

**WAR DEPARTMENT  
HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES  
WASHINGTON**

**The MISSING AIR CREW REPORT**

**13485**

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate by each Army Air Forces organization within 48 hours of the time an aircraft is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location Torretta, Italy Command or Air Force 15<sup>th</sup> AF  
Group 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Gp (H) Squadron 767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq (H)
2. SPECIFY: Place of departure Torretta, Italy Course Direct to target  
Target Linz, Austria Type of mission Bombing

3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED:  
cloud cover

4. GIVE: [a] Date 31 Mar 45 Time 1020 Last known position 44°10'N 13°20'E  
[b] Specify whether: ☒ Last sighted, ☐ Forced down, ☐ Seen to crash,  
☐ Last contacted by radio, ☐ No information

5. AIRCRAFT [LOST] [~~BELIEVED LOST~~] AS A RESULT OF: [Check one only]  
☐ Enemy aircraft, ☐ Enemy anti-aircraft, ☒ Other **Weather and possible pilot failure.**

6. AIRCRAFT: Type, model & series B-24 J AAF Serial Number 42-51838

7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT: Natural

8. ENGINES: Type, model & series P&W R-1830-65 AAF serial Number [a] 42-86908  
[b] 42-87425 [c] BP-453747 [d] BP 44-2535

9. INSTALLED WEAPONS: [Make, type and serial number] All Browning Cal. 50

[a] <u>LU 1547771</u>	[e] <u>RB 1547853</u>	[i] <u>RW 1037750</u>
[b] <u>RU 1547758</u>	[f] <u>LB 1547878</u>	[j] <u>LW 1547917</u>
[c] <u>RN 1547876</u>	[g] <u>RT 1547692</u>	
[d] <u>LN 154752</u>	[h] <u>LT 1547917</u>	

10. PERSONNEL LISTED BELOW REPORTED AS: ☒ Battle Casualty, ☐ Non Battle Casualty

11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 10; Passengers 0; Total 10

[If more than 12 persons aboard aircraft, use separate sheet]

CREW POSITION	FULL NAME [Last, First, Initial] RANK, SERIAL NUMBER	CURRENT STATUS	NEXT OF KIN, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS
[1] Pilot	Connor, Cleone C., Jr., 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. 0-2058109	MIA	Mrs. Ruth E Connor (Mother) 5520 Fishburn Ave., Maywood, Calif.
[2] Co-pilot	Jennings, Robert W., 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. 0-836468	MIA	Mrs. Suzy S. Jennings (Mother) 1901 E. Superior St., Duluth, Minn.
[3] Nav	Meng, Richard J., F/O T-134730	MIA	Mrs. Verna Alice Meng (Mother) 705 W Breckenridge, Ferndale, Mich.
[4] LWG	Nelson, Raymond J., Sgt. 17181224	MIA	Mr. Delmar R. Nelson (Father) 711 S. 9 <sup>th</sup> St., Burlington, Iowa
[5] RWG	Bevilacqua, Donald A., Sgt. 33679767	MIA	Mrs. Matilda Bevilacqua (Mother) 1523 Walnut St., Erie, Pa.
[6] BTG	Staniszewski, John D., Sgt. 33789303	MIA	Mrs. Genevieve Staniszewski (Mother) 4546 Mercer St., Philadelphia, Pa.
[7] NTG	Rodgers, Milford J., Sgt. 13194282	MIA	Mrs. Irene L. Rodgers (Mother) 312 ½ Juniper St., Quakertown, Pa.
[8] TTG	Black, Richard W., Sgt. 15125647	MIA	Mr. Flaval Black (Father) 984 Francis Rd., Bexley, Ohio
[9] UTG	Purvis, Bobbie J., Sgt. 38608835	MIA	Mr. Lafayette M. Purvis (Father) Cottonwood, Texas
[10] G	Heller, Russell R., T/Sgt. 35756504	MIA	Mrs. Stella Heller (Mother) 29-37 <sup>th</sup> St., Wheeling, W. Virginia
[11]			
[12]			

12. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT AND CHECK APPROPRAITE [one only] COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME:

NAME IN FULL	RANK	SERIAL No.	CONTACTED BY RADIO	LAST SIGHTED	SAW CRASH	SAW FORCED LANDING
[1] <b>Claude D. Walters, Jr.</b>	<b>Cpl.</b>	<b>33674057</b>		<b>X</b>		
[2] <b>George W. Dace, Jr.</b>	<b>F/O</b>	<b>T-129939</b>		<b>X</b>		
[3] <b>Denver Hamm, Jr.</b>	<b>Cpl.</b>	<b>36466817</b>		<b>X</b>		

13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING: **Yes**

☐ Parachutes were used, ☐ Persons were seen walking away from the scene of the crash,  
☐ Other reasons [specify].

14. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPH, MAP OR SKETCH SHOWING LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT.  
 15. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTIONS OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.  
 16. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL  
 NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SEARCH HERE: **No search.**

Date: **4 Apr 45**

/s/ Raymond L. Wilcovitz  
 Capt., AC

767TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)  
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP  
APO 520 US ARMY

STATEMENT

Our ship was flying Number 4 position, and I was at the left waist position when we encountered severe weather about 20 or 25 minutes out from the Italian coast. The weather that we penetrated at first was not so severe as to cause the formation to break up. A few minutes later, the weather became very bad, and the ships in the formation spread out somewhat to avoid a collision. At this moment, I chanced to be looking from the left waist window, and note that ship #65 which Lt. Connors was flying, to go into a very steep glide. I watched the ship until it disappeared into the weather. That was the last time I saw ship #65.

/s/ Claude D. Walters, Jr.  
33674057, Cpl., 767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq.

On Saturday, March 31, 1945, while on an operational mission, ship #65 was observed going down. About 1020 hours on the above date, our group encountered bad weather at an altitude of about 7,000 feet. Seven ships in our flight went into a cloud bank and about 20 to 30 seconds later only two ships of the seven ship flight were still in formation. Lt. Connor in ship #65 did not rejoin the formation then or any other time that day. We were over the Adriatic Sea, at the time, and, as near as I can determine, we were at the Key Point, which position was approximately forty miles off the Italian coast near Rimmi. The coordinates were: 44°10'N 15°20'E.

/s/ George W. Dace, Jr.  
F/O, AC.

Lt. Connor's ship caught prop wash from the ships in two position, and apparently he lost control of the plane, for it went into a very steep bank through the formation and was going down quite fast with his left wing low when he went into the clouds.

/s/ Denver Hamm, Jr.  
36466817, Cpl., AC, 767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq.

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Cleone C. Connor, Jr.</b>	<b>Mrs. Ruth E. Connor (Mother)</b> <b>5520 Fishburn Avenue</b> <b>Maywood, California</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert W. Jennings</b>	<b>Mrs. Suzy S. Jennings (Mother)</b> <b>1901 Eas Superior Street</b> <b>Duluth, Minnesota</b>
<b>F/O Richard J. Meng</b>	<b>Mrs. Verna Alice Meng (Mother)</b> <b>705 West Breckenridge</b> <b>Ferndale, Michigan</b>
<b>T/Sgt. Russell R. Heller</b>	<b>Mrs. Stella Heller (Mother)</b> <b>29 37<sup>th</sup> Street</b> <b>Wheeling, West Virginia</b>
<b>Sgt. Raymond J. Nelson</b>	<b>Mrs. Mary J. Nelson (Wife)</b> <b>1620 South Arch Street</b> <b>Hannibal, Missouri</b>
<b>Sgt. John D. Staniszewski</b>	<b>Mrs. Genevieve Staniszewski (Mother)</b> <b>4546 Mercer Street</b> <b>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Sgt. Donald A. Bevilacqua</b>	<b>Mrs. Matilda Bevilacqua (Mother)</b> <b>1523 Walnut Street</b> <b>Erie, Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Cpl. Milford J. Rodgers</b>	<b>Mrs. Irene L. Rodgers (Mother)</b> <b>312 ½ Juniper Street</b> <b>Quakertown, Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Cpl. Richard W. Black</b>	<b>Mr. Flaval A. Black (Father)</b> <b>984 Francis Road</b> <b>Bexley, Ohio</b>
<b>Cpl. Bobbie J. Purvis</b>	<b>Mr. Lafayette M. Purvis (Father)</b> <b>Cottonwood, Texas</b>