

WAR DEPARTMENT
A. A. F. Form No. 14
(Revised May 15, 1942)

RESTRICTED

ACCIDENT No. _____

WAR DEPARTMENT
AAF STATION 166
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

(1) Place Brest, France (2) Date 25 August 1944 (3) Time 1650 4
AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-26B45 030 (5) A. F. No. 42-95797 (6) Station AAF Station 166
Organization: (7) IX BC Ninth AF (8) 391st B.G. (9) 572nd Bomb Sqdn
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)

PERSONNEL

| DUTY (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) |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 P | Rice, Elma Z. | P | 0-814320 | 2nd Lt | 1801 | AC | Ninth AF | None / | No |
| 04 CP | Moscowic, Frank P. | P | 0-821061 | 2nd Lt | 1801 | AC | Ninth AF | None / | No |
| 61 B | Peters, Donald J. | P | 0-765679 | 2nd Lt | 1801 | AC | Ninth AF | Minor 2 | No |
| 71 RG | Shuler, Melvin C. | RG | 6941952 | Sgt | 20 | AC | Ninth AF | Unknown | No |
| 62 EG | Hetrick, Robert J. | EG | 33435323 | Pvt | 20 | AC | Ninth AF | None / | No |
| 64 AG | Hume, Thomas W. | AG | 39198466 | Sgt | 20 | AC | Ninth AF | None / | Yes 6 |

(20) Rice Elma Z. (21) 0-814320 (22) 2nd Lt (23) 18 (24) AC
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)
Assigned (25) IX B.C. Ninth AF (26) 391st B.G. (27) 572nd B.S. (28) AAF Station
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Attached for flying (29) IX B.C. Ninth AF (30) 391st B.G. (31) 572nd B.S. (32) AAF Station
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 1 Oct 43 (35) Pilot (36) 1 Oct 43 Instrument rating (37) 13 March 1944
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date)

FIRST PILOT HOURS:

(at the time of this accident)

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------|------------------------------------|-------|
| (38) This type | 324:55 | (42) Instrument time last 6 months | 19:20 |
| (39) This model | 151:35 | (43) Instrument time last 30 days | None |
| (40) Last 90 days | 57:25 | (44) Night time last 6 months | 46:15 |
| (41) Total | 614:50 | (45) Night time last 30 days | None |

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

| DAMAGE | (40) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| (46) Aircraft | Airplane complete loss |
| (47) Engine(s) | |
| (48) Propeller(s) | |

(50) Weather at the time of accident Ceiling: 2500 Ft; Visibility 5 miles; Wind 5 miles from 200°

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident No
(52) Cleared from AAF Station 166 (53) To AAF Station 166 (54) Kind of clearance Operational

(55) Pilot's mission Combat

(56) Nature of accident Midair collision while returning from a combat mission over Brest Peninsula

(57) Cause of accident Undetermined. The ditching was a direct result of enemy anti-aircraft fire.
(58) Has form 54 been submitted: No.

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RESTRICTED.**DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT**

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

1. The elements leading up to the final phase of this accident, which ended in a ditching, were caused by a mid-air collision, while returning from a combat mission on 25 August 1944, at about 1650. The specific cause of this mid-air collision is undetermined. At this time Lieutenant Rice suffered the loss of his left engine and damage to his left wing. At the time of the collision the tail gunner of Lieutenant Rice's airplane bailed out, was later rescued and returned to his home station.

Letting down through the overcast on single engine, planning to land on the beachhead, Lieutenant Rice found he had let down over Guernsey Island. Here his good engine was knocked out by anti-aircraft fire. He then had to ditch. Five crew members of this aircraft are accounted for. The sixth crew member, radio operator gunner, is believed to have gone down with the aircraft. Inclosed statements will furnish further details.

2. The specific cause of the mid-air collision is undetermined. The ditching was a direct result of enemy anti-aircraft fire.

3. Recommendations: None

Donald K. Brandon

Signature Donald K. Brandon, Lt. Col., AC
(Investigating Officer)

Ernest N. Ljunggren
Ernest N. Ljunggren, Lt Col., AC

James A. Sullens
James A. Sullens, Major, A.C.

Date 29 August 1944

No 305 5-43/10M-1093

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

29 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident. 25 August 1944.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

Returning from a combat sortie on the afternoon of August 25, 1944, no. 4 ship in our lead flight was running low on gas and called up that he was going to leave the formation and land on the Cherbourg Peninsula for gas. I was flying left wing of no. 4 ship, and acknowledged his call. I saw his plane leave the formation to the rear and well below me. I began to pull up on the lead element of the flight. Some time elapsed, when the plane came up from my left and under me. The instant I saw the plane coming up, I immediately tried to pull up to avoid a collision but was impossible. The plane tore my left wing up a bit, and bent the left propeller, rendering the left engine inoperative. I immediately feathered the prop, and by the time I had the plane under control, I was to the left of course. With the bad wing, I could not hold my altitude. We broke below the overcast at approximately 3000 feet, just off the coast of the German held island of Jersey, at which time we received intense accurate flak. I immediately tried to turn back to sea, at this time they shot my right engine out. We immediately prepared for ditching. We ditched approximately six to eight miles off the southeast coast of Jersey. After we hit the water, Captain Rutledge circled overhead and dropped a dinghy, and the Naval vessel not far away shot a fix on him and got our position. The co-pilot, bombardier, engineer and myself hung on to a one man dinghy for one hour and twenty minutes. We were picked up by a small boat sent out from the U.S. destroyer escort, and carried back and put on board the escort. (My tail gunner bailed out the instant of the collision, and my radio operator was hit by flak at Jersey.) We remained with the escort over night, where we received excellent treatment from the Navy. P.T. boats picked us up the next morning, August 26, and carried us into Cherbourg, where we were taken to the 298th General Hospital. We were put under their care for a twenty-four hour observation. My bombardier had a dislocated shoulder and it was put back in place by the naval doctor. When we were released by the hospital we went to the Counter Intelligence Corps Headquarters and got orders so we could catch a plane back to England. We arrived in London the afternoon of August 27, and the Intelligence Dept got in touch with our Base and transportation was arranged for the trip to our home field.

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Edna Z. Rice
2nd Lt., Air Corps, Pilot

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

29 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident, 25 August 1944.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

The lead plane of the second element was dropping back and low, as the pilot was pulling up to the lead again, the ship came up on our left wing, knocking out our left engine and a portion of the left wing was torn. As the planes collided, the tail gunner, Sgt. Hume, bailed out of our ship. Before getting the plane under control we had drifted left off course, and because we could not hold our altitude we dropped under the overcast, thereby coming out approximately 3000 feet off the coast of Jersey where we encountered very accurate flak. Turning back to the continent the right engine was shot out. We ditched the plane at approximately 1630 and were rescued by an American destroyer escort, which sent out a small boat to pick us up. We were given dry clothes and Lt. Peters arm was taken care of. We stayed aboard the ship all night and were taken to Cherbourg the next morning by P.T. boats. We were admitted at the 298th General Hospital approximately 11:30. We stayed there for twenty-four hours, were released on August 27, and taken to a field from which we were returned to England. From London we were brought to the Base in an ambulance.

Frank P. Moscovice
FRANK P. MOSCOVIC,
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
Co-Pilot.

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

29 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident, 25 August 1944..

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

After passing the I.P. on our return course to the 391st Bomb Group Base, I noticed a break in the clouds. I picked up my map and tried to locate myself. I glanced up and I saw a plane under our left wing and rising rapidly. I grabbed for my mike switch to call my pilot and warn him to pull up. In reaching for my mike switch I knocked it off the hook. I reached for the switch again and called to the pilot to pull up. As I called him he saw the other ship and tried to pull up, but our left engine had already cut his elevator and the other ship's stabilizer had cut a large piece out of our left wing. That was all I ever saw of the other ship. Just after the collision our tail gunner bailed out.

After Lt. Rice got control of the ship we broke through the overcast, we found ourselves very close to the shore of Jersey Island. When we had determined exactly where we were we tried to get away by making approximately a 90 degree turn to the right. The Germans threw up a heavy, intense and very accurate flak barrage. We hadn't gone very far when our one remaining engine was shot out. In the next few seconds the engineer tried to call the radio gunner by interphone, but received no answer. I saw the radio gunner lying against the skin of the ship. Shortly after bracing myself we hit the water. The tail hit first and then the nose. The jolt was quite severe and the navigator's compartment filled with water immediately. The engineer got out of the escape hatch first and I followed. We were in the water an hour and twenty minutes when a ship of the U.S. Navy picked us up. We stayed aboard the ship until the next morning when we got aboard a P.T. boat. We arrived in Cherbourg about 10:30 in the morning.

Donald J. Peters
DONALD J. PETERS,
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
Bombardier.

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

29 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident, 25 August 1944.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

While transferring gas I glanced out the pilot's window and saw the plane coming up on our plane. Then there was a crash and the plane seemed to pass over us. When the other plane hit us it damaged the left prop and wing surface. Directly after the crash the tail gunner bailed out. When we came down through the overcast we were losing altitude and when the pilot saw this island below, turned away from it. When we were about a half mile off shore we ran into heavy; dense and very accurate flak. We got several hits from the forward bombays and in the right engine. The radio operator was in the back of the ship and I tried to reach him on the interphone, but he didn't reply. The pilot then turned, headed away from the island and made it out about eight miles where we ditched. After being in the water for about an hour and twenty minutes the Navy picked us up and took us aboard their ship. We were on it until morning and then they sent us in to Cherbourg on a P.T. boat. That was about 10:30 in the morning.

Robert J. Hetrick
ROBERT J. HETRICK,
Pvt, Air Corps,
Engineer.

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

27 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident--Aircraft #797.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

The first I saw Lt. Rice's ship was after the collision. I saw them fall back and then go through the overcast. We left the formation and went down to see if we could help them. When we broke through the overcast we did not see them until they started shooting at them from the Guernsey Island. They were really throwing up a barrage. Soon after we saw them one of their engines started smoking. They were coming towards us so we circled around out of range until they came up to us. They said they were losing altitude fast and could not reach the main land. They asked us if they should ditch the airplane, we said yes and to ditch as near as possible to one of the islands. We flew along beside them at about 500 feet as they went into the water. Lt. Rice made a beautiful water landing and the plane stayed afloat about 25 or 30 seconds. When we came back low over the spot we thought we saw at least five heads, but there was so much other stuff floating around in the water so we weren't sure. We circled them a couple of times and threw them our dinghys. There was a small boat about eight miles from where the ship went down and they made no attempt to come to the rescue. When we would start toward them they would turn the other way. We tried to contact Air/Sea rescue but never did receive an answer. We were low on gas so after doing all we could we left and went to the coast and made a landing on a fighter strip in France. Lt. Rice's left engine was dead and the propeller feathered. The right engine was smoking badly and appeared to me to be just windmilling when they went into the water.

I did get a glimpse of the other ship (#302) just as it spun through the overcast. At the same time I saw an open parachute drift past our left wing and it also disappeared through the overcast before I got a chance to see it again.

Archibald R. Smith
ARCHIBALD R. SMITH,
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
Co-Pilot.

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
AAF Station #166

August 27, 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident. #797

TO : The Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group,
Army Air Forces Station #166.

1. After dropping through the clouds we first sighted Lt Rice's ship just as he started over the Isle of Guernsey. He was at about 2,000' and immediately ran into a concentration of heavy flak. He seemed to go almost the entire length of the island and he encountered flak all the way. His right engine began to smoke badly but stopped shortly after he got past the flak area. He then headed out to sea losing altitude very rapidly. Approximately fifteen miles east of Guernsey and ten miles south of Jersey, he ditched.

2. The plane remained afloat about twenty seconds with the tail slowly rising. At the end of this time it suddenly slid under nose first. There was considerable oil on the surface plus several objects which we think were men although we were not positive of this.

3. We circled for some time, dropped four "K" dinghys, and attempted to contact air-sea rescue. Just before we left we saw one dinghy inflated and a man crawling into it. There was also a small ship of some sort standing off about five miles south of this spot. It made no attempt to rescue these men.

4. We were forced to leave because of lack of fuel and landed on air-strip A-3 on the Cherbourg Peninsula. We reported this incident immediately upon landing.

John K. Schulte
JOHN K. SCHULTE
1st Lt, AC
Bombardier

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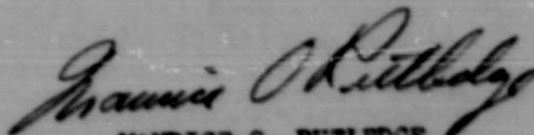
HEADQUARTERS 391ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO #140, U. S. ARMY

28 August 1944.

SUBJECT: Account of Aircraft Accident.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group, APO #140.

1. The two ships collided in mid-air, one ship (Capt Thorn, Pilot) spun and was last seen going into the undercast at an altitude of approximately 4500' to 5000'. The other ship (Lt Rice, Pilot) had an engine feathered and was losing altitude while heading toward Cherbourg Peninsula. The ship went into clouds on that heading. I lost altitude and gained a position ahead of Lt. Rice and circled below the overcast between the Isles of Guernsey and Jersey in an effort to intercept his ship and lead him to a field on the peninsula. I first spotted his ship when he was being shot at by enemy flak positions located on the Isle of Guernsey, he was heading directly over it at an estimated altitude of 1500 feet. We had radio contact and I directed him to turn south and intercept my ship which he attempted to do. The flak he had received over the Isle was heavy, accurate and intense and his good engine was smoking badly (light blue smoke), and he called telling me he was losing altitude, could not make the mainland, and consequently was ditching. He made a very good landing, as he hit the ship went almost completely under the water and then came to the surface where it floated flat with the top of its wings above water for five to ten seconds. It then stuck the nose down with the tail straight up for another estimated five to ten seconds before sinking out of sight. We circled the spot and thought we counted five men floating in Mae Wests, the dinghy had not opened and must have gone down with the ship. We threw them four "K" type dinghys and they were seen to hit about one hundred feet from the men. We attempted to call Air-Sea rescue but with no results. We had our I. F. F. in the emergency position all the time we circled and also attempted to call "Parade" and any base in Normandy which could give assistance. I circled for approximately fifteen (15) or twenty (20) minutes and then headed for the nearest base on which I could land. We gave the controller his exact position and he contacted Air-Sea rescue. The men were last seen floating in the water about ten (10) miles directly south of the Isle of Guernsey.


MAURICE O. RUTLEDGE,
Captain, Air Corps,
573rd Flight Leader.

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573RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
Station #166

27 August 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident--Aircraft #797.

TO : Operations Officer, 391st Bombardment Group AAF.

First sighted plane #797 when it was over Guernsey Island by flak bursts fired at it at approximately 2000 feet. Called and told them to get out of that area and come over to our position to be led to landing ground on Cherbourg Peninsula. Plane turned towards us but with engine smoking very much and losing altitude. This plane continued toward us and we toward them with pilots talking. He (Rice) said he couldn't make it to the mainland and was advised to ditch near one of the islands. About this time he was nearly on the water. The plane hit with the left prop touching first and then leveled out and came in level apparently. I couldn't see it for a while after this but was told it was covered by a wave it caused and then came to surface again, remaining afloat a short time with nose settling and then nose dropped under and went down with tail high. A large oil slick on the very smooth water along with floating debris aided in keeping the spot located. Four one man dinghys were dropped from our plane, two through bomb bays and two through waist windows. The first two in containers and the second two out of container but not inflated. These two landed fairly close to their position. One man was seen to climb into dinghy and four others were thought to have been spotted. We attempted to contact Air/Sea rescue without success but turned on emergency I.F.F. One ship was near but wouldn't approach while we were near. With gas very low, we left, landed at strip A 8 on the peninsula and immediately reported position etc through Operations to Air/Sea rescue.

Robert F. Penner
ROBERT F. PENNER,
Captain, Air Corps,
Navigator.

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Enc 5.

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HEADQUARTERS
AAF STATION #166APO # 140
30 August 1944

SUBJECT: Report of Aircraft Accident.

TO : Commanding General, IX Bomber Command, APO 140, U. S. Army.

1. Transmitted herewith WD, AAF Form No. 14, Report of Aircraft Accident,
(in quadruplicate) of aircraft B-26B45, No. 42-95797. 360.33

For the Commanding Officer:

9 Incls:

- 1 Incl: WD AAF Form No. 14 in quadruplicate.
- 2 Incl: Statement of Co-Pilot, 2d Lt. Sink.
- 3 Incl: " " Bombardier, 1st Lt. Schulte.
- 4 Incl: " " Flight Leader, Capt. Rutledge.
- 5 Incl: " " Navigator, Capt. Ranner.
- 6 Incl: " " Pilot, 2d Lt. Rice.
- 7 Incl: " " Co-Pilot, 2d Lt. Moscovic.
- 8 Incl: " " Bombardier, 2d Lt. Peters.
- 9 Incl: " " Engineer, Pvt. Matrick.

GREEN E. BOWEN
Lt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

360.33

1st Ind.

E-J-4

HEADQUARTERS IX BOMBER COMMAND, APO 140, U. S. ARMY, 5 September 1944.

TO: Commanding General, Ninth Air Force (Rear), APO 696, U. S. Army.

Submitted in compliance with Memorandum 55-1, Headquarters, Ninth Air Force,
dated 22 March 1944.

For the Commanding General:

RICHARD C. SANDERS;
Brig. Gen., U.S.A.,
Chief of Staff.

9 Incls: n/c (1 cy ea w/d)

RESTRICTED

2nd Ind.

E-CSJ-3

TO: Chief, Flying Safety, Army Air Forces, Winston-Salem 1, North Carolina.

Report of Aircraft Accident committee approved.

For the Commanding General:

9 Incls: n/c (2 cye ea w/d)

HARRY E. KOCH,
Major, Air Corps,
Asst Adj General.

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