

Accident No. 5-671-528

Date

Checked by Don

3-31-15

Analysed by _____

Copied for Wright

Field by _____

Notes _____

57891 12-24-75

[illegible]

RESTRICTED
WAR DEPARTMENT

Accident No. 45-1-31-520

U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

(1) Place: AAF Station 139 (2) Date: 31 January 1945 (3) Time: 1325
Aircraft: (4) Type and model: B-17 (5) A. F. No.: 45-37517 (6) Station: AAF 139
Organization: (7) 8th AF 3rd AD (8) 100th (9) 418th Bombardment

PERSONNEL

DUTY	NAME (Last name first)	RATING	SERIAL NO.	RANK	PERSONNEL CLASS	BRANCH	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND	RESULT TO PERSONNEL	USE OF PARACHUTE
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
P	APPLETON, WILLIAM S.	P	0-509452	1st Lt.	01	AC	8th	Major	none
P	MCKEN, DANIEL L.	P	0-228288	2nd Lt.	18	AC	8th	Major	none
N	DUNCAN, LEROY W.	N	T-123655	P/c	17	AC	8th	Minor	none
WO	SUTHERLAND, HARRY A.	AG	37344781	S/Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Major	none
WO	RYAN, EDWARD W. JR.	AG	13156163	S/Sgt.	35	AF	8th	Minor	none
R	WHELAN, PATRICK B.	BOC	32684426	S/Sgt.	36	AF	8th	Major	none
LT	JULY, J.P. (J.M.)	AG	39489939	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Minor	none
WO	REED, CALVIN G.	AG	39922549	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Minor	none
TO	HANBY, DAVID C.	G	36499493	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Major	none

(20) APPLETON, WILLIAM S. (21) 0-509452 (22) 1st Lt. (23) 01 (24) AC
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)
Assigned (25) 8th AF 3rd AD (26) 100th (27) 418th Bombardment (28) AAF 139
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Attached for flying (29) 8th AF 3rd AD (30) 100th (31) 418th Bombardment (32) AAF 139
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 12-3-44 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 12-3-44 Instrument rating (37) 15-5-44
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date) (Date)
First Pilot Hours: (38) This type: B-17 236:05 (42A) Link Trainer Time Last 90 Days 6:00
(39) This model: B-17C 236:50 (42B) Link Trainer Time Last 90 Days 13:00
(40) Last 90 days: B-17C 180:15 (43) Instrument time last 6 months 15:40
(41) Total: All Types 236:05 (44) Instrument time last 30 days 6:10
(41A) Total Pilot Hours: 706:45 (45) Night time last 6 months 4:50
(45) Night time last 30 days 0:00

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

DAMAGE	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
(46) Aircraft						
(47) Engine(s)						
(48) Propeller(s)						

LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS

AIRCRAFT COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED

(50) Weather at the time of accident: Ceiling 100 feet; visibility 400 yards; overcast; moderate rain and fog; wind: S/W 12 MPH; temperature: 40 degrees.

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident? Yes
(52) Cleared from 139 (53) To 139 (54) Kind of clearance: Operational
(55) Pilot's mission: Operational mission - recalled.

(56) Nature of accident: Landing accident on home station; after accident, aircraft completely demolished by explosion of bomb load.

(57) Cause of accident: Pilot error - too low approach in making a steep bank.

(58) AAF Form #54 will not be submitted.

RESTRICTED

5184

RESTRICTED
WAR DEPARTMENT

Accident No. 45-1-31-520
A6
1325

U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES
REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

(1) Place: AAF Station 139 (2) Date: 31 January 1945 (3) Time: 1325
Aircraft: (4) Type and model: B-17 (5) A. F. No.: 45-37517 (6) Station: AAF 139
Organization: (7) 8th AF 3rd AD (8) 100th (9) 418th Bombardment
(Group) (Squadron)
PERSONNEL BH 2907

DEPT	NAME (Last name first)	RATING	SERIAL NO.	RANK	PERSONNEL CLASS	BRANCH	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND	RESULT TO PERSONNEL	USE OF PARACHUTE
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
P	APPLETON, WILLIAM S.	P	0-509452	1st Lt.	01	AC	8th	Major	none
P	MCKEN, DANIEL L.	P	0-328286	2nd Lt.	13	AC	8th	Major	none
P	DUNCAN, LEROY W.	P	T-123658	P/c	17	AC	8th	Minor	none
P	SUTHERLAND, HARRY A.	AG	37344781	S/Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Major	none
P	RYAN, EDWARD H. JR.	AG	13156163	S/Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Minor	none
P	WELSH, PATRICK B.	AG	32684426	S/Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Major	none
P	JULY, J.P. (J.M.)	AG	39489938	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Minor	none
P	REED, CALVIN G.	AG	39922549	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Minor	none
P	HANEY, DAVID C.	G	36499493	Sgt.	38	AF	8th	Major	none

(20) APPLETON, WILLIAM S. (21) 0-509452 (22) 1st Lt. (23) 01 (24) AC
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)
Assigned (25) 8th AF 3rd AD (26) 100th (27) 418th Bombardment (28) AAF 139
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Attached for flying (29) 8th AF 3rd AD (30) 100th (31) 418th Bombardment (32) AAF 139
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 12-3-44 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 12-3-44 Instrument rating (37) 15-5-44
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date) (Date)
First Pilot Hours:
(at the time of this accident)
(38) This type: B-17 235:05 (42A) Link Trainer Time Last 90 Days 6:00
(39) This model: B-17C 235:05 (42B) Link Trainer Time Last 90 Days 11:00
(40) Last 90 days: B-17C 180:15 (43) Instrument time last 6 months 15:40
(41) Total: All Types 235:05 (44) Instrument time last 30 days 6:10
(41A) Total Pilot Hours: 705:45 (45) Night time last 6 months 4:50
(45) Night time last 30 days 0:00
AIRCRAFT DAMAGE FIRE

DAMAGE	(46) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
(46) Aircraft	AIRCRAFT COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED
(47) Engine(s)	
(48) Propeller(s)	

(49) Weather at the time of accident: Ceiling 100 feet; visibility 400 yards; overcast; moderate rain and fog; wind: S/W 12 MPH; temperature: 40 degrees.

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident? Yes
(52) Cleared from 139 (53) To 139 (54) Kind of clearance: Operational
(55) Pilot's mission: Operational mission - recalled.

(56) Nature of accident: Landing accident on home station; after accident, aircraft completely demolished by explosion of bomb load.

(57) Cause of accident: Pilot error - too low approach in making a steep bank.

(58) AAF Form #54 will not be submitted.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

After this operational mission had been recalled, aircraft of this group returned to buncher #25 and circled in formation at an altitude of approximately 5,000 feet. At times they reported that they could see the coastline through breaks in the undercast. Actual ceiling at the base was determined to be ragged and variable; occasionally planes could be seen passing over the base at 800 feet or 1,000 feet. Visibility fluctuated between 300 and 600 yards in light drizzle.

The Group Commander cleared the Low Squadron to attempt landing and notified the other squadrons to continue circling the buncher. Standard instrument descent (with SC3-51 Localizer) was used by all aircraft. As the first of these aircraft arrived at the field it was determined that the scud-type cloud which formed the low ceiling was variable between 100 and 300 feet. The two squadrons still circled the buncher; but were immediately ordered to proceed to a diversion field.

Four aircraft from the Low Squadron landed safely; but several planes, failing to line up properly on the localizer approach, were forced to go around. The Group Commander decided to divert all planes which were still airborne and had contacted individually almost all of the remaining aircraft when Lt. APPLETON'S aircraft was observed on the approach.

When first seen from the Tower, the aircraft appeared to be just off the landing end of the runway and in good position for a landing. The plane was then observed to attempt a go-around, pulling up slightly and turning quite steeply to the right. The aircraft settled into the ground while still in the turn. The right wing struck the ground first and somewhat cushioned the shock of the crash.

While it is realized that weather conditions were unsatisfactory, it is the finding of this Board that the major cause of the accident was 100% Pilot Error. All given facts suggest that the pilot, not allowing for the additional weight of the bomb load and perhaps concentrating too much on finding the runway, had allowed his airspeed to drop so low that a safe "go-around" was not possible. The pilot reported that the right wing started to stall out. Due to a lack of traffic and a fair crosswind, it is improbable that this was caused by prop-wash. Low airspeed is again evidenced.

The pilot's relatively steep turn to the right after gaining partial control undoubtedly saved him from ramming the Control Tower. However, the attitude and airspeed of the aircraft at this point were critical, and the loss of lift resulting from the bank to the right, caused the plane to settle into the ground.

It is the desire of the Board once again to point out that, while the Major Cause of this accident was found to be an error in Pilot Technique on the final approach, the weather conditions were very unsatisfactory and must be considered as one of the major contributing factors.

EXHIBITS INCLUDED:

- "A" - Photographs
- "B" - Pilot's Statement
- "C" - Flying Control Officer's Statement
- "D" - Convening Authority

Frederick E. Price
Lt. Col. P.C.

JOHN B. WALLACE,
Lt. Col., Air Corps,
President

David K. Lyster, Jr.
DAVID K. LYSTER, JR.,
Major, Air Corps,
Member

Signature

John S. Robinson
JOHN S. ROBINSON,
Captain, Air Corps,
Member

Date _____

AF 508 01A7701-01/750/11350

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS
ONE HUNDREDTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO #559

8 February 1945

SUBJECT: Pilot's Statement Of Aircraft Accident.

TO : President, Aircraft Accident Board, AAF Station #139.

1. I was flying as pilot of aircraft #43-37517 on an operational mission on the 31st of January 1945. My aircraft was flying in the lead position of the low flight in the Low Squadron of our group. The group had formed and was climbing to Division Assembly altitude when the mission was recalled. We were in the overcast at the time so we continued to climb until we broke out. We returned to the base area and circled in the clear and let down in the clear.

2. We broke up into squadron formation. The Control Tower told the Squadron Leader over VHF to attempt to bring in the Low Squadron. He took us to Buncher #28 for individual instrument descent. All aircraft in the squadron peeled off satisfactorily; I peeled off in the #5 position, and began our instrument descent which was started at 1200 feet. I made a complete descent - all three legs - and came back over the Buncher at approximately 350 feet true altitude. I flew the plane back to the field to come in on the localizer. As I approached the field, the visibility got worse. The Tower cleared us to land.

3. I was lined up with the localizer and proceeded on into the field. At this time the aircraft was about 150 feet above the ground. We had 1/3 flaps down for landing. I did not see the flares from the Caravan, but the nose gunner called them out when we were about 100 yards from the end of the runway. Our airspeed was 135 to 140 miles per hour. It was too late for a landing so I started around for another approach. I made a 180 degree turn and followed it out for two minutes in order to be sure that I would be East of the field. The navigator got Gee fixes as fast as he could. We turned to the localizer again and attempted another run on the field. There was no Glide Path in the plane so I had to guess at the altitude as I made the approach. I lowered full flaps in order to assure a landing. I was on the left side of the runway and could not see the Caravan nor the flares until after passing the beginning of the runway. We eased up the flaps to 1/3 and I decided to make one more attempt at a landing. Again I made an approach. Everything appeared to be okay. When East of the field trees appeared directly in front of the aircraft. I pulled up and cleared the trees but the right wing started to stall out. I hit number 3 and 4 throttles full open and gave full control to try to pick up the wing. #1 and #2 throttles were almost full on. We had high RPM at this time. We came across the end of the runway. The wing would not come up so I knew that we were going to crash. The plane was headed for the Control Tower.

I attempted to avoid hitting the Tower and also attempted to prevent the plane from rolling over upside down. The right wing started to come up as I pulled #1 and #2 throttles back. The plane "Fish-Tailed" to the right, clearing the Tower and a number of aircraft parked in their hardstands. I cut the switches to prevent a fire and pulled back on the stick to pancake the plane in for an easier landing. The plane crashed and hit a crew chief's tent and stand. The plane immediately caught fire; the oxygen became ignited and the heat was intense. The navigator was thrown out through the plexi-glass nose; the engineer and togglier were also thrown out the same opening. I was caught between the seats (my window was jammed at this time) as I tried to go out the nose escape hatch. I lost consciousness. The copilot got out through his window. But the copilot, engineer and navigator returned to the plane and helped me out. The engineer had re-entered thru the nose in order to push me up and unweidge me from the seats. The copilot grabbed me by the head and attempted to pull me through the window. He was over-come by the fire and the navigator took over. I regained consciousness at this point. I unbuckled my parachute harness, as it was caught on the throttles. The navigator was then able to pull me through the window. The balance of the crew left the plane through the waist door. All during this time the aircraft was ablaze and with live bombs in the bomb bay.

WILLIAM S. APPLETON,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Pilot

The foregoing narrative was read by Lt. William S. Appleton who stated to the undersigned that said narrative was true to the best of his knowledge and belief. Lt. Appleton was unable to sign the above, because of injuries sustained in the aircraft accident.

S/Sgt. *John C. Spence Jr.*
JOHN C. SPENCE JR.,
Ass't Operations Clerk

RESTRICTED

FLYING CONTROL SECTION: STATION 139
APO #559

8 February 1945

SUBJECT: Aircraft Accident Concerning B-17G 43-37517 T of the
418th Bombardment Squadron (H).

TO : Chairman, Aircraft Accident Committee, Station 139,
APO #559.

1. At 1310 hours 31 January 1945, aircraft B-17G 517 T, piloted by 1st Lt. W.S. APPLETON O-598452 of the 418th Bombardment Squadron (H), attempted an instrument landing on Runway 28, overshot the runway and crashed in the approximate area of hardstanding 10. Aircraft was part of combat formation of the day recalled from operations and was landing with bombs on board.

2. Weather Conditions existent at the time were as follows:
a. Cloud base - 100 feet, 10/10 coverage
b. Visibility - 300 yards
c. Wind - Southwest at 12 m.p.h.

3. Diversion instructions were passed, and were being passed to all 100th Bombardment Group aircraft in the vicinity of the field and in radio contact with the Tower. Apparently 517 T did not receive diversion instructions.

4. Pilot overshot runway at an approximate altitude of forty (40) feet and in the attempt to avoid hitting Control Tower and/or woods beyond, pulled up and raked around sharply to his right. Aircraft's right wing struck the ground at hardstand 10 causing the aircraft to crash and burn. Bombs exploded approximately 30 minutes later. Crew were not seriously injured; were evacuated to Station Hospital. No other personnel injuries sustained.

Material Damage:

- a. B-17G #43-37517 T demolished
- b. B-17G #43-38770 Z damaged beyond repair
- c. B-17G #43-38610 T damaged beyond repair
- d. Engineering equipment in and about HS 10 destroyed

5. Action taken by Flying Control:
(1) Fire and crash crews withheld from the scene due to danger of bomb explosion. This action taken only after it was ascertained that aircraft crew were safely removed.

EXHIBIT "C"

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

5. (Continued)

(2) Orders received and given to evacuate the Tower and immediate vicinity due to danger of bomb explosion.

(3) Notified Horham Tower to contact our aircraft and divert to RAF station at CROFT.

(4) Attempted to maintain radio contact with our airborne aircraft through radio facilities at station Radio Maintenance.

Joseph E. Miceli per 2403
JOSEPH E. MICELI
1st Lt., Air Corps
Duty Flying Control
Officer

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

SC#3, Hq AAF Sta 139, APO 559, U.S. Army, 3 January '45, Cont'd:

9. A sk lv of absence for a period of five (5) days is granted the foll-named Officers, 349th Bomb Sq, eff o/a 4 Jan '45; (AR 605-115).

1ST LT RAYMOND L HEIRONIMUS, JR., 0817437, AC 2D LT GEORGE H GEISE, 0723054, AC
1ST LT GLEN H PEAVY, 0822794, AC F/O RAYMOND A DECKER, T-125711, AC

10. The foll named EM, 456th Sub-Depot, WP GMV fr AAF Sta 139
o/a 4 Jan '45 to Blythe Bridge, on TD for a period not to exceed three
(3) days, for purpose of COCO. CTRS.

Sgt Raymond H Wilson, 17089096

Sgt James L Bolen, 32455620

FD will pay EM for subs & qrs while traveling on dy & while at
TD Sta in accordance with Cir 63 ETOUSA 44, as amended. TONT. TDN. 6C-
136 P 432-02 A 212/50425. (Auth: Ltr Hq ETOUSA 24 May 44).

By order of Colonel JEFFREY:

MORACE L. VANIAN, Jr.,
Major, Air Corps,
Station Adjutant.

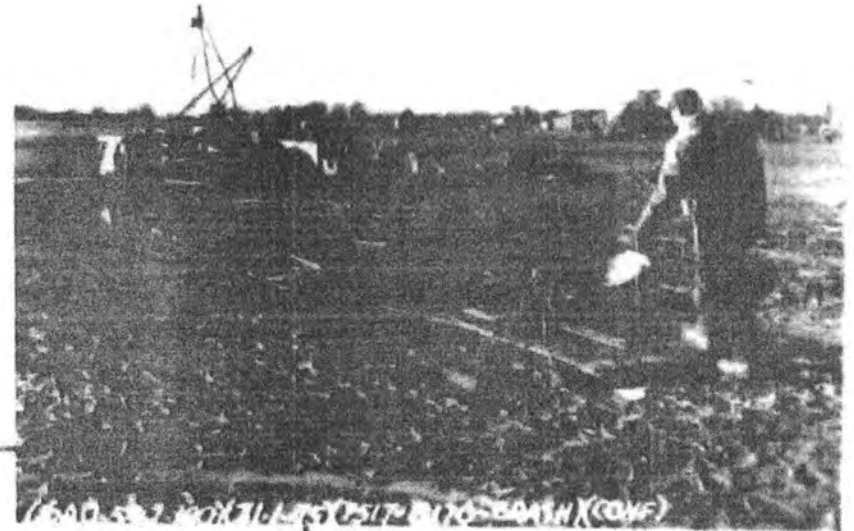
OFFICIAL:

Dale Z. Hobbs
DALE Z. HOBBS,
Captain, Air Corps,
Ass't Adjutant.

RESTRICTED



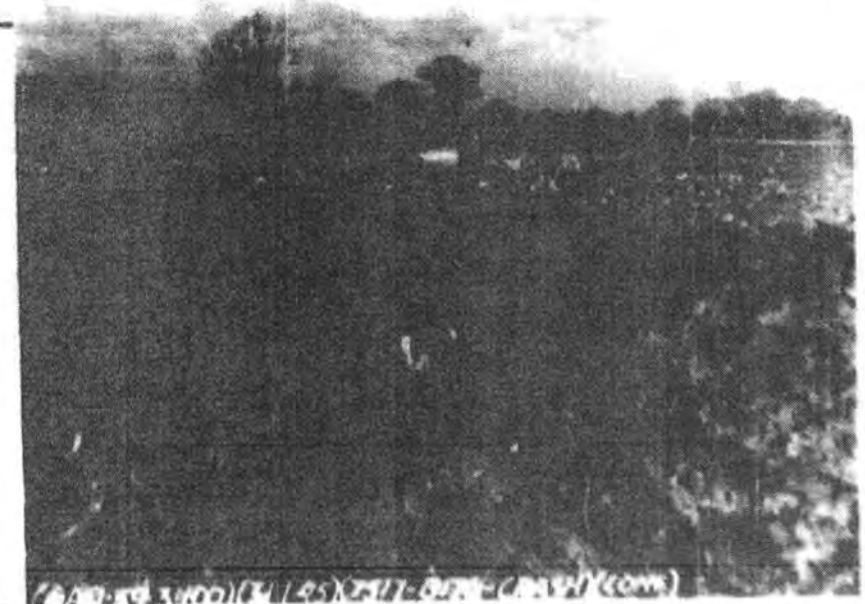
(640-374-1003) 1-401-1003-0105-0105 (CONF)



(640-374-1003) 1-401-1003-0105-0105 (CONF)



(640-374-1003) 1-401-1003-0105-0105 (CONF)



(640-374-1003) 1-401-1003-0105-0105 (CONF)