

Accident No.

44-3-29-505

Date

Checked by

J.M.

4-22-94

Analyzed by

\_\_\_\_\_

Copied for Wright

Field by

[Signature]

Notes

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1225:9-43

Accident No.

Pilot's Name

Nature Group

Specific Nature

Underlying Nature

Cause Group

Specific Cause

Underlying Cause

Cause Group

Specific Cause

Underlying Cause

*Change from  
to miss accident  
Combat*

*I don't agree that this is  
combat. Should be processed  
as major accident*

20113-00

*Gas - JFR  
23 Oct 45*

WAR DEPARTMENT  
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

**RESTRICTED**

(1) Place Fairwood Common Airdrome, S. Wales (2) Date March 29, 1944 (3) Time 0922Z  
 AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-24-40 (5) A. F. No. 41-11591 (6) Station Station #7, EWAC  
 Organization: (7) 15th (8) 150th (9) 721st (Squadron) Y373  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group)

PERSONNEL

DUITY (10)	NAME (Last name first) (11)	RATING (12)	SERIAL NO. (13)	RANK (14)	PERSONNEL CLASS (15)	BRANCH (16)	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND (17)	RESULT TO PERSONNEL (18)	USE OF PARACHUTE (19)
01P	Helmberger, Harvey E.	P	0-680634	1st Lt	01	AC	15	Yanked	-
04P	Feltonstein, Harry D. Jr.	GP	0-798466	2nd Lt	01	AC	15	Yanked	3 -
65N	Fleming, Julian D.	N	0-689574	2nd Lt	01	AC	15	Yanked	3 -
97E	Walsh, Joseph C.	AE	20120199	Sgt	20	AC	15	Yanked	3 -
0	Darby, Joseph C.	RO	19148242	S/Sgt	20	AC	15	Yanked	3 -
66P	Hettleman, David (NMI)		26650	FDARG	35	AC	15	Yanked	3 -

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED BY MANAGER  
**RESTRICTED**  
 TO 02999  
 BY AUTHORITY OF JEC  
 DATE 9/18/45



PILOT CHARGED WITH ACCIDENT

(20) Helmberger, Harvey (21) 0-680634 (22) 1st Lt (23) AC  
 (Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personal class) (Branch)  
 Assigned (24) 15th (25) 150 (26) 721st (27) Handuria, Italy  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
 Attached for flying (28) APO 52P (29) Y373  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
 Original rating (30) Pilot (31) May 24 43 Present rating (32) Pilot (33) Oct 2 43  
 (Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date)

FIRST PILOT HOURS:  
 (at the time of this accident)  
 (34) This type 500 (35) This model 500  
 (36) Last 90 days 155 (37) Last 6 months 100  
 (38) Total 700 (39) Time last 30 days 6

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

DAMAGE	(40)	(41)	(42)	(43)
(44) Aircraft	W	S		
(45) Engine(s)	W	S	W	S
(46) Propeller(s)	W	S	W	S

(48) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS

(47) Weather at the time of accident Solid overcast 600' Lower scattered to 400' Vis 1200 Yds.  
 (48) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident Yes  
 (49) Cleared from Casablanca (50) To Sts. Mawgan (51) Kind of clearance Instrument  
 (52) Pilot's mission Secret Mission - Pertaining to Functions of the 15th Air Force.  
 (53) Nature of accident Crash Landed crew bailed out with exception of Pilot & Ariel who stayed with the ship.

(54) Cause of accident Couldn't find hole in overcast, after obtaining fixes from ground stations tried to make inst approach to St. Mawgan where unable to break through undercast, Proceeded to Fairwood Common, broke through undercast over field at 500 feet. Made pass at field but unable to land. Pulled up and started around. Two engines cut out from lack of gas 4 of crew bailed out at 500 ft. Were unable to reach field and made crash landing.

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DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

(Brief narrative of accident. Include statement of responsibility and recommendations for action to prevent repetition)

1. On March 28th B-24D Number 41-11591 Took off at 2330L From Casablanca Africa destined for St. Mawgan England.
2. The Radio Operator identified into Plympton and received a Fix the Pilot then proceeded to St. Mawgan making let down but could not break through the undercast. The weather at the time was (Ceiling App 300FT Vis less than 1 Mile)
3. The Pilot then contacted Fairwood Common on world Guard Frequency and was given course to ster to their station.
4. Attached is a copy of the R/T log between the ship and Fairwood Common Control
5. After making two passes at the field (due to bad weather) the engines cut out due to lack of gas. The crew with the exception of the Pilot and engineer, bailed out at 500 Ft. The Pilot crashed landed the ship at the end of the airrome.
6. The gas consumption on this trip was 272 ga s per hour. It is the investigationg Officers opinion that the accident was not caused by Pilots error, but adverse weather condition and lack of fuel.

Signature

*James D. Rockett*  
JAMES D ROCKETT  
1st Lt AC

(Investigating Officer)

*Nathan S. Kohn*  
NATHAN S KOHN  
MAJOR AC

Date

Aircraft No: 1591 Liberator.

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Pilot: Lt. Helmerder and crew of 5.

Crashed at Fairwood Common on 29th March at 10.22 hours

I, F/O. Graham, was Duty Flying Control Officer.

The aircraft was handed over to control at 09.57 hours listening out on World Guard. The following is a copy of the R/T Log.

R/T LOG

09.57 RW to Y: Steer 027 and transmit  
Y to RW: 027 Roger. This is a Liberator; we'll need a pretty big field.  
RW to Y: Runway 1620 yards. You'll be all right - steer 030- what are your angles?  
Y to RW: Say again.  
09.58 RW to Y: What height are you?  
Y to RW: Altitude 2700 feet.  
RW to Y: Remain at that altitude.  
Y to RW: Roger. We are partly in soup now. Reducing to get out of soup.  
RW to Y: You should be O.K. on present vector; do not reduce below .8 - 800 ft.  
Y to RW: We would rather stay up in case we have to bale out.  
RW to Y: Roger. Steer 030.  
09.59 Y to RW: Are we over land?  
RW to Y: You are not over land now.  
Y to RW: Let us know when overland.  
10.00 RW to Y: Long voice transmission for homing - continue on 030  
10.02 RW to Y: Transmit for homing - continue on 030.  
Y to RW: Roger. How many more minutes?  
RW to Y: Cannot tell you at present moment. Will tell you shortly. You have only a mile or two to go; will call you over base.  
Y to RW: Say again.  
RW To Y: Orbit to port.  
Y to RW: Cannot understand message.  
RW to Y: I say again; you are over base, orbit to port.  
Y to RW: Coming over land, is that right?  
RW to Y: That is correct. Go round in circles - I want you to keep orbiting.  
Y to RW: Circling at 360°. Have to be quick - petrol getting low.  
RW to Y: Are you at 2700 feet?  
RW to Y: Keep orbiting and will give you instructions.

In the meantime aircraft had passed over base and had been heard.

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10.04 RW to Y: Continue to circle ~~300~~ <sup>Al</sup>. Give long voice transmission for heading. Reduce height, you are over base. Orbit to port. You are right over base now. Orbit to port and reduce angles. I want you to reduce height.

Y to RW: We are reducing our altitude.

RW to Y: Do not go too far from field. I want you to orbit.

RW to Y: What is your endurance?

10.07 Y to RW: About 5 minutes.

RW to Y: You had better come in quickly; we are firing lights you can come down to 500 ft.

Y to RW: Reger.

RW to Y: Runway in use is 05; if you can come in on that.

Y to RW: We will do our best.

RW to Y: Can you see lights?

Y to RW: Cannot see a thing; going into soup. We are at 1600 ft.

RW to Y: Reduce, but keep orbiting.

Y to RW: Orbiting field; orbiting at 1300 ft now.

RW to Y: You will have to come lower than that. Reduce to 600 ft.

Y to RW: We are dropping fast now 1200 ft.

RW to Y: Keep on turning. Tell me each hundred feet as you come down.

10.09 Y to RW: 1,000 ft., 800 ft., still in soup. 700 ft., 600 ft. We are in the clear.

RW to Y: Can you see lights.

Y to RW: Not yet. At 500 ft now.

RW to Y: at 500 ft steer 210., steer 210., steer 210 for 2 minutes.

Y to RW: Do you want us to turn on 210.

RW to Y: Yes

10.11 Y to RW: Reger. We are over little lakes of water. Does that help you?

RW to Y: Yes. Keep going that way; it might help us later.

10.11 RW to Y: Q.F.E. 999.9.

Y to RW: Reger. at 300ft, heading on 210, banking over buildings; looks like coal mines.

RW to Y: Can you see lights.

Y to RW: Going up over ridge.

RW to Y: Ridge might be hill. I am trying to avoid; climb to 700 ft.

10.12 Y to RW: Reger. I hope so. staying on 210.

RW to Y: Steer 110.

Y to RW: Reger 110. Coming up to 700 ft. On 110. Pretty high peak ahead, ahead to right.

RW to Y: Reger. We are firing lights. You should see us.

10.13 RW to Y: Steer 090 ~~at 1100 ft~~ <sup>see lights</sup>

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Y to RW: Steering 090.

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~~RW to Y: You are in circuit. Keep orbiting. Can you see us? Turn port quickly~~

I saw the aircraft for the first time near the South barrier of the camp.

Y to RW: We are banking, turning to the left. Cannot see runway.

RW to Y: Keep over to port. We are firing lights.

Y to RW: We see lights. Have to come up on 050 for runway.

RW to Y: You are coming down Runway now. Wheels down. Keep out to starboard turn port quickly.

Y to RW: We are doing that.

RW to Y: Turn port now. Keep turning port now.

10113 Y to RW: Fire flares.

RW to Y: We are firing; try and keep lined up with runway. You are on wrong runway.

Y to RW: We have found it- keep firing flares towards the end of runway.

RW to Y: Keep going round; firing lights from end of way.

Y to RW: Save your flares; think we can make it.

RW to Y: We have run out of flares; you are coming in wrong runway - it is much too short. You are now across runway in use.

Y to RW: See end of runway now.

RW to Y: Keep your eye on it. Do you think that you can make it?

Y to RW: Engines cutting.

RW to Y: Do not bother with firing of red lights; they are being fired for your assistance try and come in on any runway. Turn sharply port, try and come in on runway 230°

Y to RW: Making height and baling out.

#### ACTION TAKEN:

Two many flares were lit at the down wind end of 05 runway. The Outer Circle. Leading in Funnel and Fog funnel and flarepath were switched on in the hope that they would prove of assistance to the pilot in making his approach.

On numerous occasions I asked the pilot to make tighter turns but he could not risk doing that due to the shortage of petrol and the risk of starving the engines by such action. Due to the exceptionally flat turns made by the Pilot, he was unable to line up either with the long runway or any other runway in order to land or pancake with any reasonable degree of safety.

I was not aware that the aircraft had set out from an overseas base and would not be familiar with normal code words used in this country, otherwise I would not have used certain words such as 'orbit' and 'angels'.

Regarding the remark 'We have run out of Flares' made at approximately 10.17 hours; up to that time we had fired 40 very lights from the control tower and the stock was being replaced. In the meantime we informed the aircraft that Red very lights would be fired not to prevent him coming in but for his assistance. We also fired six Mortar bombs. When the aircraft was approaching 05 runway, very lights were fired only from the chequered van at the end of the runway.

The weather at 10.00 hours on 29th March according to Fairwood Common Meteorological Office was cloud base 700 feet, visibility 1800 yards. I consider the cloud base was 5/10ths at 500 feet., 5/10ths 700 feet, 10/10ths total, as the weather deteriorated between 10.00 and 11.00 hours.

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The machine crashed at 10.2 hours, after four of the crew had baled out and landed safely. Full crash procedure was instituted at once. The ambulance was standing by at the Control tower and proceeded at once to the scene of the crash.

/s/ P. B. Graham, F/O

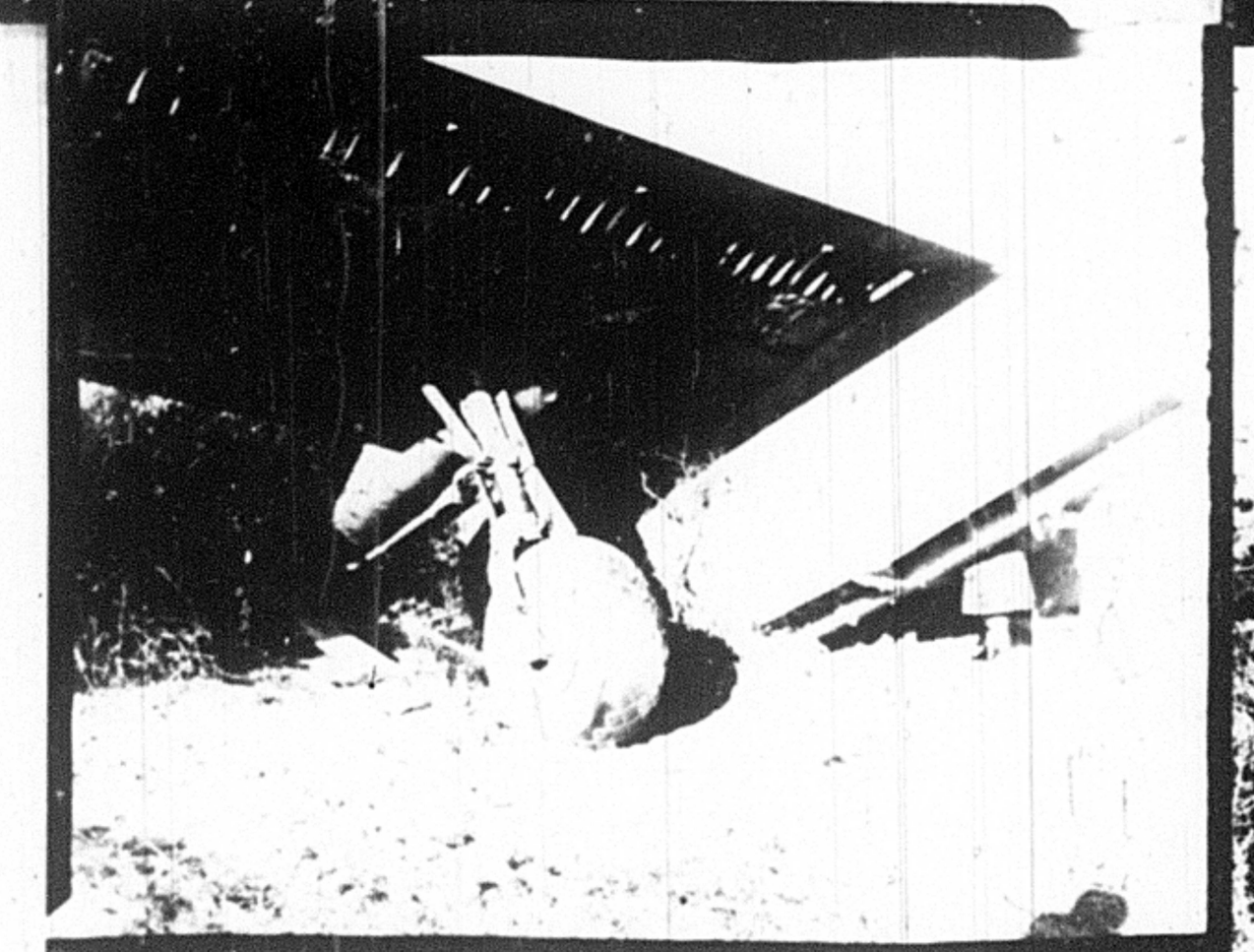
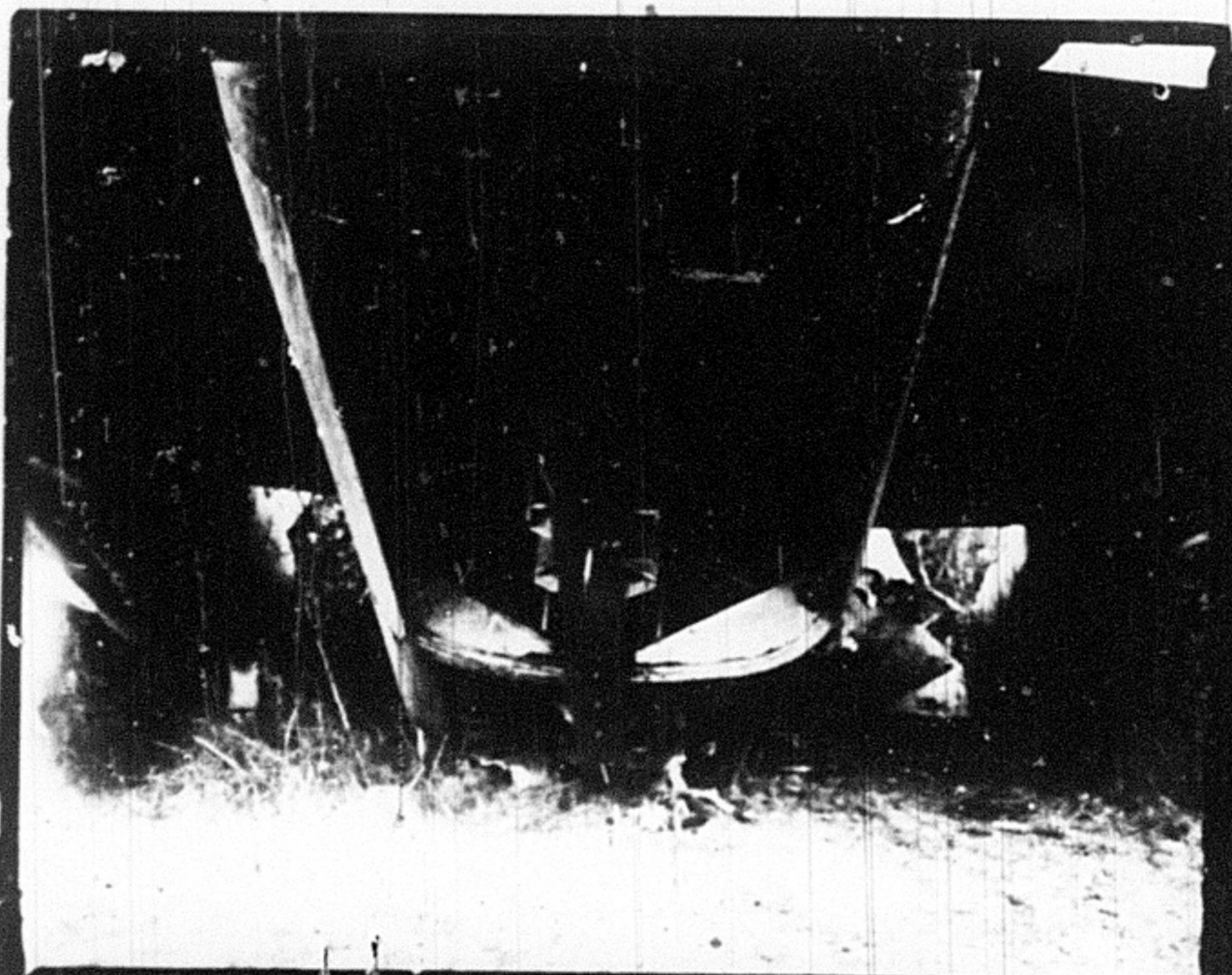
Duty Flying Control Officer.

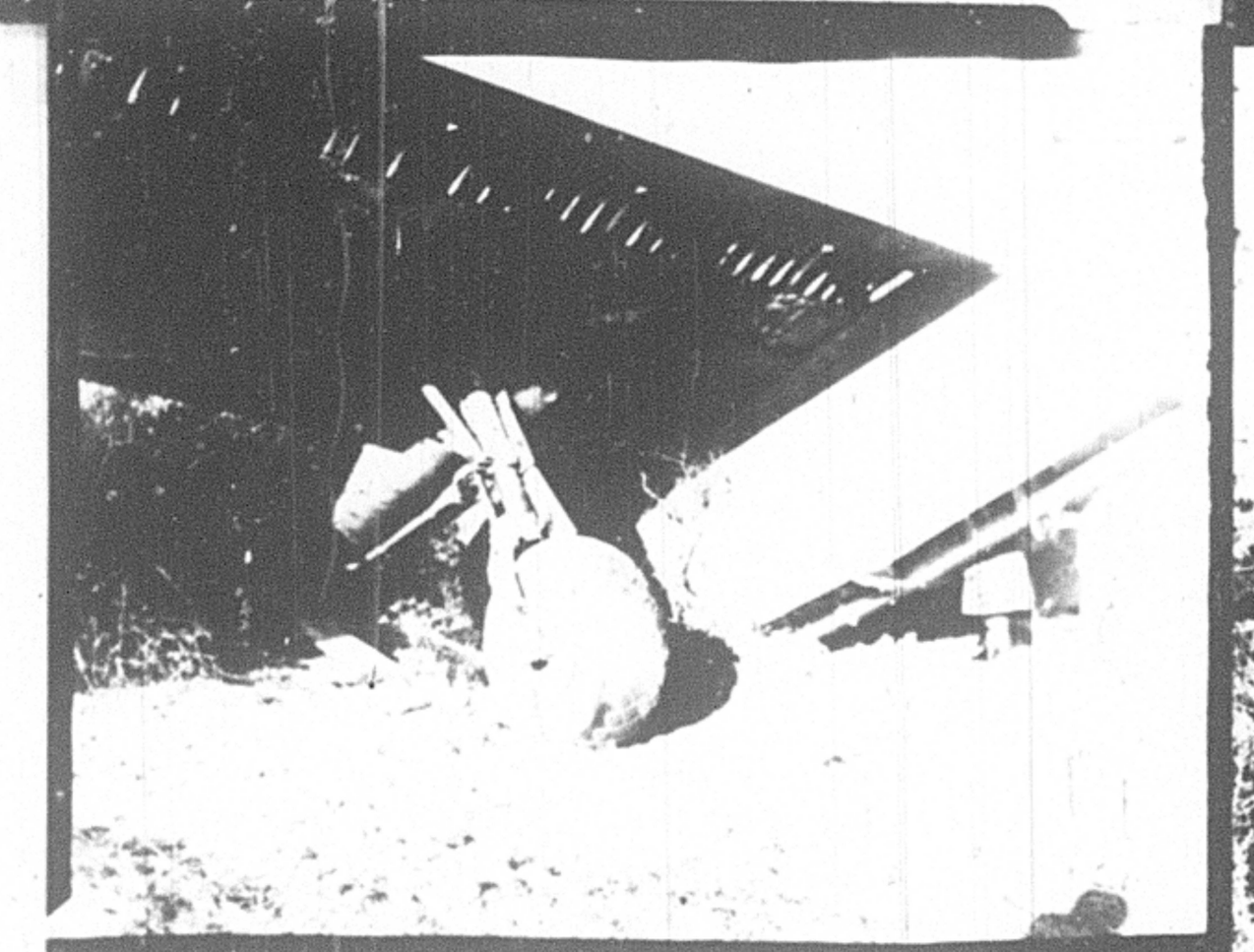
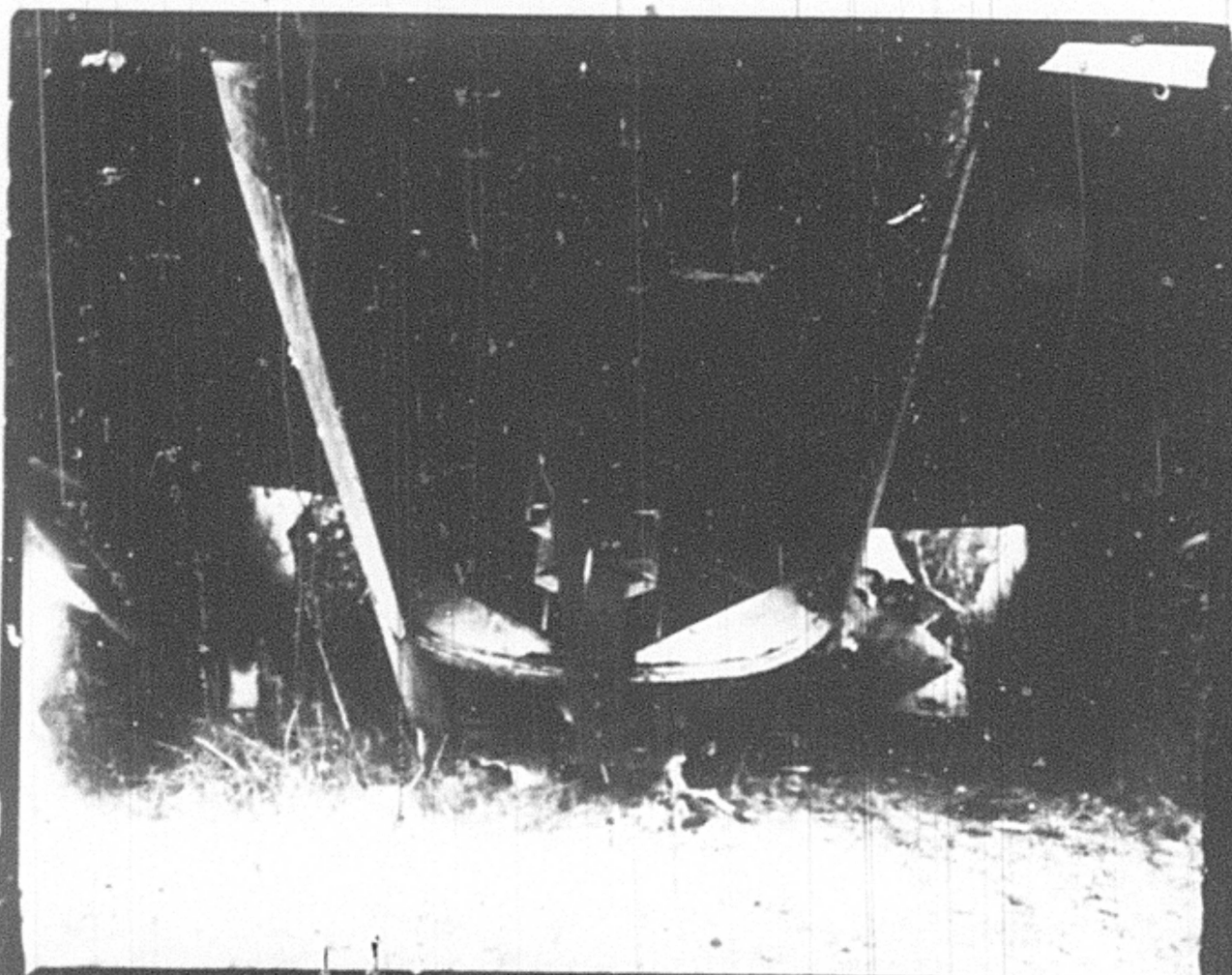
29th March 1944

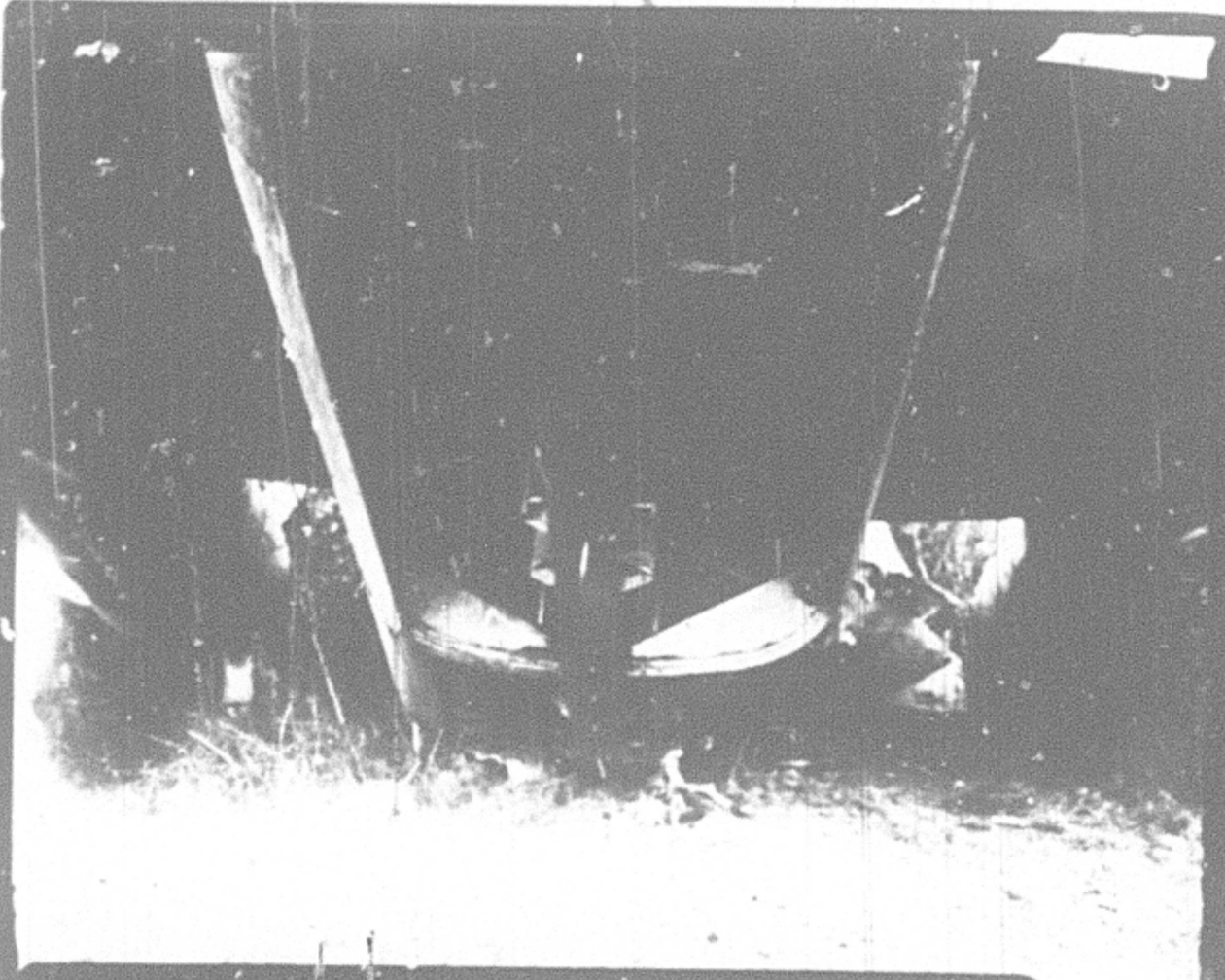
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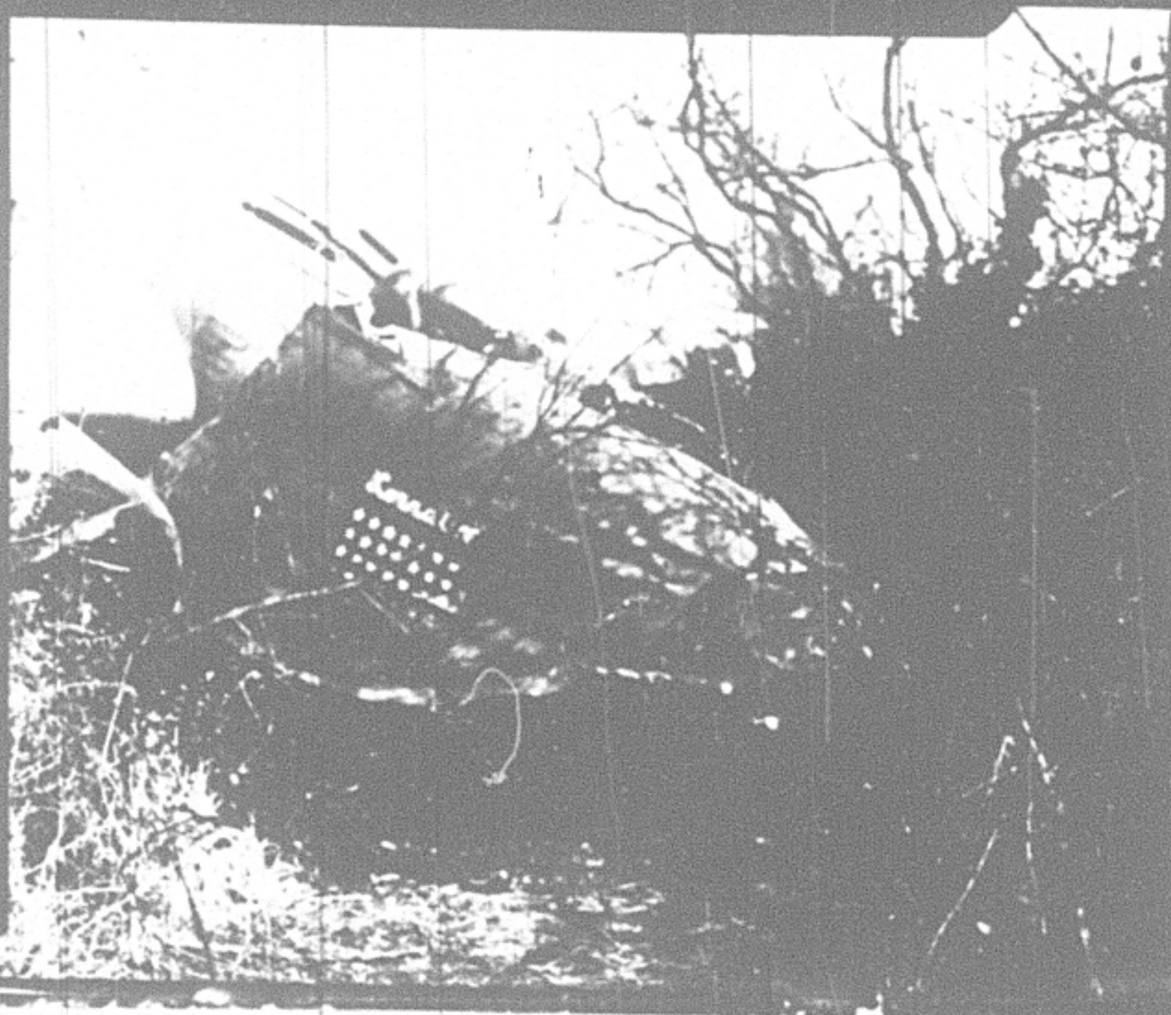
*James D. Rockett*  
JAMES D. ROCKETT,  
1st Lt, AC.

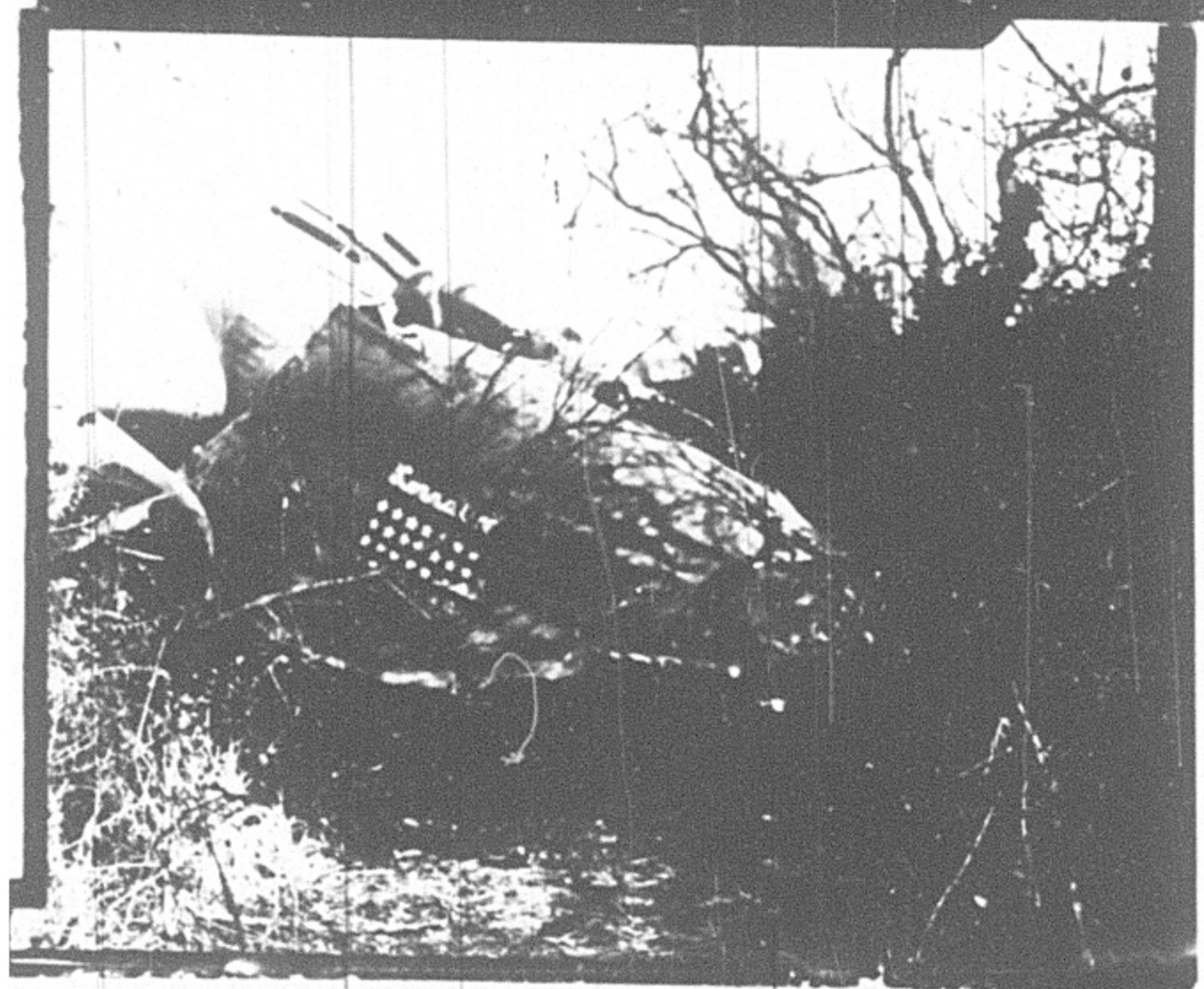
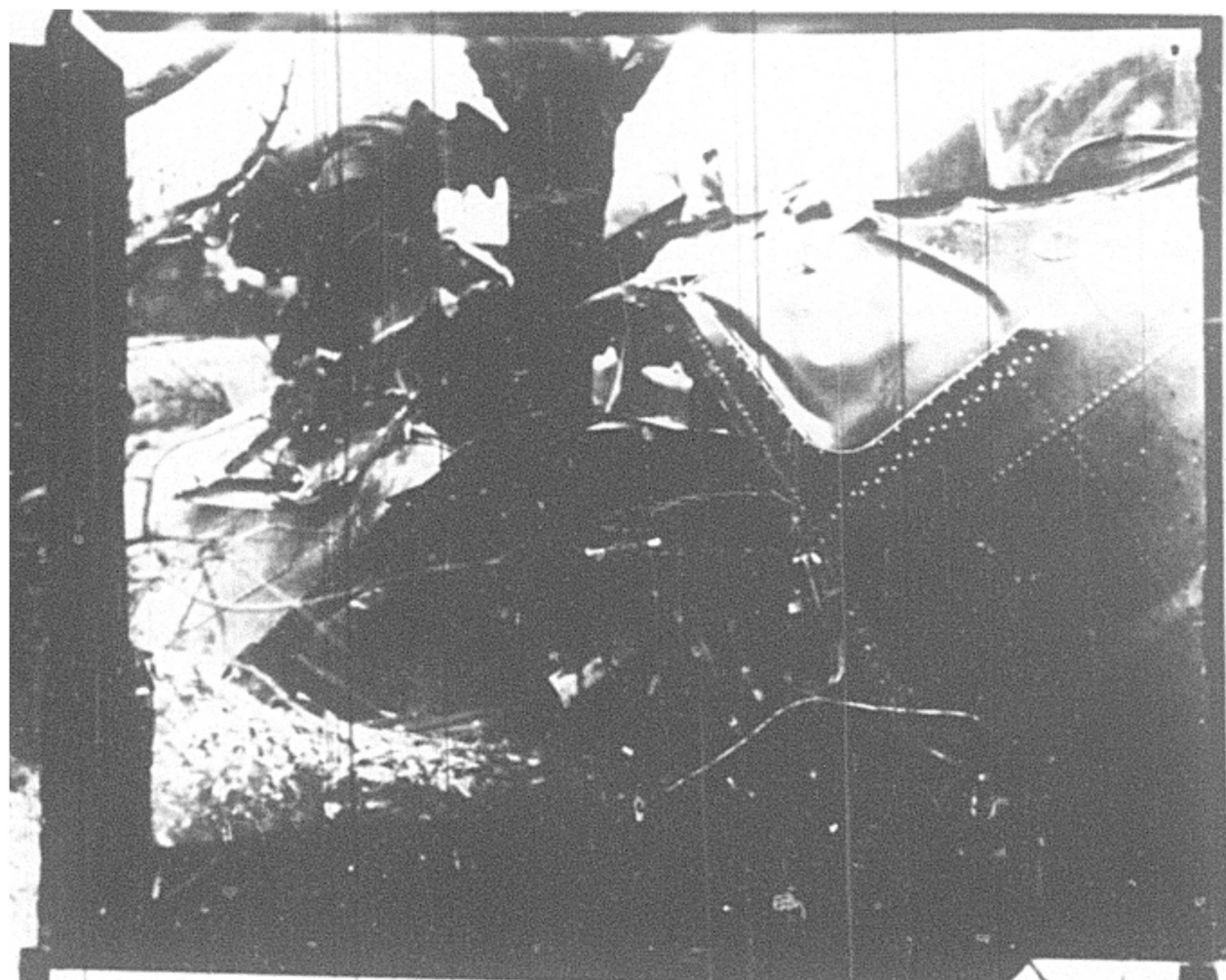


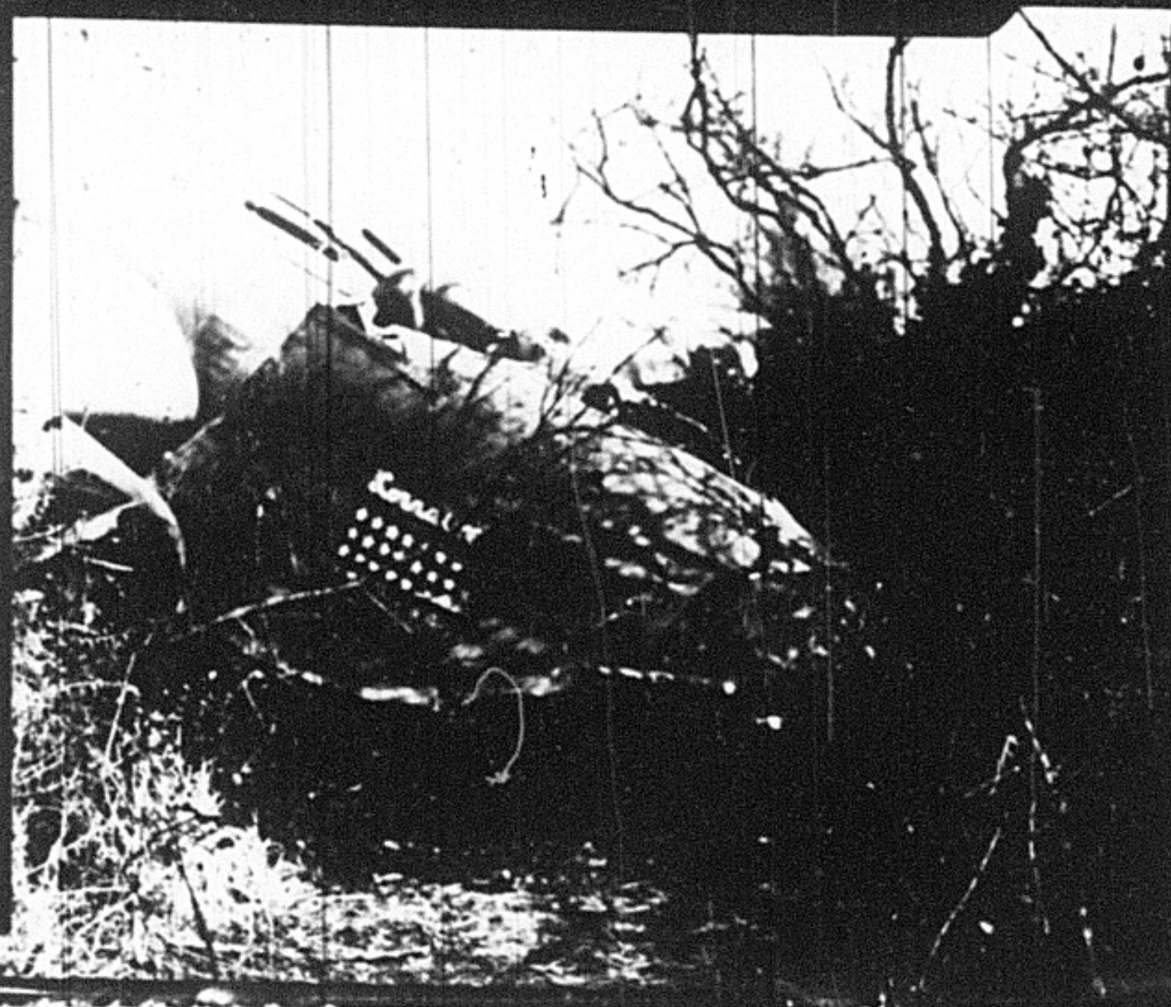












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3641  
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HEADQUARTERS  
STATION #7, EWING  
APO 515-A

In reply refer to:  
360.33

8 April 1974

SUBJECT: Transmittal of AAF Form No. 14.

TO: Headquarters, Office of Flying Safety, Army Air Forces, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

1. Inclosed herewith Report of Aircraft Accident, A.A.F. Form No. 14 for Aircraft F-24-D, Number 41-11591, with inclosures thereto.

2. Request receipt by indorsement hereon.

3 Incls:

Incl 1 - Form No. 14

Incl 2 - Photographs

Incl 3 - Statement of FOO,  
Fairwood Commons.

*Wilson L. David*

WILSON L. DAVID,  
Lt Col., AF,  
Comdr.

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