

NAME OF PILOT

TYPE OF PLANE

ACCIDENT NUMBER

Farris James R.

C-47A

44-5-12-524

CHARGED TO:

OUT

IN

CHARGED TO:

OUT

IN

CHARGED TO:

OUT

IN

Accident No. 44-5-12-524

Date 6-24-44

Checked by me

Analyzed by \_\_\_\_\_

Copied for Wright  
Field by \_\_\_\_\_

Notes \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1225:9-43

# RESTRICTED

RECEIVED  
21 MAY 1944  
U.S. AIR FORCE

Accident No. **155**  
USA AF STATION 489  
(Station of Investigation)  
Cottlesmore  
Committee

## War Department U. S. Army Air Forces REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

44-5-12-524

1 Place: Benwick, Cambridgeshire 2 Date: 12 May 1944 3 Time: 03:41  
Aircraft: 4 Type & model: C-47A 5 A.F. No.: 42-92679 6 Station: USAAF 489  
Organization: 7 IX TCC, Ninth AF 8 316 Troop Carrier 9 Troop Carrier  
(Comd & A.F.) (Group) (Squadron)

### Personnel

Duty:	Name (Last name first)	Rating	Serial No	Rank	Class	Br	Comd	HTF	UOP
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
P	Farris, James E.	Pilot	0789698	Major	01	AC	9th	Total	No
OP	Spencer, Dickson H.	Pilot	0683060	2nd Lt	01	AC	9th	Total	No
CA	East, Burton E.	Pilot	0393125	Lt. Col	01	AC	9th	Total	No
N	Still, Glenn R.	Nav.	0744871	1st Lt	01	AC	9th	Total	No
E	Tomchek, Theodora T.	AN	33131463	S/Sgt	2	AC	9th	Total	No
BO	Elliott, John M.	DC	15110946	T/Sgt	3	AC	9th	Total	No
X	Richert, Floyd N.	Chaplain	0482716	Capt	77	AC	9th	Total	No
T	Rice, John D.	Paratroop	0419405	Capt	1	Inf		Total	No
T	Wamsough, Hansel G.*	Paratroop	15102003	Pvt	77	Inf			
T	Buckley, Douglas L.*	Paratroop	16085395	Pvt	77	Inf			

### PILOT CHARGED WITH ACCIDENT

20 Farris, James E. 21 0789698 22 Major 23 01 24 AC  
(L. Name) (F. Name) (M.I.) (Serial No) (Rank) (Per Class) (Branch)  
Aspd 25 IX TCC, Ninth AF 26 316 T.C. 27 36 T.C. 28 USAAF 489  
(Comd & A.F.) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
Atchd for flying 29 (Comd & A.F.) 30 (Group) 31 (Squadron) 32 (Station)  
Original rating 33 Pilot 34 20 May 42 Present rating 35 Pilot 36 20 May 42  
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date)  
Instrument Rating 37 10/11/42  
(Date)

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED OR CHANGED

TO **RESTRICTED**

BY AUTHORITY OF

CG, AAF

BY **ECA**

DATE 2-27-46

### First Pilot Hours:

(at the time of this accident)

38 This type 893:00  
39 This model 893:00  
40 Last 90 days 64:15  
41 Total 893:00

42 Last time lost 6 mos  
43 Last time lost 30 days  
44 Last time lost 6 mos 40:40  
45 Last time lost 30 days 4:30

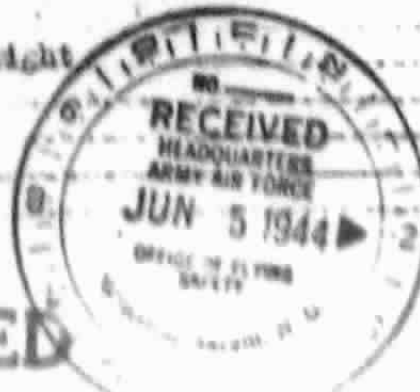
46 Aircraft 1 W-31 1 11  
47 Engine (s) 1 W-31 W-31 1 11  
48 Propeller (s) 1 W-31 W-31 1 11

50 Weather at the time of accident 3/4 moon Slight haze Visibility 6-8 miles  
51 Was the pilot flying on last at time of accident No  
52 Cleared from Cottlesmore 53 To Secret Eagle Mission

55 Pilot's position Training Paratroop

56 Nature of Accident Collision in full flight with other aircraft

57 Formation crossed course in flight



RESTRICTED

\* Jumped previous to accident at 12:01 at 01:15



1. Aircraft #42-92679, Pilot Major James R. Farris, leading the 36th T.C. Sqn., which comprised the last two of four 9 ship flights in the second serial of the 316th T.C. Group. Formation was proceeding toward March on course with a heading of approximately 90°, altitude approximately 4300 feet.
2. The first serial of the 316th Group, which was preceding the second by about 6 min. had come in on the course to March slightly south of course and had turned a little west or short of March, the turning point; meanwhile reducing altitude.
3. At the time of the accident the lead ship of the first serial was approximately 4000 feet, or 500 feet below the lead of the second serial, and on a course of approximately 300 degrees, in such a manner as to pass directly from Southeast to Northwest under the second serial.
4. Aircraft #42-108877, Pilot Lt. J. L. Sharber, Jr., was leading the element of the first 9 ship formation in the first serial of the group formation. Prescribed course required a turn of 148° at March. Two L-squadron formations were following same course at the same prescribed altitude. The first formation was possibly off course slightly to the left after the completion of the turn judging by the position of the wreckage. The main part of the lead formation went down and under the second, but ship #42-108877 piloted by Lt Sharber left the formation and attempted to go over the second formation, striking ship #42-92679. Lt. Sharber's plane was in a steep climbing turn at the time of the collision. Both ships burst into flames and all personnel on both planes were killed.
5. A number of factors may have contributed to the accident: (1) The first serial according to plan, should have been north of the second rather than south after the turn at March. (2) The fact that Lt. Sharber did not remain in close formation (3) The fact that there was no more than 500 feet difference in altitude between the two serials. (4) The fact that the course was planned to include turn of more than 90° with large formations at close intervals and the same prescribed altitudes, making it possible or even probable that formations would meet or nearly meet on nearly reciprocal heading.
6. As to suggestions, it is thought that if in future operations the elimination of factors such as those listed above were accomplished, accidents such as this one would probably not occur again.

18 May 1944

Date Investigation Completed

*Albert J. Tully Jr.*  
 Major, Air Corps

Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*William S. Kneiser*  
 Major, Air Corps

Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*Edwin L. Kneiser*  
 Major, Air Corps

Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*William E. Childers*  
 Major, Air Corps

Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*Samuel H. McCallister*  
 Capt., Air Corps

Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

Accident No.

No. 1 of 1944

War Department  
U. S. Army Air Forces  
REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

USA AF STATION 489  
(Station of Investigating  
Cattesmore  
Committee)

1 Place Near Benwick, Cambridgeshire 2 Date 12 May 1944 3 Time 03:41  
Aircraft: 4 Type & model C-47A 5 A.F. No. 42-108877 6 Station USAAF 489  
Organization: 7 IX TCC, Ninth AF 8 316 Troop Carrier 9 44th Troop Carrier  
(Comd & A.F.) (Group) (Squadron)

## Personnel

Duty:	Name (Last name first)	Rating:	Serial No	Rank	Class	Br	Comd	RTP:UOP
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
01	P : Sharber, Joseph L. Jr.	: Pilot	: 0661243	: 1st Lt	: 01	: A0	: 9th	: Fatal: No
04	CP : Bayless, Hubert M.	: Pilot	: T1905675	: F/O	: 29	: A0	: 9th	: Fatal: No
65	M : Gallack, Harry, (NMI)	: Nav.	: 0745781	: 1st Lt	: 01	: A0	: 9th	: Fatal: No
62	M : Asleson, Floyd V.	: AM	: 37272213	: S/Sgt	: 29	: A0	: 9th	: Fatal: No
71	RO : Sandlin, Earlan O.	: RO	: 34263809	: S/Sgt	: 29	: A0	: 9th	: Fatal: No
75	T : Gullick, William A	: Paratrooper	: 01311828	: 2nd Lt	: 18	: 99	: Inf	: Fatal: No
75	T : Ray, William F.	: Paratrooper	: 34016386	: PFC	: 18	: 99	: Inf	: Fatal: No
75	T : Woodhead, Ivan H.	: Paratrooper	: 39013890	: Pvt	: 18	: 99	: Inf	: Fatal: No

## PILOT CHANGED WITH ACCIDENT

20	21	22	23	24
Sherber, Joseph L. Jr.	0661243	1st Lt	01	A0
(L. Name)	(F. Name)	(Serial No)	(Rank)	(Per Class)
25 IX TCC, Ninth AF	316 T.C.	44 T.O.	29	USA AF 489
(Comd & A.F.)	(Group)	(Squadron)		(Station)
26	27	28	29	30
(Comd & A.F.)	(Group)	(Squadron)	(Station)	
31	32	33	34	35
Original rating	Pilot	3-7-42	Present rating	Pilot
(Rating)	(Date)		(Rating)	(Date)
36	37	38	39	40
Instrument Rating	22-12-43			

NAME WOODHEAD IVAN H

AIR FORCE &amp; COM. \_\_\_\_\_

GROUP NO. \_\_\_\_\_

GROUP TYPE \_\_\_\_\_

AIRCRAFT CODE # 2

(1020184)

1st time last 6 mos 12:55  
1st time last 30 days 1:30  
1st time last 6 mos 29:30  
1st time last 30 days 7:50

List of Loaded Parts

50 Weather at time of accident 3/4 moon, light haze - Visibility 6-8 miles  
51 Was the pilot flying on instrument at time of accident No  
52 Cleared from Cattesmore 53 Secret Eagle Mission - One of six times

54 Pilot's name Training Squadron

55 Was there a collision in flight with other aircraft

56 Were there formations crossed during flight



RECEIVED  
JUN 5 1944



Accident No. \_\_\_\_\_

Reported by: \_\_\_\_\_

USA AF STATION 489

War Department  
U. S. Army Air Forces  
**REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT**

(Station of Investigating  
Committee)

1 Place: Near Denwick, Cambridgeshire 2 Date: 12 May 1944 3 Time: 03:41  
Aircraft: 4 Type & model: C-47A 5 S.F. No.: 42-106677 6 Station: USAAF 489  
Organization: 7th TCC, Ninth AF 316 Troop Carrier 44th Troop Carrier  
(Comd & A.F.) (Group) (Squadron)

**Personnel**

Duty:	Name (Last name first)	Rating:	Serial No	Rank	Class	Br	Comd	RTP	UOP
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
P	Sharber, Joseph L. Jr.	Pilot	0661243	1st Lt	01	AC	9th	Fatal	No
CP	Bayless, Hubert M.	Pilot	T1905675	F/O	92	AC	9th	Fatal	No
W	Gallack, Harry (MM)	Wav.	0745781	1st Lt	01	AC	9th	Fatal	No
W	Asleson, Floyd V.	W	37272213	S/Sgt	29	AC	9th	Fatal	No
RO	Sandlin, Earlan C.	RO	34263809	S/Sgt	29	AC	9th	Fatal	No
W	Gullick, William A	Paratrooper	01311888	2nd Lt	10	Inf		Fatal	No
T	Rav, William F.	Paratrooper	34016886	PEC	42	Inf			13
T	Woodhead, Ivan H.	Paratrooper	39018890	Pvt	44	Inf			13

**PILOT CHANGED WITH ACCIDENT**

20	Sharber	Joseph	L. Jr	21	0661243	22	1st Lt	23	01	24	AC
(L. Name)		(F. Name)		(M)	(Serial No)	(Rank)		(Per Class)		(Branch)	
25	IX TCC	Ninth AF	26	316 T.C.	27	44 T.C.	28	USAAF	489		
(Comd & A.F.)		(Group)		(Squadron)		(Station)					
29	Rated for flying	30	(Comd & A.F.)	31	(Group)	32	(Squadron)	(Station)			
33	Original rating	Pilot	34	3-7-42	Present rating	35	Pilot	36	3-7-42		
(Rating)		(Date)		(Rating)		(Date)					
37	Instrument Rating	22-12-43	(Date)								

**First Pilot Hours:**

(at the time of this accident)

38	This type	1192:20	42	Last time last 6 mos	12:55
39	This model	1192:20	43	Last time last 30 days	1:30
40	Last 30 days	71:35	44	Last time last 6 mos	29:30
41	Total	1192:20	45	Last time last 30 days	7:50

Damaged	AIRCRAFT Damage	47 List of Damaged Parts
46 Aircraft	W 5	
47 Engine (s)	W 5 W 5	
48 Propeller (s)	W 5 W 5	

50 Weather at time of accident: 3/4 moon, slight haze Visibility: 6-8 miles  
51 Was the pilot flying on last at time of accident? No  
52 Cleared from Cottessmore 53 To Secret Eagle Mission? Kind of old fence

54 Pilot's last known training: Paratroop

55 Collision in full flight with other aircraft

56 2 formations missed course in flight



**SECRET**

1. Aircraft #42-92679, Pilot Major James R. Farris, leading the 36th T.C. Sqdn. which comprised the last two of four 9 ship flights in the second serial of the 316th T.C. Group. Formation was proceeding toward March on course with a heading of approximately 90°, altitude approximately 4800 feet.
2. The first serial of the 316th Group, which was preceding the second by about 6 min., had come in on the course to March slightly south of course and had turned a little west or short of March, the turning point, meanwhile reducing altitude.
3. At the time of the accident the lead ship of the first serial was approximately 4000 feet, or 500 feet below the lead of the second serial, and on a course of approximately 300 degrees, in such a manner as to pass directly from Southeast to Northwest under the second serial.
4. Aircraft #42-108377, Pilot Lt. J. L. Sharber, Jr., was leading the #2 element, of the first 9 ships formation in the first serial of the group formation. Prescribed course required a turn of 148° at March. Two 4-squadron formation were following same course at the same prescribed altitude. The first formation was possibly off course slightly to the left after the completion of the turn judging by the position of the wreckage. The part of the lead formation went down and under the second, but ship #42-108377 piloted by Lt Sharber left the formation and attempted to go over the second formation, striking ship #42-92679. Lt. Sharber's plane was in a steep climbing turn at the time of the collision. Both ships burst into flames and all personnel on both planes were killed.
5. A number of factors may have contributed to the accident: (1) The first serial according to plan, should have been north of the second rather than south after the turn at March. (2) The fact that Lt. Sharber did not remain in close formation (3) The fact that there was no more than 500 feet difference in altitude between the two serials. (4) The fact that the course was planned to include turn of more than 90° with large formations at close intervals and the same prescribed altitudes making it possible or even probable that formations would meet or nearly meet on nearly reciprocal heading.
6. As to suggestions, it is thought that if in future operations the elimination of factors such as those listed above were accomplished, accidents such as this one would probably not occur again.

18 May 1944

Date Investigation Completed

*Albert J. Kelly Jr.*  
 ALBERT J. KELLY, JR.  
 Major, Air Corps  
 Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*William S. Kaiser*  
 WILLIAM S. KAISER  
 Major, Air Corps  
 Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*Edwin L. Richter*  
 EDWIN L. RICHTER  
 Major, Air Corps  
 Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*William E. Grubbs*  
 WILLIAM E. GRUBBS  
 Major, Air Corps  
 Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee

*John H. McCullough*  
 JOHN H. MCCULLOUGH  
 Capt., Air Corps  
 Investigating Officer  
 A/C Accident Committee



**SECRET**

HEADQUARTERS  
316TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP, AAF.

APO 133, U.S. Army  
17 May 1944

On the morning of 12 May 1944, I was leading the first of two thirty-six plane serials being flown by this group. Shortly after 0330 I observed an occult below and slightly left, flashing "B", which was located at March, Cambridgeshire, and designated as the turning point to Cottesmore. I began descending from 4500 feet and turning from a heading of approximately 95° to 300°. On completion of the turn, I observed the second serial approaching on approximately 90° course in such a manner that our courses would cross very soon. I was at that time at 4000 feet and descending. In my judgement, the second serial was at 4500 feet or higher and there was sufficient difference in altitude for safe passage on the cross course. With this decision, I continued my course. My lead squadron flight had passed safely under the higher formation when evidence of the collision was apparent, due to the bright flash of the explosion.

There can be no question that in the interest of safety, the added precaution of turning my formation to entirely avoid a cross course would have prevented such an accident.

*Walter R. Washburn, Jr.*  
WALTER R. WASHBURN, JR.  
Lt. Col., Air Corps

**SECRET**



12 May 1944

I was flying Co-Pilot in the lead ship, 1st serial of the 31st T.C. Group with Lt. Col. Washburn as Pilot. We were on the mission known as "Eagle".

We had just completed our turn at March on our return course but were a little short of March. I believe we were also South of course. We had approached our turn at an indicated 4500 feet. I believe we descended, in our turn, to an altitude of approximately 4000 feet indicated. After we had steadied on to our course for Cottemore, I noticed what I thought to be the second serial of the Group approaching us from the front and about 30 degrees to the left. It was apparent we were going to pass close together. However, I believed we were safely below the lead ships of the approaching formation. I looked out the Co-Pilot's window to ascertain, as best I could, that our formation was intact. All of the part of our formation which I could see looked alright with the exception of a lone ship. It was apparently alone and out of formation; riding above, to the rear, and slightly to the right of our formation. I believe we continued to descend until we were about 3500 feet indicated when we passed the other formation.

I looked up to the right rear at the other formation just after we had passed. All ships appeared to be clear, but the lone ship was still in its former relative position and still out of formation. I continued to watch both the other formation and the lone ship. Suddenly the lone ship went into a steep climbing turn to the right, up and into the other formation. It collided with one of the ships in the third right of nine ships of the formation. Both ships burst into flames and fell burning to the ground.

*Myron Miller*  
MYRON (NMI) MILLER  
1st. Lieut., Air Corps

Co-Pilot - Group Lead ship.

12 May 1944

In the vicinity of March (Wing Assembly Point) on route from the Command Departure Point to March Airplane 43-50052 leading serial (3) was (4) miles south of course.

This Airplane started its turn from 85° to 300° about (5) miles short of March and ended up in route from March to Cottessmore (2) miles north of course.

Considering the area that is required to turn a group about 145° I would judge that if serial (3) did not pass over March that it passed to the outside of it.

*Edward G. Nagle Jr.*  
EDWARD G. NAGLE JR.  
Captain, Air Corps.

Navigator - Group lead snip.



44th TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON,  
Office of the Intelligence Officer

13 May 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of 2nd Lt. Jackson H. Beyer.

TO : Whom It May Concern.

1. I was pilot the second ship, 2nd Element, first flight of the 44th Squadron on the night of 12 May 1944 at about 0345 hrs. After making our turn at March at 0345 hrs at 4000' to fly to Cottessmore, we saw a formation approaching at approximately the same altitude. Our Squadron Leader started to go down and I think our element leader, Lt. Sharber, started to go down. Then he started to pull up and I think he pulled to the right. I continued to go down and then leveled off at the same level as the Squadron Leader. The last I saw of Lt. Sharber he was going up. Then I saw a glow in the sky from our rear. Both formations had navigational lights on at the time.

*Jackson H. Beyer*

JACKSON H. BEYER,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,

Pilot, 2nd Ship, 2nd Element, 1st Flight.

44TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON, AAF  
Office of the Intelligence Officer

13 May 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of 2nd Lt. Karol F. Rybos.

TO : Whom It May Concern.

1. On the morning of 12 May 1944 I was co-pilot of the Second Ship in the Second Element of the First Flight, 44 Troop Carrier Squadron. After we had made our turn at March returning to Cottesmore we were flying at about 4500'. We saw a formation approaching us head on. They had their navigation lights on as did our ships. We swung to the right with our Lead Ship. Then we turned left and down, but our element leader, Lt. Sharber, went up and straight into the oncoming formation. I saw a flare in the sky and pieces of debris in the air. When Lt. Sharber started to go up and to the right we followed for a moment, but seeing we couldn't make it, we dove down and out.

Karol F. Rybos

KAROL F. RYBOS.

2nd Lt., Air Corps.

CO-Pilot, Ship #47.

2nd ship, 2nd element, 1st flight.



44th Troop Carrier Squadron, AAF  
Office of the Intelligence Officer

13 May 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of 1st Lt. C.K. Williams.

TO : Whom it may concern.

1. On the morning of 12 May 1944 I was pilot of the third ship in the second element, first flight, of the 44th T.C. Squadron. As we left March at 0345 hours on the return flight at approximately 3500-4000 feet, we saw a nother formation approaching us at about the same altitude. Lt. Sha rber, our element leader, started to climb, but we were unable to follow him. As he went up he collided with a ship of the oncoming formation, causing a blinding flash and an explosion.

*Charles K. Williams*  
CHARLES K. WILLIAMS  
1st Lt., Air Corps  
First Pilot.

3rd ship, 2nd element, 1st flight.


44TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON, AAF  
Office of the Intelligence Officer

13 May 1944.

SUBJECT: Statment of 2nd Lt., Antonio Fasano.

TO : Whom It May Concern.

1. I was co-pilot of the 3rd ship, second element, first flight in the 44th Troop Carrier Squadron on the night of 12 May 1944. After we made our turn at March at about 4000' at 0345 hrs, I saw a formation with navigational lights on approaching us at the same level. The formation kept coming at us. Then suddenly our Squadron leader went down. Lt. Sharber started to go up, and I noticed our right wing man peel off and go down. I looked back and Lt. Sharber had disappeared. (I think his lights blended into the other formation.) I made a gentle turn to the left and went down. In turning I saw a flash high off my right wing.

  
ANTONIO FASANO,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,  
Co-pilot.

3rd ship, 2nd element, 1st flight.



44TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON, AAF  
Office of the Intelligence Officer

13 May 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of 1st Lt. Claire (NMI) Beck, O-1704157

TO : Whom It May Concern.

1. I was pilot of the second ship in the first element of the second flight, 44th Troop Carrier Squadron on 12 May 1944 at 0340 hrs. As we approached March at 4500' (my co-pilot was flying from the left seat), we saw a group of planes with navigational passing lights on at our level or a little above. They were approaching us almost head on from the left. I kept watching them for we were close and my co-pilot held his position. Then it looked like the second element of the first flight was gaining altitude. I thought they were going to try and go over the oncoming formation. Our formation held the same headings as near as I could tell and what appeared to be the second element of the first flight seemed to go through the oncoming formation and then I saw a flash, explosion, and the sky was temporarily lit up. I am not sure whether or not either formation changed headings upon approaching the other. The explosion took place to the right and somewhat above our ship.

Claire Beck  
CLAIRE (NMI) BECK  
1st Lt., Air Corps,  
Pilot.

2nd ship, 1st element, 2nd flight.

45TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON  
316TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP, AAF

A.P.C. 133, U.S. Army,  
15 May 1944.

SUBJECT: Collision Accident of 12 May 1944.

TO : All Concerned.

TIME: 0400

PLACE: NW of March

1. I was leading the first flight of the second squadron in the 316th Group formation on the problem, Eagle. I had just completed the turn at March, taking a course for our home base, when I noticed a formation of four (4) squadrons on our left approaching at an angle of about 150°. They appeared higher than our formation at first but as we drew closer appeared to be more on our level. I decided to drop down about three hundred (300) feet, but after losing 200 feet saw that my perspective was wrong and that they were considerably above us. When this other formation was in front of me, there was a bright flash and then fire streaking out and debris scattering over the sky. The ship or ships, not distinguishable, fell out of formation, tending to spin as it fell. I did not see another ship pull up into the other formation but other pilots of my flight reported seeing a ship from the second flight of the 44th Squadron gain altitude, climbing toward the other formation.

*Edwin L. Hinner*  
EDWIN L. HINNER,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Leader, 1st Flight of  
2nd Squadron in Group  
Formation of 12 May 1944.



HEADQUARTERS  
316TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP, AAF

APC 133, US Army  
14 May 1944

SUBJECT: Statement on Accident, 12 May 1944.

TO : When it may Concern.

At 0350, 12 May 1944, as we completed our turn at March, Cambridgeshire, to return to our base, I sighted another formation approaching ours from the left at approximately 90°. Although I was flying high position in our group it appeared that we would pass under the formation with a comfortable margin of safety.

It seemed that our lead squadron had already passed under the other formation when there was a blinding explosion. I immediately turned left to avoid falling flame and debris but this proved unnecessary as we were farther away than I thought. My first impression was that a wing plane in the formation above us had collided with his element leader while watching our formation pass below.

*Bertie W. David*  
BERTIE W. DAVID,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Leader of 4th Flight of 9  
planes in 3rd Serial.

SECRET

APC 133, US Army,  
13 May 1944.

I was leading a formation of 18 planes of the 37th Squadron on Mission "Eagle". We were in 9-plane V of V's with 9-plane flights in trail, the 36th Squadron was following us flying ~~in~~ the same formation.

We were approaching March on the next to last leg of the return route at an altitude of 4500' on a heading of 95°, air-speed 140 mph.

At a point about 3 minutes west of March, Cambridgeshire I sighted a formation approaching us from right to left, apparently on the 300° heading from March to Cottesmore. I supposed it was the first serial of the Group which was composed of 36 planes. The oncoming formation was below us, I would say by at least 500'. I thought that all planes of the 37th and 36th would pass safely over, but I did make a slight turn to the left and climb about 200'. My flight passed above and in front of the other formation, but in just a few seconds a brilliant yellow glare lit up the sky. I checked the planes in my flight of 9 and the co-pilot and navigator checked the second flight of 9--all were still in formation.

The turn at March was made and we continued to Cottesmore where we descended to 3500' and held until we could enter the landing pattern at 1500', all planes of 37th Squadron landing in proper order.

The mission itself had gone off without incident. My formation dropped troops on BZ #1 at 0154, one minute late. We had not sighted the first serial of the Group since departing Cottesmore.

*Albert F. Fitch Jr.*  
ALBERT F. FITCH JR.  
Major, Air Corps,  
Pilot in Lead Plane of  
316th Gp's Second Serial.

12 May 1944

I had just been told by Lieut. Schenck, My Navigator, that we were a couple of minutes from the turn at March. I was flying in a normal position for formation and was dead level with my lead ship.

Suddenly an aircraft flashed into view immediately ahead and slightly below crossing my path at an angle from right to left - racing us. I immediately dove my ship straight ahead and just as I was starting down that aircraft collided with my lead ship (Major Harris) and burst into flames. Just before my vision failed I saw the ship that I believed to be the No. 3 (left wing) ship in our element going down at the same angle as I was and slightly ahead of me but well to the left. When I recovered my vision sufficiently to see the instruments I was turning slightly to the right and still losing altitude - @ I lost approximately 1000 feet in the dive from cruising altitude of indicated 4800 feet to an indicated altitude of 3800 feet - - I straightened out and climbed to 5000 feet and obtained a W/T QM to Cottemore.

Prior to seeing the ship pass directly in front of me I saw what appeared to be a group approaching us at an angle from my right - - After I watched it for a short while I decided that it was safely below our altitude and continued to watch my element leader.

*W. E. Hutter*  
R. W. HUTTER,  
Capt., AC.

Pilot - #2 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (36th Squadron)



SECRET

12 May 1944

We were cruising along on the right wing of the lead ship of the 30th Squadron. We were to the rear and slightly above the ships in the 37th Squadron. An airplane appeared heading right for us, he was a short distance below us. All at once he turned to the right in a very steep climbing turn. He passed in front of us and collided with the lead ship. The planes exploded immediately and we dove down and out to the left.

*Philip Konrad Jr.*  
PHILLIP KONRAD, JR.  
2nd Lieut., AC.

Co-Pilot - #2 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (30th Squadron)

**SECRET**

12 May 1944

Nearing March I noticed a formation of aircraft approaching as if to cut across our path. I kept watching them as they came closer. One started climbing and cut in towards us passing in front of our nose and up into Major Farris's ship. A large explosion occurred and I was blinded by the flash.

*Walter Schuchter*

WALTER SCHUCHTER,  
2nd Lieut., AC.

Navigator - #2 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (30th Squadron)

SECRET

12 May 1944

I was flying on Col. Fleet's left wing in the lead element of the next to last Squadron of the formation. We were approaching March when I noticed a formation meeting us. It seemed to be several hundred feet lower than we. The engineer hit my arm and pointed ahead and under the lead plane. I saw a C-47 in a climbing turn - - looking as if it were headed straight for me. I instantly started down and out. There was a blinding flash, and an explosion that could be heard over the roar of the engines - - the plane was shaking violently. I thought part of the right wing was gone and we all thought we were on fire. I was blinded for several seconds and on recovery found we were well out of the formation and still going down. I leveled out at 2000 feet and came home. I don't know the exact altitude of the collision but am sure it was a little over 4500 feet.

*R. S. Whatley*  
R. S. WHATLEY,  
2nd Lieut., AC.

Pilot- #3 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (36th Squadron)



**SECRET**

12 May 1944

I was flying Copilot in ship flying No. 3 position to ship that was destroyed. We were approaching another formation at what appeared a safe altitude above them when our crew chief punched and yelled regarding a plane that was coming up at an altitude of a Pursuit insted of a C-47. I dont believe the lead ship saw it as no avoiding manuevers were made. There was a direct hit and all seemed to explode upon impact. From there on only flame could be seen.

*Earl W. Shank*  
**EARL W. SHANK,**  
2nd Lieut., AG

Ce-Pilot - #3 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (30th Squadron)

SECRET

12 May 1944

While standing in the companionway between the Pilot and Copilot I noticed a small formation of planes of which seemed to be going the opposite way, on the right of our formation. But, there was one ship that I noticed coming at our element which was the lead of the Squadron and when he kept coming closer the Pilot in our ship peeled off to the left and immediately after he did so there was a terrific flash and the plane seemed to have quivered which sort of made me believe that we were hit. The whole sky looked like it was lit up and I dashed to the cabin to look out on the wing, and I could swear that I saw flames rolling off it. Then I rushed back to the Cockpit and looked out the astrodome and the wing was all clear but in a distance behind us I saw a lot of flames falling to the ground.

T/Sgt A.J. PRZYBYLSKI.

*A.J. Przybylski*

Crew Chief - #3 ship, 1st element, 1st 9 ships (36th Squadron)

SECRET

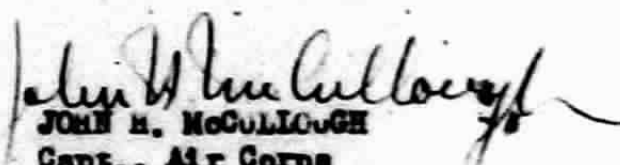
**SECRET**

12 May 1944

I was leading the fourth formation of nine aircraft in the second serial of the 310th Troop Carrier Group formation on the morning of May 12, 1944, "Eagle" Mission.

At approximately 0335 hours while flying on a course of approximately 90 degrees magnetic, between Peterborough and March, at an altitude of 5100 feet, I noted a large formation of aircraft approaching on a course of approximately 300 degrees in such a manner as to intercept our course. It appeared to me that this formation was at approximately the same altitude as our formation.

To avoid a collision course, my flight of nine began immediately to lose altitude, at the same time it appeared that the lead of the intercepting unit also started to dive so I started a climbing left turn and it was at this moment that it became apparent from the resulting flare of light that a collision had occurred somewhere in front of our aircraft, probably in the nine ship formation immediately preceding my own and such was, of course, the case.

  
JOHN H. MCCULLOUGH  
Capt., Air Corps

Pilot - Leader of second 9 ships (30th Squadron)



**SECRET**

12 May 1944

I was leading #2 flight in the first half of the 30th Sqdn. formation. We were making good a heading of approximately 90 degrees, when we met another formation which was flying approximately 2900 feet or 3000 feet and coming in from slightly to the right of us. As we came together one ship that seemed to be clear out of his formation passed over the right wing man in my flight. I couldnt tell where he came from.

Immediately following this another ship coming almost directly at my flight, but at a lower altitude, began a climbing turn to the right. This maneuver carried him directly into the path of our lead element and the result was a large explosion. I was blinded temporarily, but when my eyes cleared up, we were clear of the other formation. I tacked my flight onto the rear of the 37th Squadron and followed them home.

*Ralph R. Welter*  
RALPH R. WELTER  
1st Lieut., Air Corps

Pilot- Leader 2nd element of first 9 ships (30th Squadron)

**SECRET**

12 May 1944

On the night of May 11, 1944, while on Troop Carrier Mission "Eagle", we were flying on a course of about 90 degrees at an altitude of 5000 feet as the third 9 ship element of four.

From my position as Flight Leader of "C" Flight my crew and I observed a flight of aircraft crossing our course from the right. It appeared as if one Squadron was going under and barely in front of my flight and one Squadron above and behind our Squadron.

Just as the Squadron was under our Squadron, one airplane from below suddenly made a steep climbing turn to the left. I was sure there would be a collision so I turned my flight to the left and climbed to get out of the way. There was a sudden flash and an airplane fuselage came in front of my airplane and then fell in flames.

I could not tell which airplane in our lead flight was hit on account of the explosion. When safely permitted we leveled off and one wing man and myself returned to base.

*William G. Wheeler*  
**WILLIAM G. WHEELER**  
1st Lieut., Air Corps

Pilot - 3rd element, 1st ship, 3rd element, 1st 9 ships (39th T.C. Squadron)

~~SECRET~~

(Ref: Ltr War Department, Report of Aircraft Accident, dtd 12 May 1944.  
C-47A, #42-92679, 36th T.C. Squadron and C-47A, #42-108877, 44th  
T.C. Squadron, 318th T. C. Group, USAAF 489)

000.93

1st Ind.

G-19

HEADQUARTERS, 52ND TROOP CARRIER WING, AAF, APO 133, US ARMY, 25 May 1944.

To: Commanding General, IX Troop Carrier Command, APO 133, US Army.

*W. F. H.*

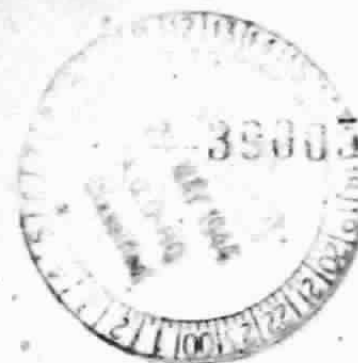
AS 360.33 (12 May 44) 2nd Ind. E-JH-15  
HEADQUARTERS, IX TROOP CARRIER COMMAND, APO 133, U S ARMY. 29 May 1944

To: Commanding General, Ninth Air Force, APO 696, U S Army.

22 Incls;

Incl 1 - AAF Form 14, A/C #4292679 (C-47A). (triplicate).  
Incl 2 - AAF Form 14, A/C #42-108877 (C-47A). (triplicate).  
Incls 3 to 22 - Statements of Witnesses. (triplicate).

*W. F. H.*



360.33

3rd Ind.

E-I-12

HEADQUARTERS, NINTH AIR FORCE, APO 696, U. S. ARMY. 30 May 1944.

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

Report of the Aircraft Accident Committee approved.

for the Commanding General,

*C. R. BIRBARI*  
C. R. BIRBARI  
Lt. Col., Air Corps,  
Asst. Adj. General.

26627

22 Incls;

n/a (2 cys ea w/d.)



## CORRECTION REQUEST

44-5-125-24

[illegible]

Person Submitting Correction

(over)

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