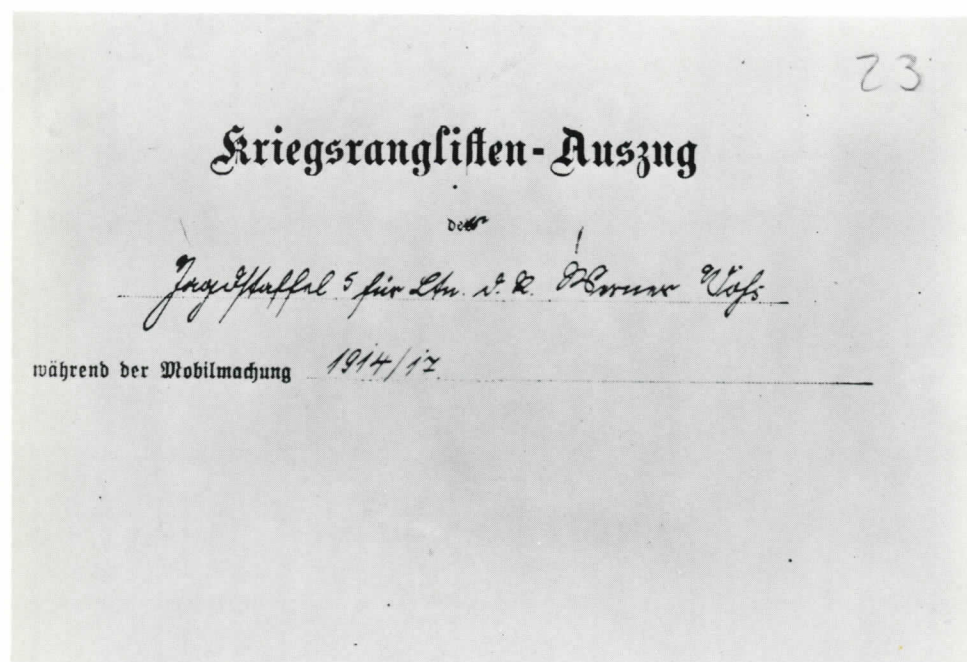
Constantin Krefft.

Kindest regards to Mr. Voss."

from your true Doris child"

Charles Donald Collection

The official Military Record of Werner Voss up to the time he was transferred to the leadership of Jagdstaffel 5 throws much light on his obscure early war career. The original German record is shown with its English translation.



Charles Donald Collection

**WAR RECORD
OF
Jagdstaffel 5 for Lieutenant in Reserves Werner Voss**

Years of Service 1914/17

No.	Rank	First & Family Name	Religion	Place & Date of Birth	Occupation Residence	Family Name of wife, No. of children, notation that applicant is single.	Name Occupation Residence of Parent	Formation of Army
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
23	Lt. of Reserve	Werner Voss	Evangelic (Protestant)	Crefeld Prussia 13, April 1897	Businessman Merchant or Accountant Crefeld	Single	Father Max Voss Mfg. Mother Mathilde Voss nee Pastor Crefeld Blumenthal-Strasse 75	Jagdstaffel 5

Participated Fr. 31, May 1915 to 5 July 1915 Reserve Officers Applicants Course at Locksteuter Lager (Lockstedt Camp)

Holds Qualification for Single Year Voluntary Military Service 27, Jan 1915 Promoted to PFC 18, May 1915 Promoted to Corp. 2, Mar 1916 Promoted to Sergeant 9, Sept. 1916 Promoted to Lt. of Reserve

For the Accuracy of this
Copy by Direction
Signed Buessing
Lt.

Werner Voss War Record (continued)

Date Entering Service	Participated in Battles Remarkable	Decorations a. Prussian b. others	Duties & Troop Attachments a. Former b. After mobilization began
10.	11.	12.	13.
16 Nov, 1914	<p>1914/15 Against Russia 1916 Western Theatre, Battle of Verdun 30 Mar - 11 May, 1916 and on the Somme and on the Balkan.</p> <p>2 Nov 1916 - 26 Nov 1916 Battle at the Somme</p> <p>27 Nov 15 - 16 Mar 1917 Trench Battle at the Somme</p> <p>From 16 Mar, 1917 Battle on The Siegfried Line.</p> <p>At Jagdstaffel Boelcke Shot down 28 Enemy Aircraft (Acknowledged by Kogenluft)</p> <p>At Jagdstaffel 5 Shot Down 29th Enemy on May 24, Kogenluft Acknowledges</p> <p>Furthermore 5 Additional Victories For which the Reports Have been Partly submitted.</p>	<p>a. Ek II Class Pilots Badge on 28, May '16 Per Order of 21, May 1916.</p> <p>EK I Class 19, Dec. 1916. Knight Cross of Royal House Order of Hohenzollern with Swords 27, Mar 1917. Pour Le Merite, 8, April '17</p>	<p>a. none</p> <p>b. 16, Nov 1914 enlisted at Replacement Eskadron Hussar Rgt. II.</p> <p>30, Nov 1914 to Mobile (Active) Regiment.</p> <p>20, May 1915 Back to Replacement Eskadron.</p> <p>26, July '15 declared Unfit for Infantry & Cavalry Duty to Crefeld.</p> <p>1 Aug, 1915 To FEA-7 Cologne.</p> <p>1 Sept, 1915 to Pilots Training School, Crefeld.</p> <p>12, Feb 1916 to FEA-7 Cologne, I Company.</p> <p>10, Mar 1916 to Fighter Squadron IV Staffel 20.</p> <p>28, Mar 1916 Staffel 20 to Field Combat.</p> <p>21, Nov 1916 Per Kofl I, Nr. II, a 77 to Jasta Boelcke</p> <p>Permanently ordered.</p> <p>20, May 1917 to Jasta 5 ordered</p>

VICTORY LIST FOR WERNER VOSS

Nol	Date	Location	Allied Type
1.	Nov 27, 1916	Miraumont	Nieuport
2.	Nov 27, 1916	South of Bapaume	Vickers
3.	Dec 21, 1916	Miraumont	B.E.
4.	Feb 1, 1917	Essarts	Vickers
5.	Feb 4, 1917	Givanchy	B.E.
6.	Feb 10, 1917	Bucquoi-Pusieux	Vickers
7.	Feb 25, 1917	Le Sauveur	Vickers
8.	Feb 25, 1917	Arras	Vickers
9.	Feb 26, 1917	Lourie	B.E.
10.	Feb 27, 1917	Blairville	B.E.
11.	Feb 27, 1917	St. Catherine	B.E.
12.	Mar 4, 1917	South of Berneville	B.E.
13.	Mar 6, 1917	Favreuil	Vickers
14.	Mar 11, 1917	Combles	F.E.
15.	Mar 11, 1917	Bailleul	Nieuport
16.	Mar 17, 1917	North of Warlencourt	F.E.
17.	Mar 17, 1917	North of Warlencourt	Vickers
18.	Mar 18, 1917	Neuville	Sopwith
19.	Mar 18, 1917	Boyellez	B.E.
20.	Mar 19, 1917	St. Loger	Sopwith
21.	Mar 24, 1917	Boiloux-Boiry	B.E.
22.	Mar 24, 1917	Vaulx	F.E.
23.	Apr 2, 1917	Ecoust	B.E.
24.	Apr 6, 1917	South of Bagnicourt	Sopwith

No.	Date	Location	Allied Type
25.	May 7, 1917	Etaing	Sopwith
26.	May 9, 1917	Havrincourt	B.E.
27.	May 9, 1917	Le Bosquet	Sopwith
28.	May 9, 1917	Leudain	Sopwith
29.	May 23, 1917	Cambrai-Bapause	F.E.
30.	May 26, 1917	Gouzeavcourt	Sopwith
31.	May 28, 1917	South of Douai	F.E. 2b
32.	June 5, 1917	Vaucelles	F.E.
33.	June 6, 1917	West of Cambrai	Nieuport
34.	June 14, 1917	Catelot	Sopwith
35.	Aug 10, 1917 4:25 PM	Dixmuiden	SPAD
36.	Aug 15, 1917 7:10 PM	Ypres	F.E.
37.	Aug 16, 1917 9:00 PM	St. Julien	Sopwith
38.	Aug 23, 1917 10:10 AM	Dixmuiden	SPAD
39.	Sept 3, 1917 9:52 AM	Houthen	Sopwith
40.	Sept 5, 1917 3:50 PM	St. Julien	Sopwith Pup
41.	Sept 5, 1917 4:30 PM	Dixechoete	Caudron
42.	Sept 6, 1917 4:35 PM	St. Julien	F.E.
43.	Sept 10, 1917 5:50 PM	Langemark	Sopwith
44.	Sept 10, 1917 5:55 PM	Langemark	Sopwith
45.	Sept 10, 1917 6:15 PM	Langemark	F.E.
46.	Sept 11, 1917 10:30 AM	Langemark	Not identified
47.	Sept 11, 1917 4:25 PM	St. Julien	Sopwith
48.	Sept 23, 1917 9:30 AM	South of Roulers	DeHaviland

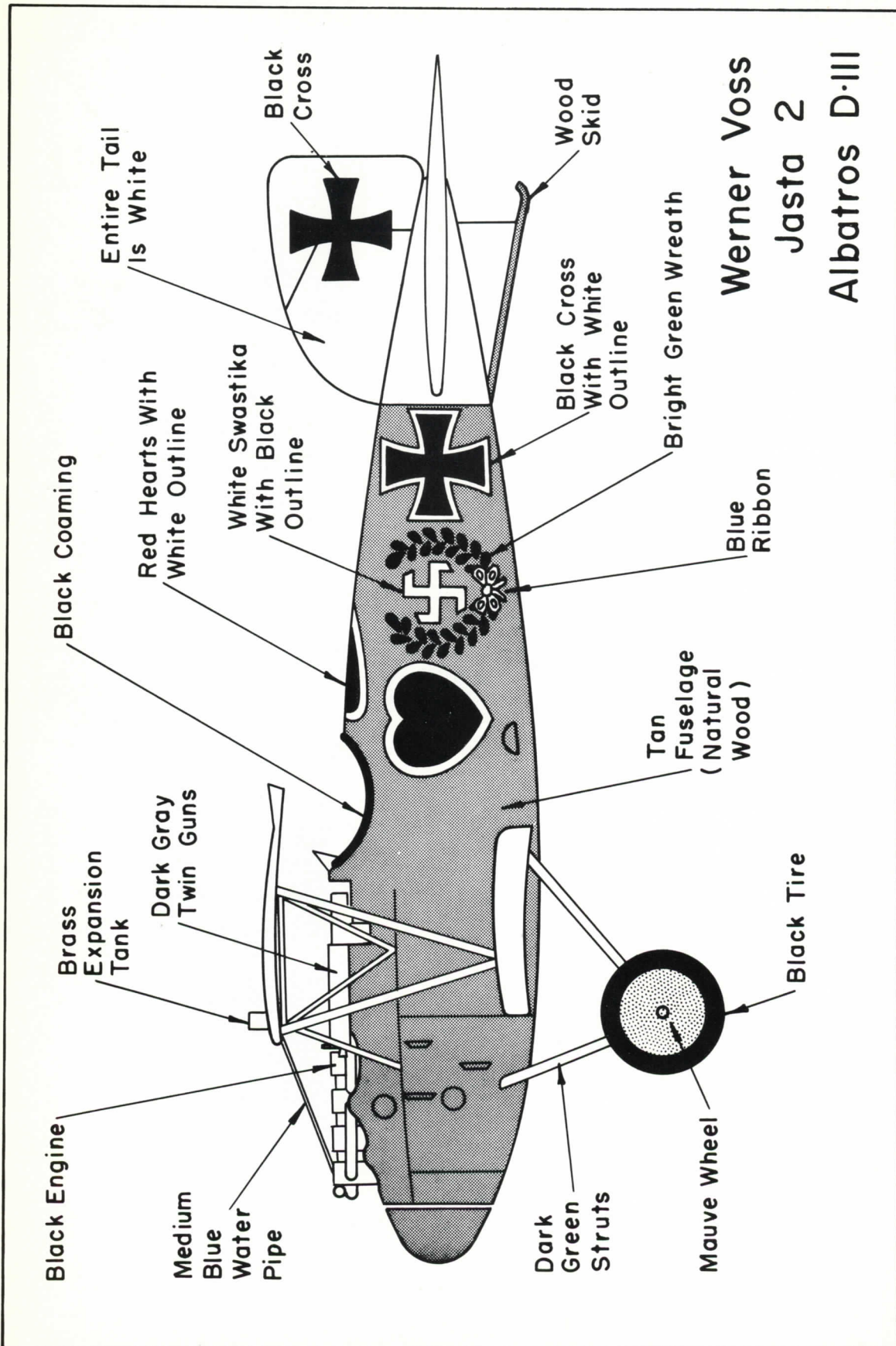
WERNER VOSS' ALBATROS D-III

The very successful Albatros D-III made its appearance on the Western Front early in 1917. It is generally conceded that this plane contributed immensely to the German successes during "Bloody April" when Allied losses were four to five times greater than those of the Central Powers!

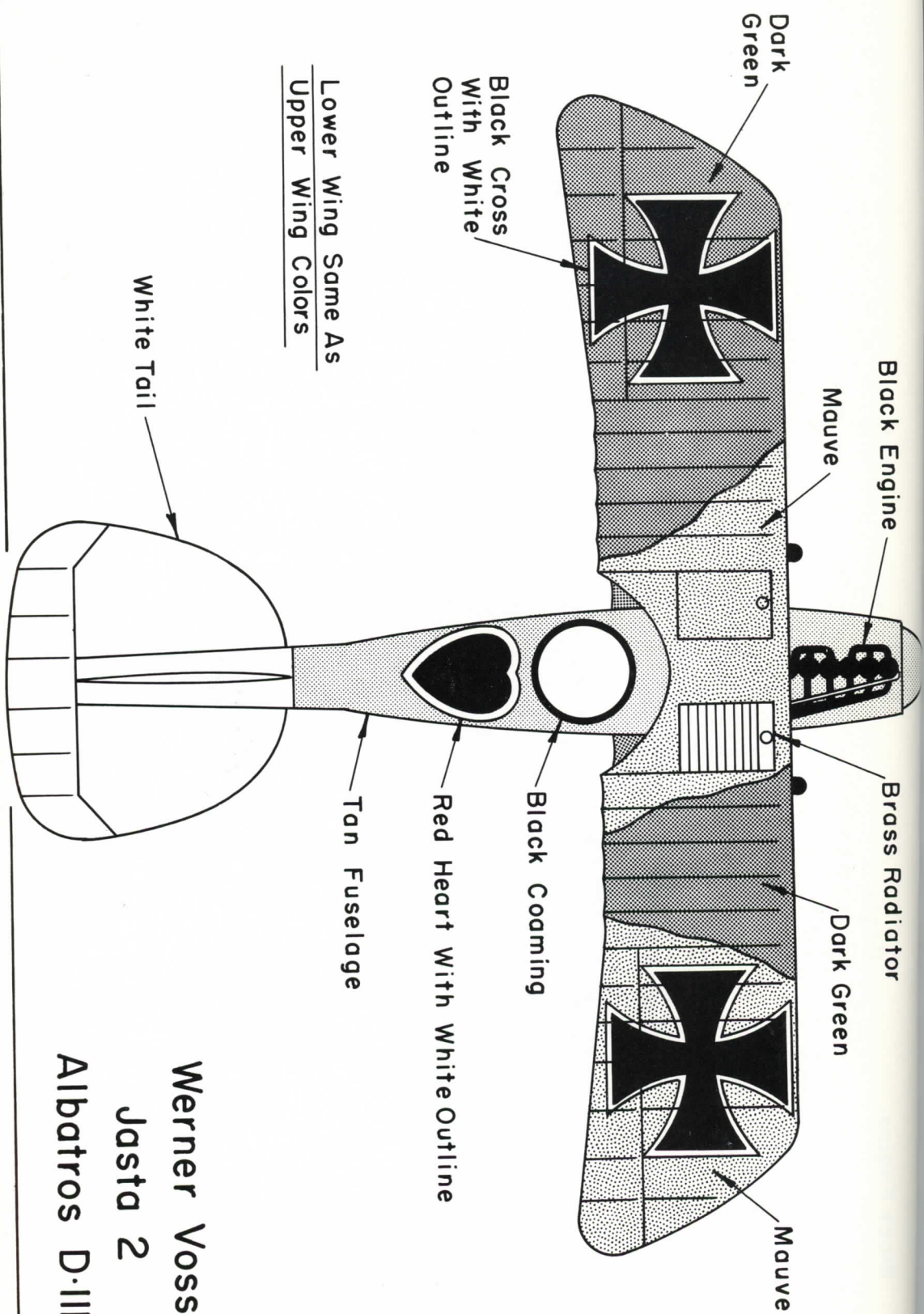
This craft followed the design pattern initiated by the D-I and D-II which featured exceptional streamlining compared to other contemporary airplanes. The engine cooling radiator was neatly installed in the upper wing, the bullet-like fuselage featured advanced semi-monocoque construction with plywood covering. The large spinner completed the streamlining. Wing and control surfaces were fabric covered.

Powered by a one hundred and sixty horsepower Mercedes six cylinder engine, the D-III reached a top speed of over one hundred and thirty miles per hour. Although maneuverability was slightly inferior to other contemporary scouts, the Albatros D-III possessed an excellent rate of climb and superior speed which proved to be definite assets – especially for the mediocre pilot. Loaded weight was 1,953 lbs; the craft could climb to 13,120 feet in 18.8 minutes. But the "V" strutter, as it was often called, suffered from weakness of the lower wing. On January 24, 1917 two pilots from Voss' Jasta Boelcke were killed when their lower wings failed during violent combat maneuvering.

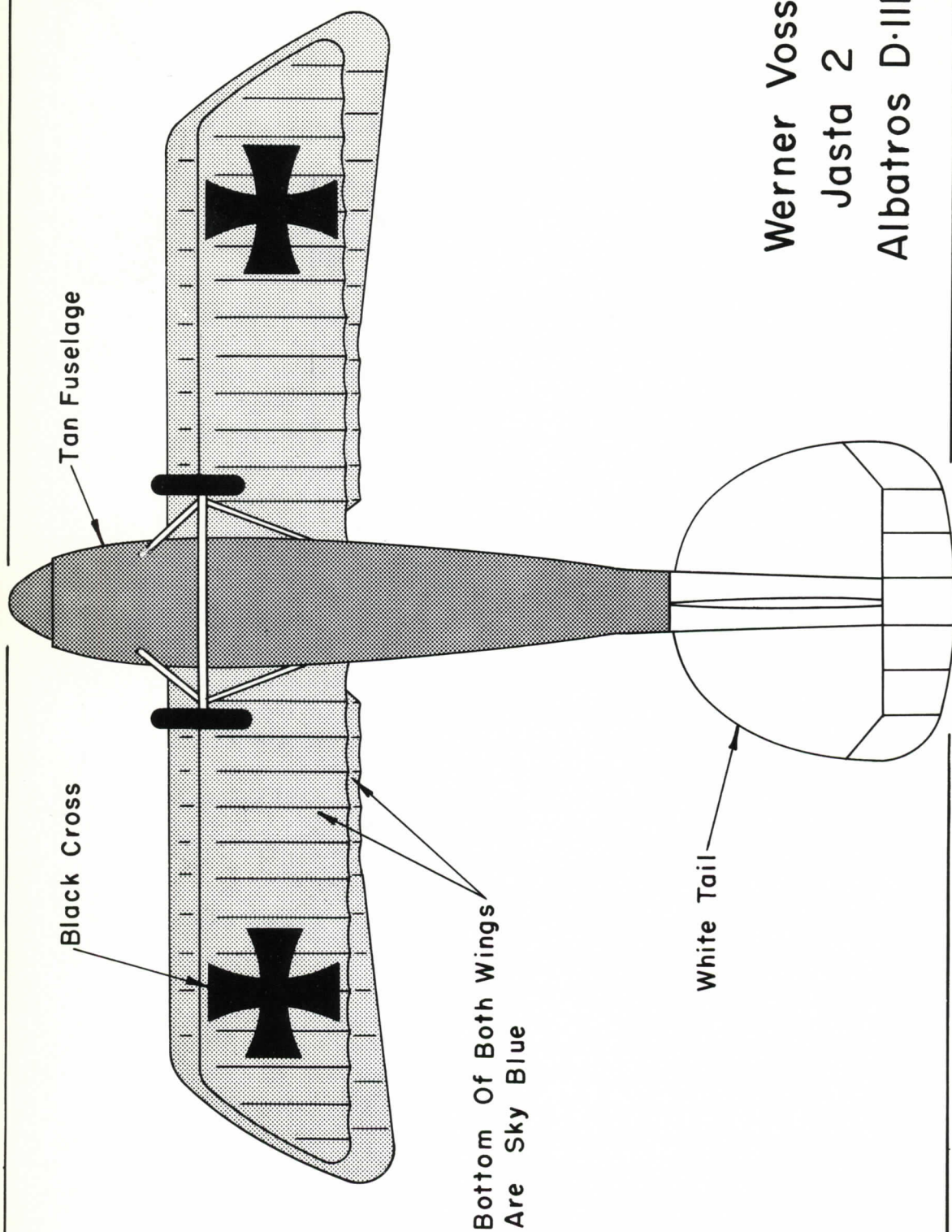
The standard factory color scheme for the Albatros D-III was a clear varnished fuselage which gave it a dull yellow or straw-like color, lower surface of wings were sky blue, and upper wing surfaces were divided into three or four sections of alternating mauve and green, or brown and green. In view of the fact that the fuselage remained unpainted many pilots, including Voss, affixed their personal markings on this inviting surface. Werner Voss' markings when flying the Albatros D-III with Jasta II (Boelcke) are shown in accompanying drawings. Notice that the entire tail was painted white – a popular means of personal identification among pilots of the German Air Service. The swastika was an ancient good luck emblem and the laurel wreath is a sign of victory. The red hearts indicate love of country and parents. During 1918 a few late Albatros scouts sported the multi-color hexagon wing covering.



Albatros D-III (continued)



Werner Voss
Jasta 2
Albatros D-III



Werner Voss
Jasta 2
Albatros D-III

WERNER VOSS' PFALZ D-III

The Pfalz D-III is often confused with the Albatros scouts. Despite their superficial resemblance, the two designs differed considerably in actual performance.

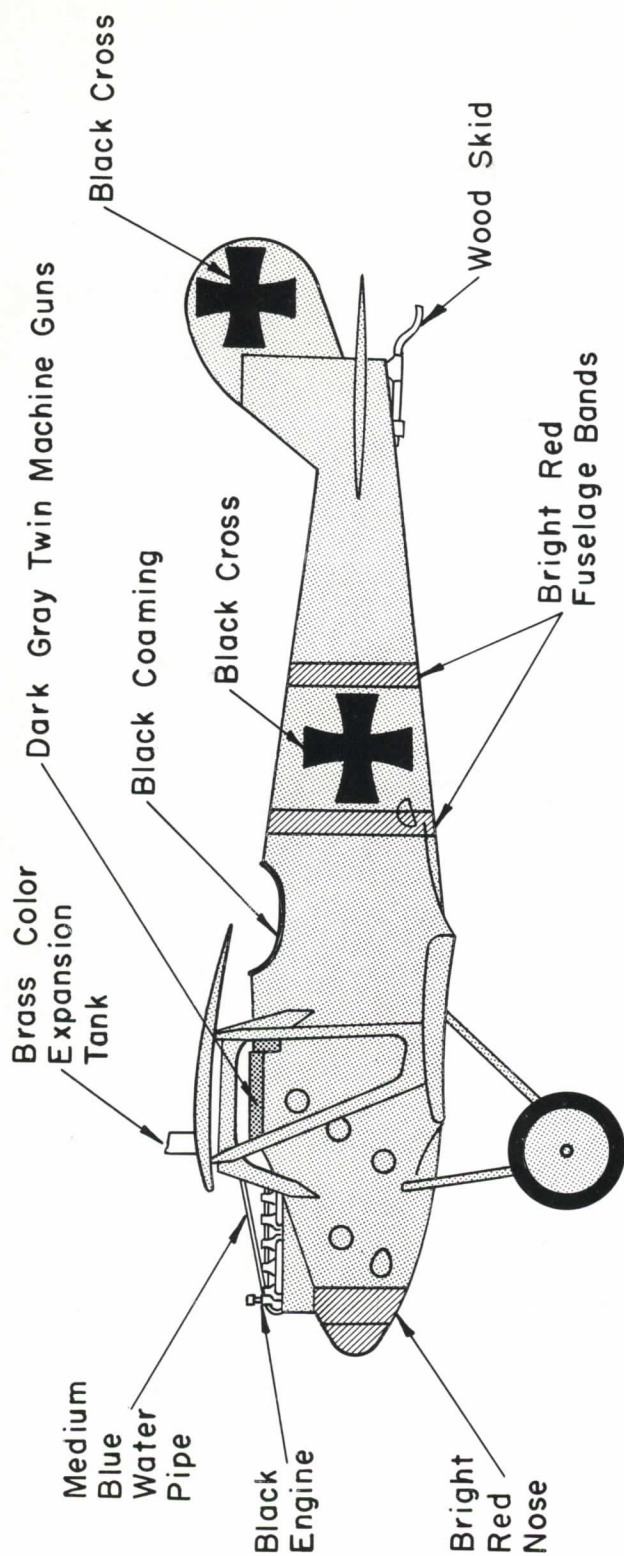
Manufactured in Speyer-on Rhine, the D-III was the first biplane scout design produced by Pfalz...the company having built Roland D-I and D-II aircraft under a license agreement. The craft made its initial appearance at the front during the summer of 1917 with the builders hoping that it would succeed the Albatros designs. However, the introduction of the Fokker Triplane shattered this idea. The D-III was often mixed in a Staffel with Albatros and Fokker Triplane scouts as was the case in Werner Voss' Jasta 10.

m The craft attained a maximum speed of one hundred and three miles per hour when powered by the one hundred and sixty horsepower Mercedes engine. It required seventeen minutes to reach 10,000 ft. which was a decidedly inferior rate of climb. Superior qualities of the airplane were its extreme ease of handling and its phenomenal structural strength. The pilots who flew the Pfalz D-III had no fear of losing wings during high speed dives unlike their Albatros and Triplane flying comrades. The D-III possessed excellent dive recovery characteristics which made it excellently suited for balloon busting.

Construction was quite similar to the Albatros with a plywood mono-coque fuselage and fabric covered wings and control surfaces. Loaded weight of the Pfalz D-III was 2,056 lbs.

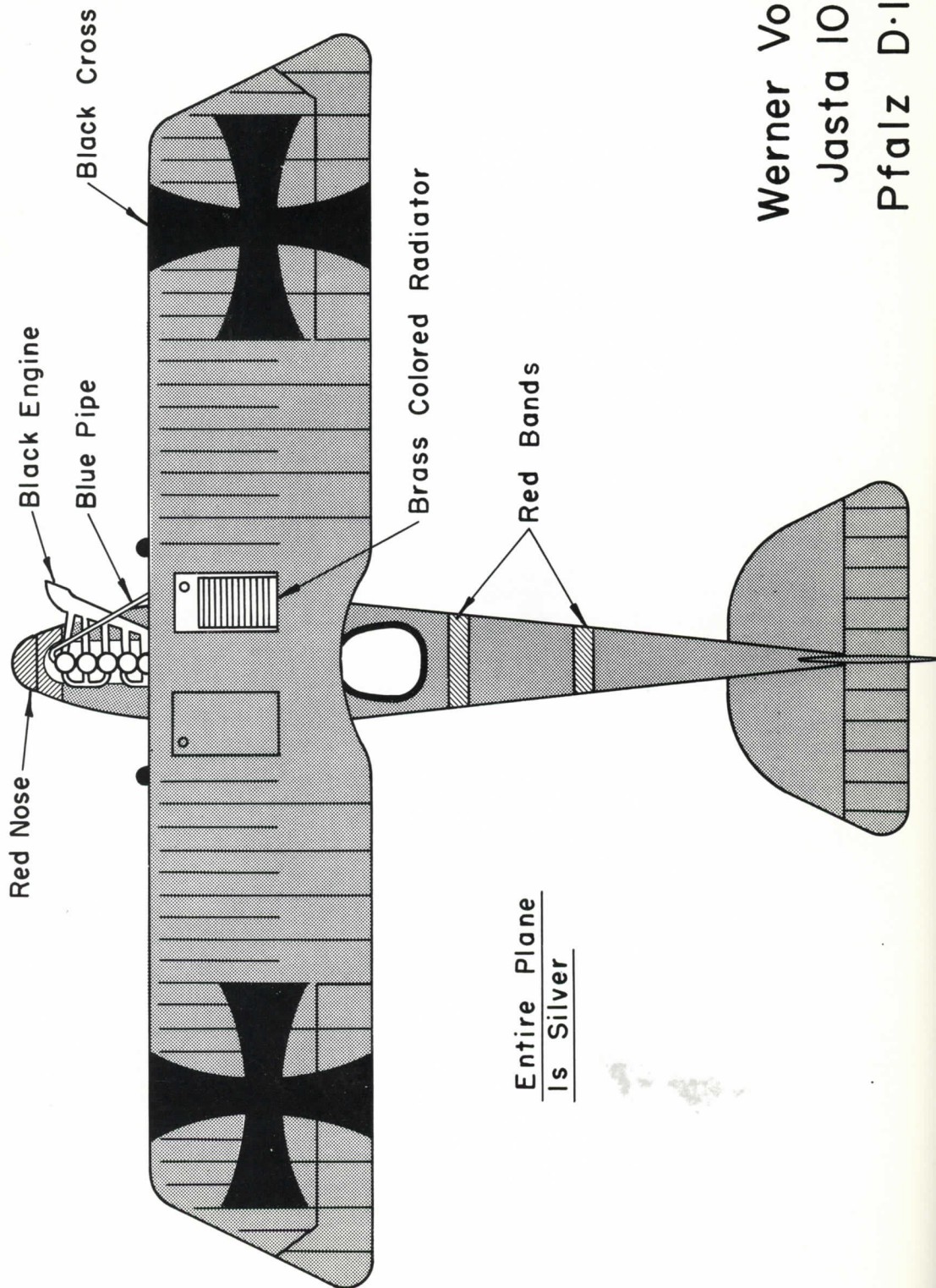
In view of the fact that the Bavarian Government sponsored the manufacture of Pfalz designs the majority of Bavarian Staffels were equipped with them. The Prussian Government ordered the craft as stop-gap equipment to replace the Albatros and, later, the Fokker Triplane. It was usually given to the novice or unskilled pilots. However, many Aces indicated a preference for the Pfalz and were quite successful with the design.

The vast majority of Pfalz D-III scouts were sprayed completely silver at the factory and this scheme was rarely changed in service. Staffel and personal markings consisted of colored tails or noses and fuselage bands. Voss flew a Pfalz with red nose and fuselage bands on several occasions when he was in command of Staffel 10.



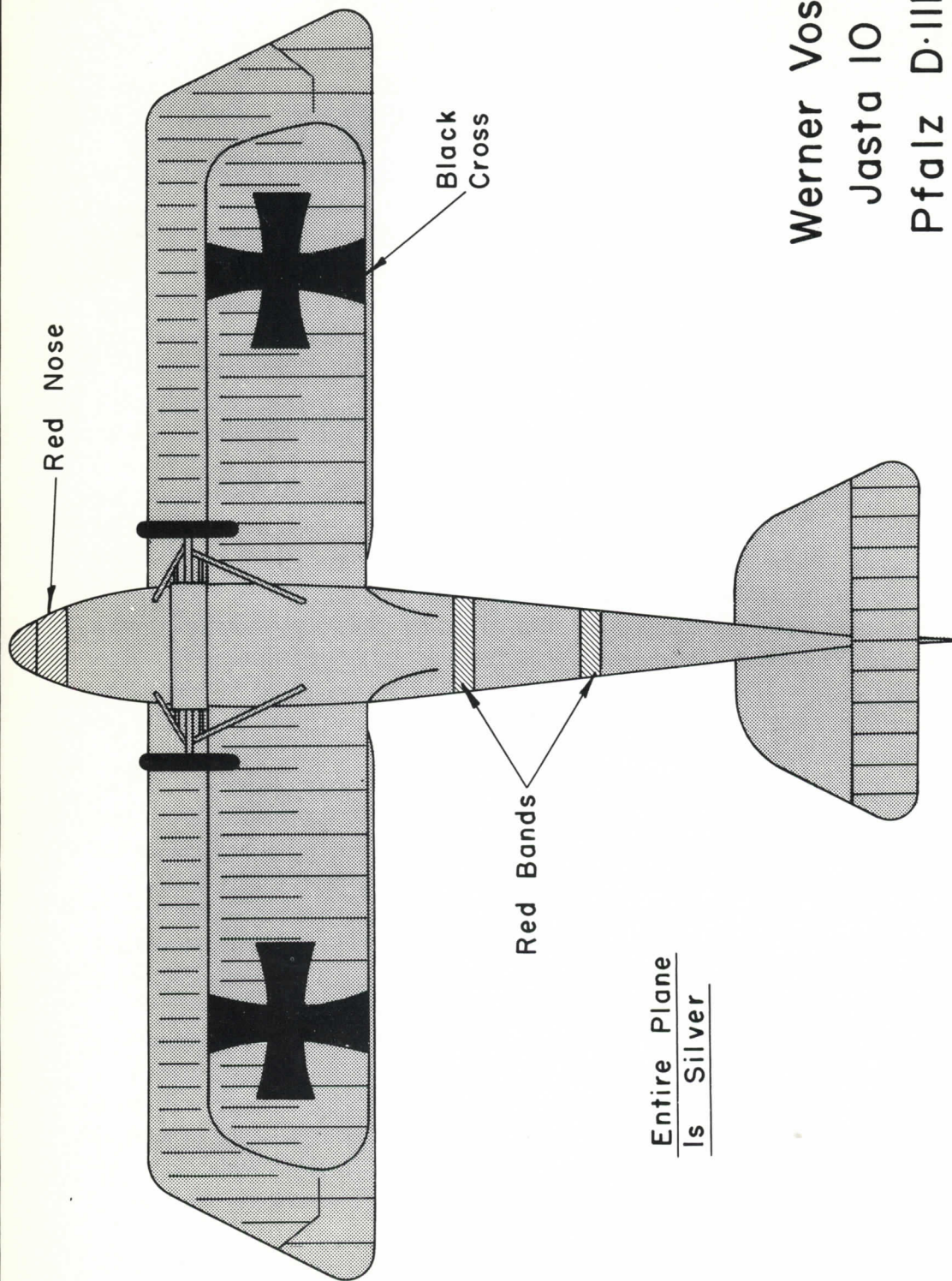
Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Pfalz D-III

Entire Plane Is Colored Silver



Entire Plane
Is Silver

Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Pfalz D-III



Entire Plane
Is Silver

Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Pfalz D-III

WERNER VOSS' FOKKER TRIPLANE

The most glamorous and widely publicized airplane of the 1914-1918 war is undoubtedly the Fokker Triplane. The tiny aerial scout was used by the majority of German Aces including von Richthofen, Udet, Goering, Loerzer, von Tutchek and Werner Voss.

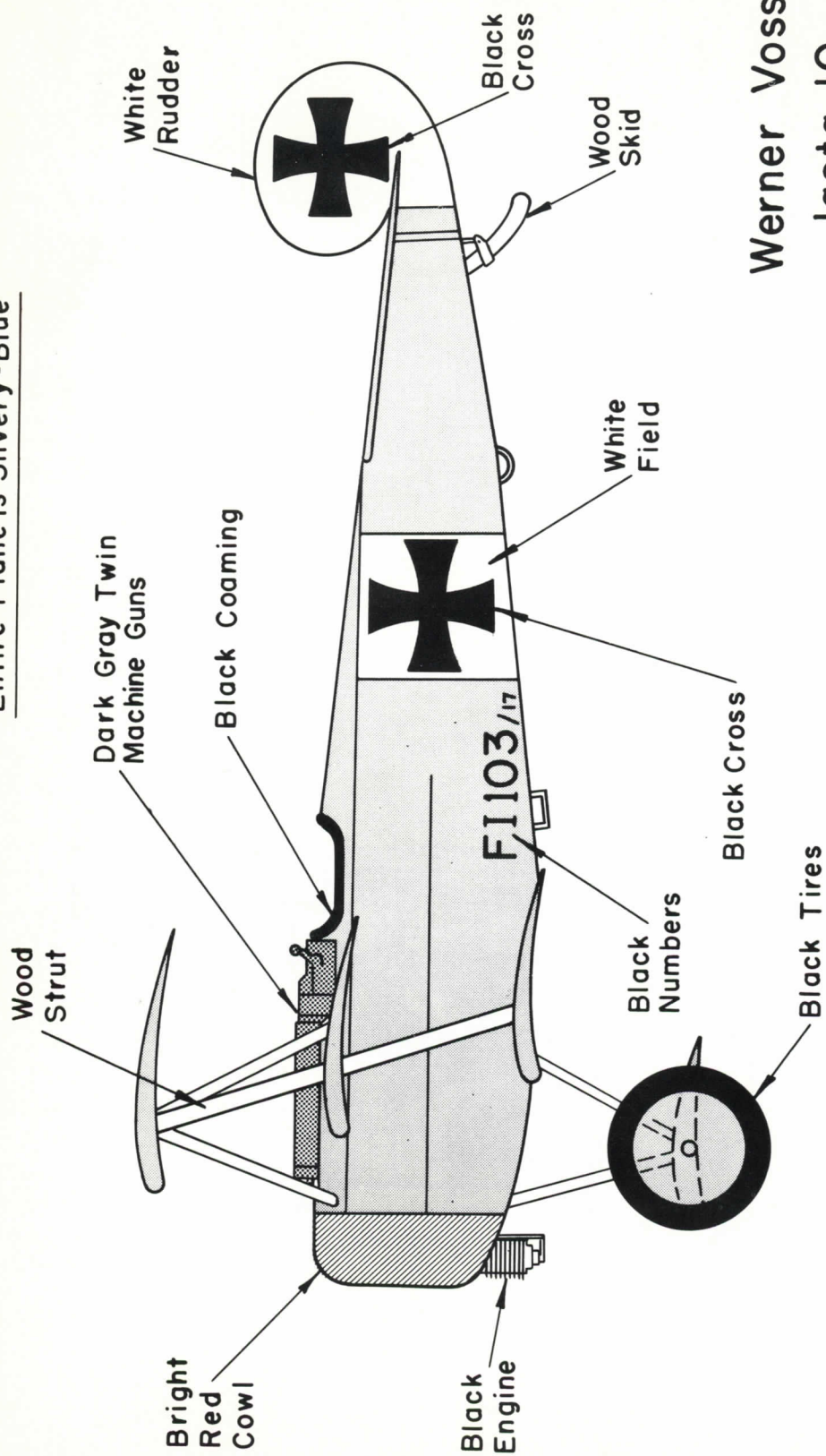
Richthofen and Voss received the first two service Fokker Triplanes late in August of 1917 and, although the Baron initially preferred his speedy Albatros, Voss expressed immediate faith in the new product. Both pilots achieved victories with their "Tripes" during September but by the end of the month both planes were destroyed and several weeks elapsed before the next triplanes were ready.

The maximum speed of the 830 lb. craft was 122 miles per hour. Its powerplant was a 110 horsepower Oberursel rotary engine. The primary asset of the Fokker Triplane was its fantastic maneuverability which made it one of the best "dog fighters" of the entire war. This very ability to stunt made the Tripe fairly difficult to fly and, consequently, it was seldom assigned to the novice or mediocre pilot. Few Staffels were equipped exclusively with the Triplane; it was invariably mixed in with Albatros and Pfalz scouts. The craft could reach an altitude of 15,000 feet in seventeen minutes.

Several leading pilots, including Gonterman, lost their lives in Triplanes due to structural failure. The fabric on the upper wing had a bad habit of peeling off when diving speeds became excessive and the entire structure often collapsed. This defect coupled with the fact that it required an expert pilot to efficiently utilize the advantages of the design resulted in the Fokker Triplane having a relatively short operational existence. By January of 1918 its production had been curtailed; only von Richthofen flew the craft until his death that April.

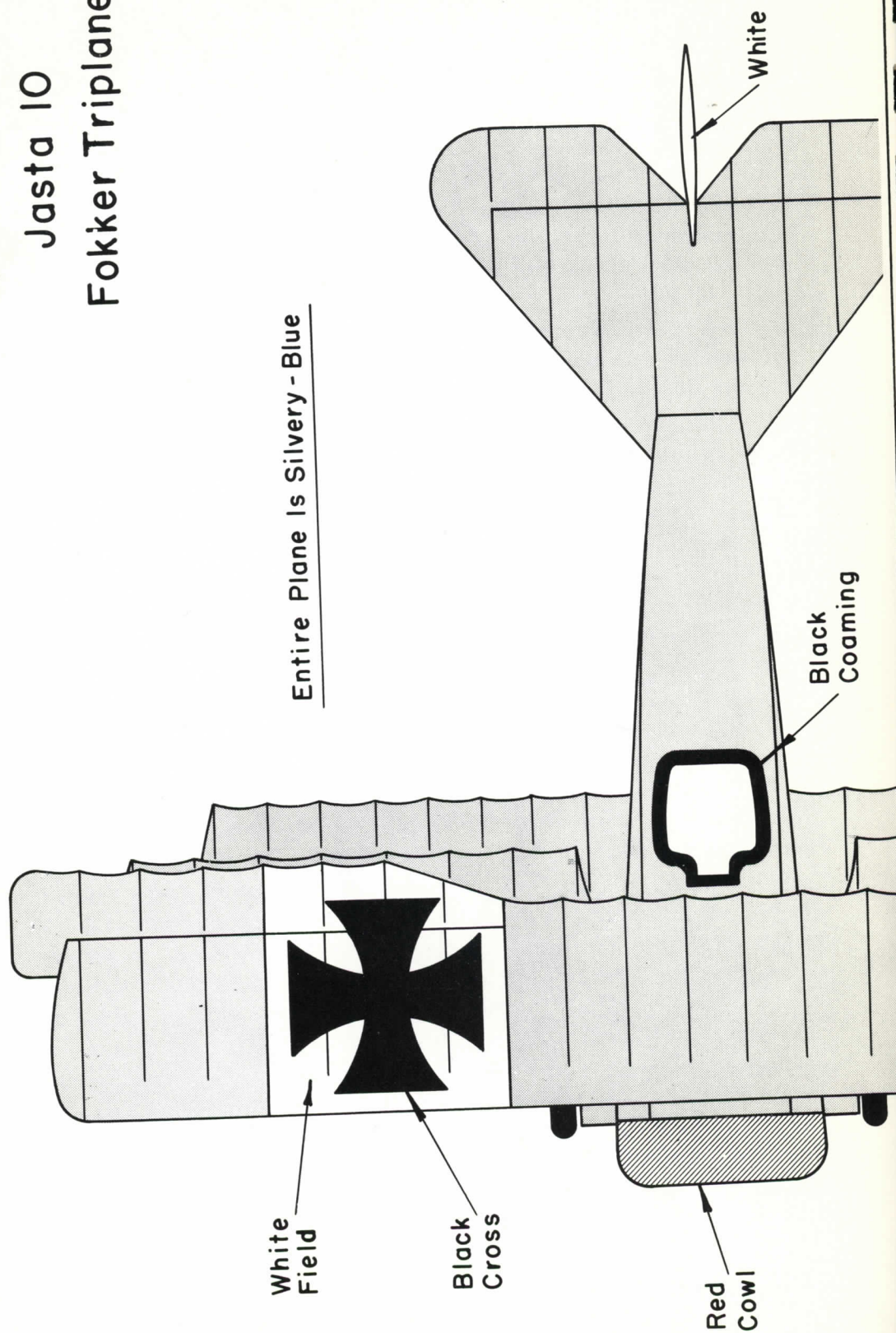
Tripes left the factory with light blue under-surfaces, the fuselage sides and all upper surfaces were streaked with a dirty brownish-olive wash. Very few used the printed lozenge fabric. The Aces and crack staffels employed bright colors and gaudy markings as a means of special identification. The drawings illustrate Werner Voss' simple, but distinctive, personal color scheme as applied to his Fokker Triplane of Jagdstaffel 10.

Entire Plane Is Silvery - Blue

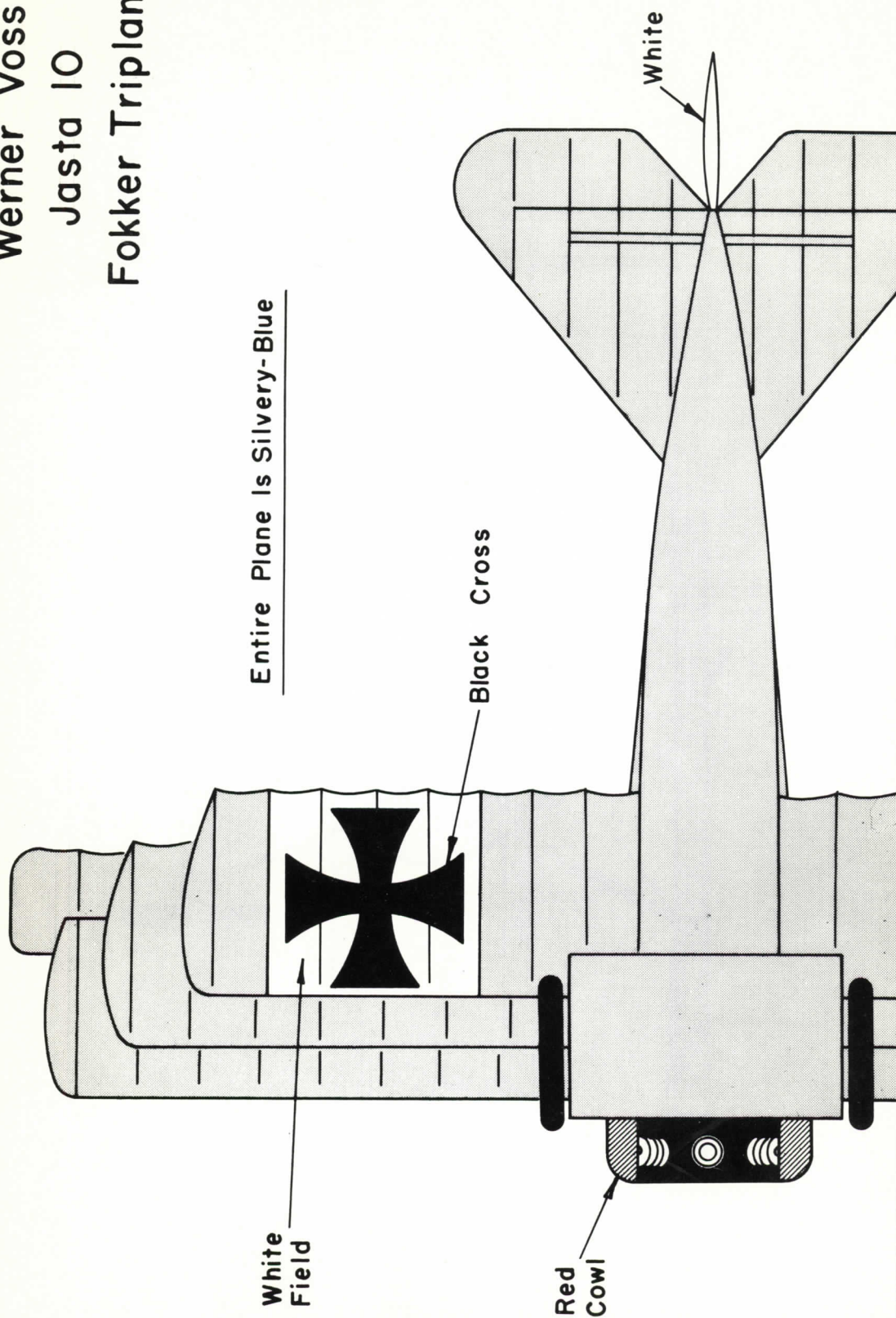


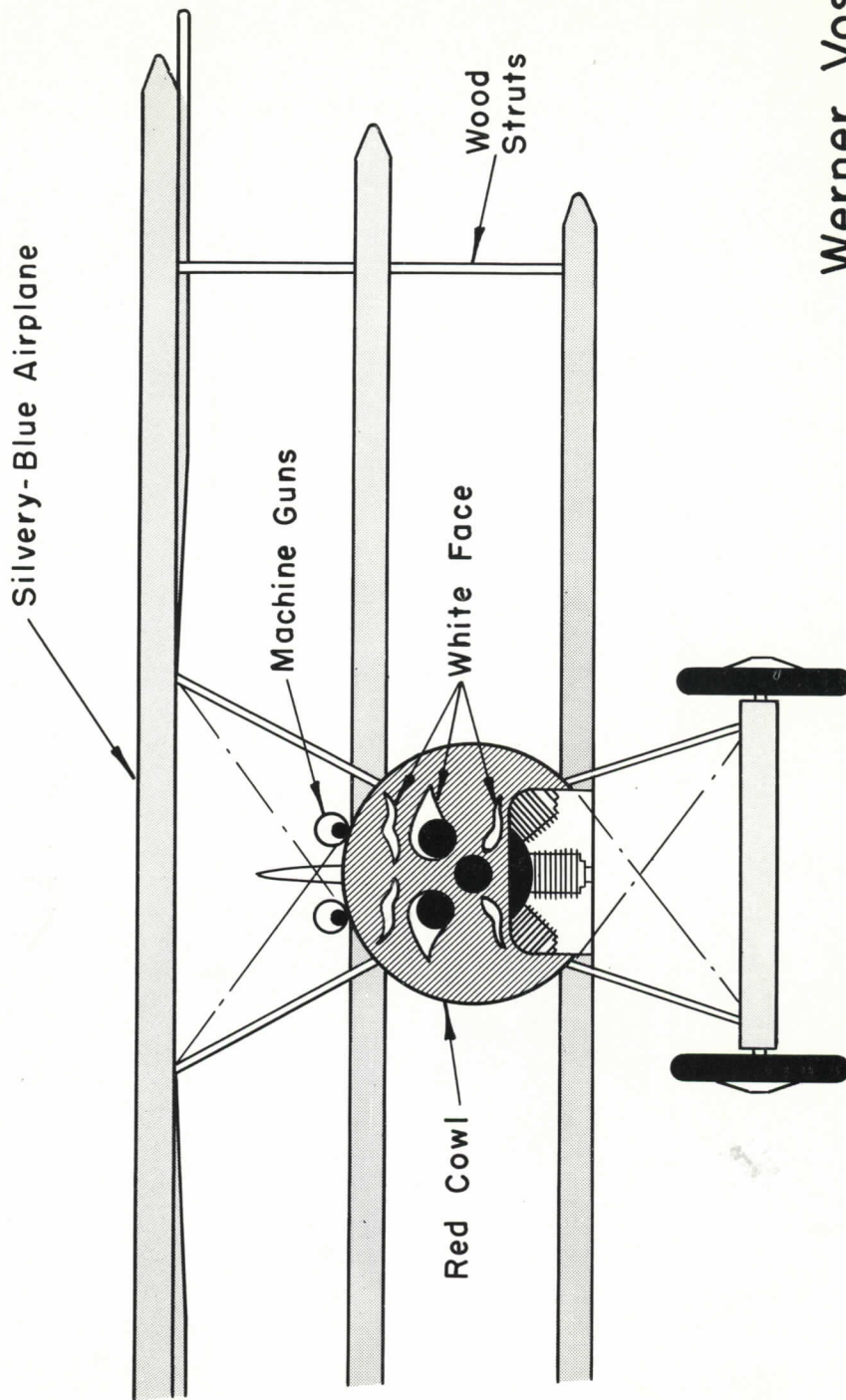
Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Fokker Triplane

Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Fokker Triplane



Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Fokker Triplane





Werner Voss
Jasta 10
Fokker Triplane

H-SERIES—

by Peter Bowers

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THREE GREAT COLLECTIONS OF OUTSTANDING WORLD WAR I and II AIRCRAFT



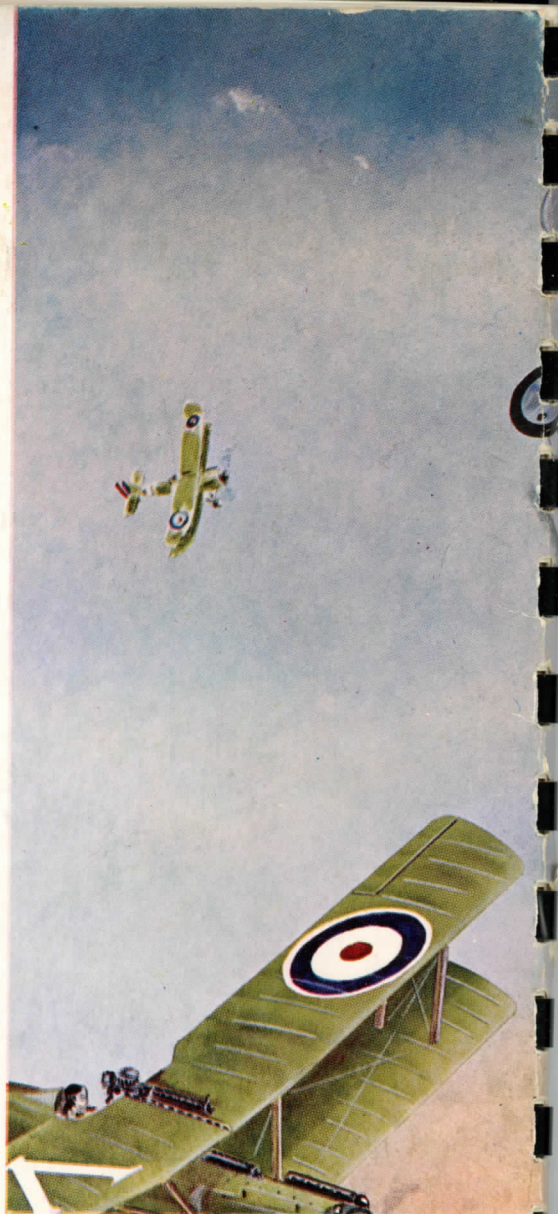
H-5



H-1



H-2



FRONT COVER

The cover painting depicts the epic aerial battle of September 23, 1917 when Werner Voss fought the Aces of "B" Flight from No. 56 Squadron for ten minutes.

Prominent artist Louis Basso has captured the action of the wildly maneuvering triplane as it evades the S.E.5a scouts piloted by Mayberry and McCudden while two other English fighters maneuver for favorable attacking positions in the distant sky. The red-nosed Albatros plunging earthward was how fate dealt with Voss' only would-be rescuer.