

2-14-45

45-1-19-517

171

WAR DEPARTMENT
FORM NO. 14

ACCIDENT NO. 171

WAR DEPARTMENT
U.S. ARMY AIR FORCES

8 miles S.E. REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

(1) PLACE of Besancon (2) DATE 19 January 1945 (3) TIME between 1145 & 1150
 (4) Type and model B-26-G10 (10) (5) A.S. No. 43-34605 (6) Station Dijon Airbase
 Organization (7) 42nd Wing 1st TACAF (8) 320th (9) 411st
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) BM (Squadron) 1216

PERSONNEL

RY	NAME	RATING	SERIAL NO.	RANK	PERSONNEL CLASS	BRANCH A.F.	RESULT	USE OF
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16) OR	(17) TO	(18) PARA-
						COM.	PERSO.	CHUTE
						(17)	NNEL	(19)
							(18)	

P	McCURDY, ARTHUR L.	P	0-1683114	2nd Lt.	18	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No
CP	CULWORTH Jr., ELMER L.	P	0-819760	1st Lt.	18	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No
B	HILL, JOHN C.	AG	18071305	S/Sgt.	38	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No
EO	BENTAS, NICHOLAS (NMI)	EO	36554340	S/Sgt.	38	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No
RG	RAHL, LLOYD A.	RG	36570208	S/Sgt.	38	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No
AG	TOTHAMMER, HENRY P.	AG	39838514	S/Sgt.	38	AUS	1st TACAF	Killed	No

McCURDY, ARTHUR L. (21) 0-1683114 (22) 2nd Lt (23) 18 (24) AUS (1)
 (Last name) (First name) (MI) (Serial No.) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)
 signed (25) 42 Wing 1st TACAF 320 (27) 411st (28) Dijon Airbase
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station) 1216
 Cleared for flying (29) (30) (31) (32) (33) (34) (35) (36) (37) (38) (39)
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station) 11-3-43
 Original rating (39) Pilot (34) 11/3/43 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 12/5/43 Instrument
 (Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date) rating (37) None (38) (Date)

First Pilot Hours
 at the time of this accident)
 (1) This type 88:35 (42) Instrument time last 6 months 2:00
 (2) This model 88:35 (43) Instrument time last 30 days none
 (3) Last 90 days 34:35 (44) Night time last 6 months 3:30
 (4) Total 88:35 (45) Night time last 30 days None

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE
 (19) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
 Aircraft W 4 Complete washout
 Engine(s) W 4
 Propeller(s) W 4

Weather at the time of accident Ceiling 1-2000! Visibility 3-5 miles. 10/10 Cumulus
 congestus and stratocumulus clouds. (Weather observation taken at Besancon, 1100Z,
 19 January 1945) DK
 Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident No
 Cleared from Dijon (53) To Dijon (54) Kind of clearance 0
 Pilots mission Combat
 Nature of accident Crash
 Cause of accident Unknown.

(58) Has form 54 been submitted? Not applicable.

Handwritten notes

(OVER)

RESTRICTED

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

At 1100 hours, 20 January 1945, I inspected the wreckage of Aircraft #43-34605 where it had crashed at a point approximately eight miles southeast of Besancon, France at about 1510 hours on 19 January 1945. The bodies of crew members had been removed but the wreckage had not been disturbed, although a blanket of eight inches of snow covered the aircraft and the scene of the accident.

It was apparent that the aircraft approached from the direction of Besancon over which it had passed at low altitude at about 1505 hours. Observers in Besancon reported that the aircraft was headed southeast under a very low ceiling and was evidently in distress. It is assumed that it was aircraft #334605 which was sighted as it was positively identified as a B-26 type medium bomber carrying yellow markings.

After passing over the crest of the hill about 3/4 mile north of the point of impact, the aircraft barely cleared a farm house located on the southern slope of the hill. Two hundred yards below the farm house, the ship left its first visible mark on the ground where the cowling of the right engine had dug in. Debris was scattered in a southerly direction from this point for a distance of about a hundred yards to where the main concentration of wreckage came to a stop.

It was apparent that the aircraft struck the ground at a fairly steep angle on the right wing, nacelle, and lower right hand length of the fuselage. An examination of the engines and propellers revealed that the left engine was carrying power at the time of the crash while the right engine was obviously windmilling slowly but was not feathered. The position of landing gear units and the condition of the two recognizable flaps indicated that the ship came in clean. The bombs had not been salvaged but were in and near the wreckage. An investigation of the turret compartment revealed that no attempt had been made to jettison flak vests, helmets, ammunition, or other heavy objects.

The disintegrated condition of the aircraft plus the snow coverage prevented further accurate evaluation of evidence.

Signature: *Sidney P. Smith*

(Investigating Officer)

SIDNEY P. SMITH,

MAJOR, AIR CORPS.

Date 22 January 1945

S E C R E T

Lawrence J. Hayward
LAWRENCE J. HAYWARD,
MAJOR, AIR CORPS.

Frank G. Bennett
FRANK G. BENNETT,
1st Lt., Air Corps.

DISPENSARY
46TH GENERAL HOSPITAL (U.S.)
APO NO. 419 U. S. ARMY

EDS/hah
20 Jan 45

SUBJECT: Investigation of Death of the Crew in Airplane Crash.

TO: The Commanding Officer,
441st Bombardment Sq,
320th Bomb Gp, A.A.F.,
APO 374, US Army.

1. On 19 Jan 45 at 1800 hours, on orders of the Adjutant, the undersigned officer went to the scene of an airplane crash in the vicinity to investigate and report, bring in the bodies of those killed, and secure their personal effects. The following morning the scene of the crash was again visited in daylight in company with the Commanding Officer and three other officers of the unit to which the plane belonged.

2. The plane that crashed passed directly over the Hospital at 1505 hours, 19 Jan 45, at very low altitude and apparently in difficulty. It crash landed directly after in open farm land about 1 mile south of La Veze (6 miles S.E. of Besancon, France). The plane was a B-26 with the number 334-625/08 on the tail fin and was later identified as belonging to the 441st Bombardment Squadron, 320th Bomb Group, A.A.F. There was no local property damage.

3. The plane came in over a farm house flying SSE parallel to and just E of a row of trees (see diagram), striking the ground 200 yards S of the house. The right engine, which it seems was stalled, struck first, digging a hole 1 foot deep and leaving a part of the cowlings. The fuselage then apparently swung to the left, the left engine dropped out, the body broke apart thru the bomb compartment, the right wing was completely demolished along with the nose of the plane, the left wing turned over completely and came to rest pointing back along the course, the tail however remained upright but pointed almost directly ahead with severe damage to the right elevator. Two 1,000 lb bombs remained in the center of the wreckage of the body but two others were thrown ahead an additional 25 yards. From the point of impact to where the tail came to rest was 100 yards. There was no explosion or fire.

4. The bodies of the entire crew of 6 were strewn along the course of the wreck (See numbers in diagram), death was instantaneous in all. The first body was found 20 yards


BASIC: Investigation of Death of the Crew in Airplane Crash (contd.)

beyond the point of impact, the second 10 yards further on and a little to the right, the next two were close together in a bit of detached wreckage of the body midway along the course, the co-pilot (1st Lt) strapped in his seat and wearing a throat microphone was found just before reaching the main mass of the wrecked body and wing, the pilot (2nd Lt), his head completely in shreds and both legs entirely amputated thru the thighs, lay in the midst of the main wreckage of the body of the plane. The crew, listed in the order their bodies were found proceeding in the direction the plane was traveling, along the course of the wreck, were as follows:

- (1) Hill, John C. S/Sgt, 18-071 305 (P) - Skull Crushed.
- (2) Rahl, Lloyd A. S/Sgt, 36 570 208 (P) - Skull Fractured.
- (3) Tothammer, Henry P. S/Sgt, 39 838 514 (P) - Skull Fractured.
- (4) Bantas, Nicholas (NMI) S/Sgt, 36 554 340 (C) - Concussion.
- (5) Gudworth, Elmer L. 1st Lt, O 019 760 - Skull Crushed.
- (6) McCurdy, Arthur L. 2nd Lt, O1 683 414 - Entire skull crushed, and in shreds, both legs completely amputated thru thighs, and right hand thru the palm.

Bodies # 2, 3, & 4 were the only ones wearing identification tags; the 1st and 2nd Lts were identified by their collar insignia; body # 1, the only remaining one was identified by officers of his organization the following morning, who also checked the identity of the two lieutenants. A continuous guard had been posted by the local MP's at the site of the wreck shortly after the crash.

5. The personal effects of each body, including 5 rings, and insignia of the officers, were removed and carefully listed separately. The following morning they were turned over to Major Walter P. Fay of their organization, together with copies of certificates of death for each. Receipt for the listed valuables was given by him.


EDWARD D. SPALDING
Lt. Col., Medical Corps,
Investigating Officer.

HEADQUARTERS 320TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 374 US Army

E-H-2

22 January 1945

SUBJECT: Crash of Aircraft #43-34605. (Yellow 08)

TO : All Concerned.

1. Following is the report of radio conversation between aircraft number 605 and Sector Control (Boxcar) immediately preceding the crash:

- a. The following conversation took place on "B" Channel:
 - 11438 - Yellow 08 called Boxcar for steer to Dijon, Boxcar asked for transmission and gave steer of 290 degrees for 40 miles. 08 asked him to repeat. Boxcar repeated and told 08 YOU ARE NEAR BESANCON. 08 said ROGER 290 OUT.
 - 11441 - Boxcar called 08 and asked DID YOU RECEIVE YOUR STEER? 08 answered ROGER AND OUT.
 - 11442 - 08 called Boxcar I BELIEVE I'LL HAVE TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING. CAN YOU FIX ME UP? Boxcar answered IF YOU ARE ON 290 YOU ARE JUST EAST OF BESANCON. 08 said ROGER AND OUT.
 - 11443 - Boxcar: THE NEAREST FIELD WHICH IS CLEAR WILL BE DOLE, STEER 250 DEGREES FOR 25 MILES, DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT? 08 answered ROGER 250 OUT.
 - 08 called AIRCRAFT HAVING ENGINE TROUBLE AND MAY HAVE TO BAIL OUT.
 - 11444 - Boxcar called ARE YOU STEERING 250? No answer.
 - 11445 - Boxcar called 08 three times. No answer.
 - 11445 plus - Boxcar called 08, 08 answered. Boxcar asked ARE YOU STILL ON 250? No answer. Boxcar: IF YOU READ ME TRANSMIT, YOUR RADIO IS CUTTING OUT.
 - 11446 - Called 08. No answer.
 - 11447 - Called 08 IF YOU READ ME GIVE ME A TRANSITION.
 - 11452 - Called three times. No answer.
- b. During the above conversation the following fixes were taken:
 - 11440 - WO 7952
 - 11443 - WO 8358
 - 11445 - WO 8559
- c. 11447 - A general bearing was taken by one station. Ship was in the same general area.

For the Group Commander:

Lawrence J. Hayward
LAWRENCE J. HAYWARD,
Major, Air Corps,
Operations Officer.

241st MILITARY POLICE COMPANY ZI
DETACHMENT "A"
APO 667 U. S. ARMY

20 January 1945

SUBJECT: Report of Plane Crash.

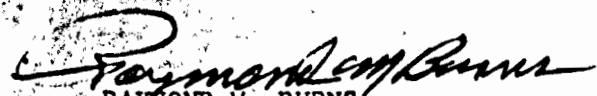
TO : Operations Officer, 320th Bomb Group.

1. On 19 January 1945 at 1630 hours, I, Raymond M. Burns, 1st Lt., O-1297488, 241st MP Co., Det "A" commander received a telephone call from the French police in the city of Besancon that a plane had crashed about 6 or 8 miles southeast of Besancon. I called an ambulance of the 46th General Hospital located in the city of Besancon and went to the place where the plane had crashed.

2. I was the first American present and upon arriving at the scene of the accident found noone, involved in the crash, alive. The ambulance returned to the hospital and Lt Col Spalding, with help from the hospital, removed the remains of the bodies to the 46th General Hospital.

3. In the meantime I had placed two American guards and two French police on guard at the accident. The scene of the accident is still being guarded at this time.

4. I came back to my office, phoned Nephew A-3 and the Provost Marshal, CAS advising them of the accident.


RAYMOND M. BURNS
1st Lieut., Inf
Commanding Det "A"
241st MP Co ZI

