

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: NND 735001

By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

Classification changed

to **RESTRICTED**

by E. A. BRADY, Lt. Col., AO

by F. M. MUECH, Capt., AO

Date **1 MAR 1963**

CONFIDENTIAL

WAR DEPARTMENT
HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate by each Army Air Forces organization within 24 hours of the time an air crew member is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location, by Name Seventeenth Air Force : Command or Air Force 9th Bomb
Div Group 388th Bomb Sq : Squadron 884th Bomb Sq : Detachment
2. SPECIFY: Place of Departure AAF Sqn / A-30 : Course 290°
Target or Intended Destination Germany, Ger. : Type of Mission Bombing
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED
10/10 overcast at 9000'
4. GIVE: (a) Day 1st Month Mar Year 1945; Time 1816; and Location Welsch, Ger.
of last known whereabouts of missing aircraft.
(b) Specify whether aircraft was last sighted (X): Last contacted by
radio (): Forced down (): Seen to crash (): or Information not Available
5. AIRCRAFT WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS A RESULT OF: (Check
only one) Enemy Aircraft (): Enemy Anti-Aircraft (X): Other Circumstances
as follows Enemy fighters attacked formation shortly after aircraft
was hit by 'flak' and was leaving formation.
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, Model and Series A-30-B-30 : AAF Serial No 41-59375
7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT, if any None
8. ENGINES: Type, model and Series R-2800-11 : AAF Serial ()
Number (a) FP-02415 (b) FP-02050 (d)
9. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial Number):
(a) 1320349 (b) 1320338 (c) 1297743 (d)
(e) 781140 (f) 250018 (g) 781141 (h)
(i) 129740 (j) 250018 (k) All M-3 Cal. .50 Browning Machine Guns
(m) 129740 (n) 129740 (o) (f)
10. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW WERE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty Yes
(b) Non Battle Casualty

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Incl #34

Incl. 1'

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11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 2; Passengers: 0; Total 2
Starting with the Pilot, furnish the following particulars; if more than 11 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on separate sheets and attach original to this form.

Crew Position	NAME IN FULL (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number	Current Status
1. Pilot	MITCHELL, JAMES L.	1st Lt.	591125	WIA
2. Co-pilot	McLestrey, David W.	2nd Lt.	591126	WIA
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				

12. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT, AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME:

(last name first)	Rank	Serial Number	Contacted by Radio	Check only one column		
				Last Sighted	Saw Crash	Saw Forced Landing
1. MITCHELL, THOMAS A.	1st Lt.	591125		X		
2. Co-pilot, David W.	2nd Lt.	591126		X		
3.						

13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash; or (c) Any other reason (Specify) _____
14. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN OR HEARD FROM.
15. ATTACH EYEWITNESSES DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.
16. GIVE, NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SEARCH, IF ANY, INCLUDING DESCRIPTION AND EXTENT No search made.

Date of Report 11 March 1945

(Signature of Preparing Officer)

EDWARD M. WEICHERTZ,
Capt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

17. REMARKS OR EYEWITNESS STATEMENTS:

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CERTIFICATE

Aircraft piloted by 1st Lt. James I. Munroe, O-1107247, was flying as #8. I was flying as #7 in flight, right and under of #8. Flek was encountered and #8 received a hit under cockpit. Aircraft, with wings wobbling, shot up and fell back and disappeared from my view. Both engines of aircraft were still operating.

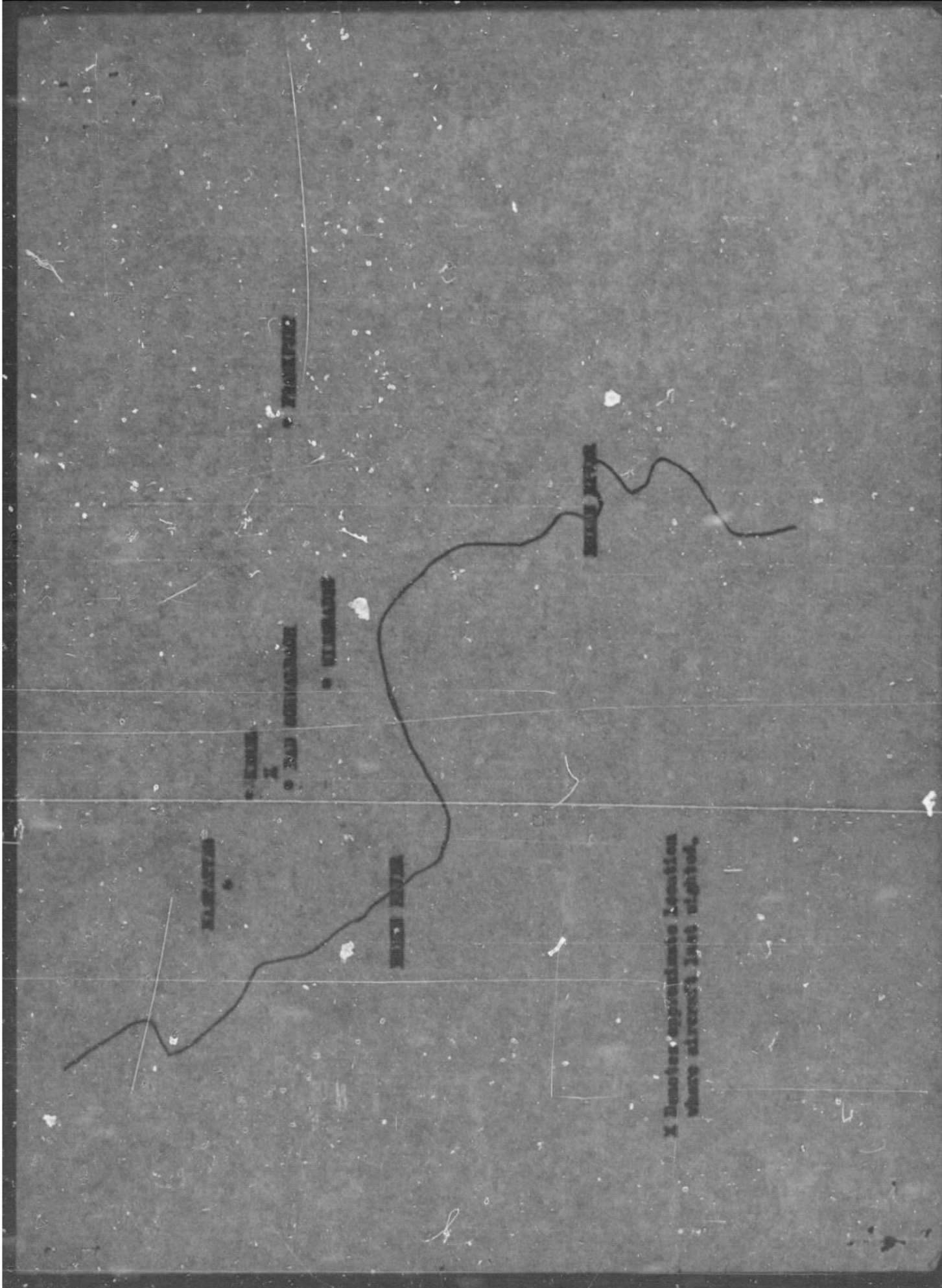
Thomas A. Mucary
THOMAS A. MUCARY,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
O-895832, 854th Bomb B

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X Denotes approximate location
where aircraft last sighted.

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STATEMENT OF FIRST LIEUTENANT JAMES I MINNICK
AC 0-1100274

On 3 August 1945, at Hammond General Hospital, Modesto, California, pursuant to notification of hearing, copies of which are attached hereto, Lt James I. Minnick made the following statement:

My name is James I Minnick, 1st Lt, AC, 0-1100274. On 9 March 1944 I was piloting an A-26 attack bomber on a mission over Germany. I do not recall the exact number or other identification of the plane. In order to set the time of other relative events, I will assume I was first hit about 1200. The right engine was shot out either by flak or by a fighter plane forcing me out of formation with a complete loss of one engine. At that time the bomb bays were open and I was on my bomb run. I believe the target was about three miles away. While going through single engine procedure and maintaining control of the aircraft, at about 1205 I was attacked the second time from above at 0400 by one ME-109. This attack damaged the left engine and shot holes in the wind shield. It also brought oil from the left engine which went back over the fusilage.

I looked in the direction of the attack and saw three more ME-109s turning in for a pursuit attack. Realizing the condition of the airplane and the fact that I was out-numbered, I dove into the clouds which were about three thousand feet below me. At this time I ordered my gunner to bail out and then attempted to maintain control and altitude of the aircraft. My plan was to fly west and try to make our lines if possible. My gunner, S/Sgt McCleskey, at this time, about 1208, called me as he was going out and said these words, "I am going out, sir."

For about ten minutes I tried to maintain altitude. The right engine began to vibrate and I was unable to keep control. Due to damage to the left engine and not getting full power, I could not maintain altitude and decided to bail out myself. I called my gunner five times and received no answer. I pulled the hatch and bailed out at approximately 12:23. At this time I was approximately five hundred feet above the ground and to remain with the ship a few seconds longer would have meant I would have crashed with it. I was in the air about five to seven seconds after my chute opened until I hit the ground.

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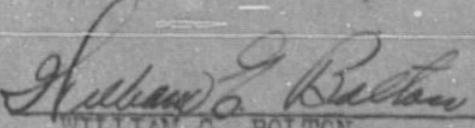
By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

The plane went into a dive practically at the same time I left it and it crashed almost directly beneath me and immediately exploded and burned.

I do not know where we were when S/Sgt McCleskey bailed out and the only way I could tell where we were would be to see a large scale map of Germany and find the community by the name of Gespert which is a small town of about three thousand population on the Rhine River. I was about a day's travel by foot away from there. I believe the approximate place Sgt McCleskey bailed out was about forty miles northwest of Coblenz in a mountainous area. I believe I bailed out approximately twenty miles from Coblenz.

I believe that Sgt McCleskey bailed out some place within a radius of ten or fifteen miles from our target though I do not at this time recall what the target was.

The above statement was made to me this 3rd day of August 1945 at Hammond General Hospital, Modesto, California.


WILLIAM C. BOLTON
2nd Lt. MAC
Investigating Officer
Hammond General Hospital

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#1

9 March 1945

Dear Sir:

For your interest and information and for what benefit it may be to the other men of the squadron, I am writing a first hand account of what happened after I bailed out over Germany. After I was separated from the formation by having my right engine shot out I dove into the overcast in order to evade them. I found I couldn't maintain altitude and I had my gunner bail out. I heard him say he was going and I called him five times later to make sure he was gone and then I pulled the hatch. My decision to dive into the clouds was made by a second attack on my plane by three Me 109-S. One Me. on its pass shot holes in my windshield and left nacella. I could see the German markings very clearly and the pilot still had his machine gun on when he passed.

When I started to bail out I noticed my chest strap unfastened. I fastened it, then stood up attempting to jump to the side in order to miss the vertical stabilizer. The slip stream was too strong to permit me to go over the side. I could see that the wind would force me directly in the path of the stabilizer. I sat down in the plane again and pulled it up to a stall. Just as the plane started to roll into a spin I bailed out. After I felt myself floating in the air I pulled the rip cord. I found myself directly above the burning airplane. It became necessary to pull the cords in order to slip over to prevent landing on the burning plane. I estimated I was in the air about seven seconds after I pulled the rip cord. My chute caught in a tree and after unfastening it, I climbed down the tree and immediately ran down a stream towards the woods.

I hid in the woods as best I could and then took stock of what I had. The clip of my gun had come out so I buried the gun. I did not want the Germans to have it. In one of my pockets was a briefing slip which I destroyed; and of course I checked to find if I still had my escape kit. My best plan was to work my way toward the Rhine River by the streams, but before I had a chance I was found by a German soldier and several civilians. They made me go with them and I walked for a considerable way, waiting for my chance to break away, all the time building up their confidence in the fact that I was perfectly at ease with them. In fact, I even started whistling "Lily Marlene" and they whistled it along with me. We finally came out on a plateau overlooking a German town which was undoubtedly where they were taking me. Immediately behind me was a draw which was a marvelous opportunity for me to break away. I took out my map and they pointed out the general location of where I was, which was about 20 miles north of Coblenz. I folded my map up, put it away and made a break for the draw. The soldier followed me for awhile, but he soon got tired and stopped - he fired no shots.

It was still daytime, so after I had run for a considerable way I found some piles of twigs which I climbed under and pulled

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#2

over my body so that I couldn't be seen. I lay there until nightfall and then proceeded to work my way down the stream to the Rhine River. I travelled along roads, because I found I couldn't make time going direct. I passed a good many civilians, but I walked past them with the assurance that I was one of them and no one stopped me.

10 March 1945-----I came to the Rhine River in the early morning while it was still dark. My greatest problem now was crossing it, as it was very wide. I walked about five miles south before I found a small boat which I was able to unfasten from its chain. On my walk down the Rhine, it was very quiet except for the movement of trains thru the railroad yards that I passed thru. There was not much activity. It was hard for me to believe that I was viewing some of the famous tourist hotels and castles under such conditions.

With considerable difficulty I lowered the chain into the boat and dropped into it - I started rowing across the Rhine River. All I had was a board for an oar. I had to sit in the back of the boat with my feet hanging in the water and scull my way across. I landed on the other side and climbed up on the bank and found I was near some fortifications.

To my disappointment I found I was at a river junction and I had to cross another river before I could make my way toward the lines. I crawled on my stomach back to the boat which luckily was still there, rowed across the other river and upon the bank. It was beginning to get light and I could see it was a marshalling yard which had been bombed heavily. I had made my way only about half the way across when it got so light I could see German soldiers up on the road and I knew I would be detected if I didn't take cover. I hid in a box car for 12 hours until it became dark again.

After it became dark enough so that I would not be seen, I left the box car, worked my way up to the road which paralleled the Rhine. I made one attempt to go directly west, but the mountains were too rugged for me and I found I had to stick to the roads. I passed thru several small cities on the Rhine working my way toward Cologne. I had several amusing incidents on the way. In one town I got mixed up with several soldiers with their girls coming from a dance. Most of them were drunk and one soldier threw a bottle which landed broken at my feet. I ducked down a side street to avoid them. The road finally ended with a sentry gate. I knew I couldn't pass it so I had to walk back a few miles where I could cut west from the Rhine. As luck would have it, I found an old vineyard path which wound its way over the mountains to some country roads. I used my compass and travelled in either a west or northerly direction until the road I was on finally ended in a swamp. I had remembered seeing a cave not far back - I went in the cave and went to sleep.

11 March 1945-----In the morning when I could see I found I could travel most of the day due to the absence of towns. I finally came to a point where I couldn't travel any more in the daytime and I had to wait in the woods for nightfall. I found some

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#3

cabbage and turnips that kept me going that day and the day before - as luck would have it, I found a sandwich and a rain hat lying in the street. Because I was cold I built a fire out of targets in an old range house. It attracted a soldier but when I motioned for him to sit down he said "nein" and left.

Night came, the country was pretty clear and I directed myself by compass, heading west. I hid in the woods again - they were so thick that at times I had to crawl on my hands and knees to get thru. From then on I kept in the clearings and seemed to be walking over plowed ground most of the way. During the night I got so hungry I stole a chicken. I could hear German soldiers in the house as I climbed into the chicken coop. I found eggs but only glass ones. I grabbed a chicken by its neck and wrung its head off. I walked back in the woods tore off the legs and managed to eat some of the raw meat.

12 March 1945----I started walking again and came to a hay stack toward early morning, dug a hole in the top and went to sleep. I woke about 6 o'clock. There were two houses nearby which I entered to steal food. I didn't succeed and kept travelling the rest of the day by forests. I found some apple peelings in an old fire, washed them in a stream and ate them. I used my halizone tablets for water. Again I came to a point where I couldn't travel any longer in the daytime and waited until evening. A German soldier coming down the road walked up to me and asked if I was an American airman. I acted like I was a deaf mute, grunted and pointed to my mouth. Apparently he believe me and walked on. I decided to get off the road and headed for the nearest woods, but was seen by three Germans who called me to halt. I waved to them and kept walking towards the woods. They pulled out their guns and started firing at me, but by that time I was in the woods hidden under a spruce tree. I stayed there several hours while the Germans searched for me and fired shots, but they were unable to find me. I could hear troops moving and it sounded like I was very near the front. I found out later I had considerable distance to go. I walked all that night and as I would come to towns I would by-pass them and stick to the roads.

13 March 1945----As day broke I found myself on a first class highway which went down thru the mountains. I could hear the artillery very clearly and I knew I was near the bomb line. It finally got so light I had to hide in the woods again, and below me I could see the Germans straggling back so I knew I was near the American lines. Definite proof was the artillery which was going off all around me.

I found a small house which was boarded up, broke into it and found food, the first real food since I had been forced down. I found butter, bread, eggs, took a blanket and proceeded to make a nest in the woods. I figured I could sweat out the Americans here, as it would only be a matter of a day or two before they would be along. This plan would have worked if I had dug in, but I was hit by artillery in the arm and in the left buttock. I had to leave

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concealment in order to get help. I walked half the way, about 300 yards, to a building which turned out to be a monastery - then I collapsed. Nuns took care of me for two days when the Americans finally moved up - The American medics took me back to an evacuation hospital in a jeep where I was operated on and shipped back to a General Hospital in France. I received two quarts of blood and a quart of liquid food intravenously.

It will be a long time before I am fixed up. I may have to go to England, but I made it and it sure feels good to be back. My feet suffered considerably and, as a result, I have a slight touch of trench foot because my shoes were not waterproof.

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12954

PPH
(3)

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS,
UNITED STATES ARMY

JWP/JFA.
APO 887,
3 April 1945.

AG 350.33 Cas

SUBJECT: Missing Air Crew Report.

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington, 25, D.C.
Attention: Statistical Control Division.

1. Forwarded herewith Missing Air Crew Report of the Ninth Air Force.
2. Records of this headquarters indicate the present status of the crew members of subject aircraft to be as shown below:

1st Lt. James I. Minnick,	O-1100247	LWA	9 March 1945.
S/Sgt. David F. McCleskey,	33240905	MIA	9 March 1945.

VIA THE THEATER COMMANDER:

H. M. RUND
H. M. RUND,
Colonel, AGD,
Assistant Adjutant General



1 Incl: Missing Air Crew Report, 386th Bomb Gp,
A-26-B-30, 41-39375, 9 March 1945.

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AC-25036

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**HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY**

S: 3 May 1945.

AFD 887.

JWP/JFR.

3 April 1945.

AG 319.1 Cas

12954

SUBJECT: Information supplementary to Missing Air Crew Report.

TO : Commanding General, Ninth Air Force, APO 696, U.S. Army.
Attention: Battle Casualty Section.

1. Records of this headquarters indicate the present status of 1st Lt. James I. Minnick, O-1100247, to be slightly wounded in action, 9 March 1945.

2. Request a statement by Lt. Minnick be forwarded in duplicate, to this headquarters concerning the loss of aircraft number 41-39375, of which he was pilot. The statement should include all the facts and circumstances surrounding the loss of subject aircraft: location and condition of aircraft when last sighted or contacted; and any information pertaining to the welfare of S/Sgt. McCleskey, who was the only other crew member aboard subject aircraft.

3. In event Lt. Minnick has not returned to his organization, request hospital be contacted where he is hospitalized, and statement be obtained with the least practicable delay.

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL EISENHOWER:



Robert L. Woodward
ROBERT L. WOODWARD,
Captain, AGD,
Assistant Adjutant General.

0-17554-3

Classification changed by authority
of TAG *R.W.F.* 10 JUL 1945
(Adjutant General)

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1-12489

704
HEADQUARTERS, NINTH AIR FORCE, APO 696, U.S. ARMY.

5 APR 1945

TO: Commanding General, 9th Bombardment Division (M) APO 140, U.S. Army.

For compliance with basic communication and return of correspondence to this headquarters.

By command of Major General VANDENBERG:



W. T. Mendenhall
W. T. MENDENHALL
Captain, AGO
Asst. Adj General

06777

70h
HQ, 9TH BOMBARDMENT DIVISION (M), APO 140, U.S. ARMY, 6 April 1945. 2nd Ind. G-MW-24.

TO: Commanding Officer, 386th Bomb Group (M), APO 140, U.S. Army.

Attention invited to preceding indorsement and return of correspondence through this headquarters with least practicable delay.

By command of Major General ANDERSON:

4730

M. S. Worth
M. S. WORTH,
Capt., AC.,
Asst Adj Gen.

704
HEADQUARTERS, 386TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M), APO 140, U. S. ARMY, 10 April 1945. 3rd Ind. G-M-2

TO: Commanding Officer, Detachment of Patients, 4140 U. S. Army Hospital Plant, APO 205, U. S. Army.

1. Attention invited to basic communication and preceding indorsements.
2. Request a statement be obtained from Lt. Minnick and returned to this Headquarters.

For the Commanding Officer:



A. S. [Signature]
A. S. [Signature]
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Capt. Adjutant.

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By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

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704.

4th Ind.

WZY 1s

Hq., 4140 US Army Hosp. Plant, APO 205, US Army, 18 April 1945.

TO: CO, 4165 US Army Hosp. Plant, APO 508, US Army.

1. Attention is invited to basic communication and preceding indorsements.
2. Subject officer was transferred to your command per par 2, SO 92, this organization, 7 April 1945.

For the Commanding Officer:

W.R. Von Ehren
W. R. VON EHREN,
Capt., MAC,
Adjutant.

18 APR 1945



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By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

201 - Minniox (0)

5thnd

BVT:

DET OF PMS, 4165 US ARMY HOSPITAL PLANT, APO 508, c/o PM New York, NY 27 Apr 1945

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C.

1. Above named 0 transferred to the Zone of Interior per letter, Subject:
"Evacuation Orders No. 100", HQ, 803rd Hospital Center, APO 68, U. S. Army,
dated 9 Apr 1945

45 AGO

MAY 5 1946

Received

0 Incls.

2/0

189-74GR

B. V. KAMLOTT

1st Lt, M.O.

CO, Det of Units

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Authority: NND 735001

By: NARA NARA Date: 1973

AGPO-R

6th Ind.

RWF/meh/1503

WD, AGO, Washington 25, D. C., 27 July 1945

TO: CO, Hammond General Hospital, 1975th Service Command Unit, Modesto, California.

The records of this office show that First Lieutenant James I. Minnick, AC, 01100247, is with Detachment of Patients.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

Robert B. Chamberlain
Adjutant General

704

7th Ind.

WGB:sw

ASF, NSC, Hammond GH, Modesto, California, 6 September 1945

TO: Hq, European Theater of Operations, U. S. Army 889

Basic communication complied with and statement of 1st Lt. James I. Minnick, O-1100247, attached hereto. Also inclosed is statement which he had typed for his own information and which was part of his scrap-book.

For the Commanding Officer:



William G. Boston
WILLIAM G. BOSTON
1st Lt. AG
Investigating Officer

1 Incl (In sup)
Statement by Lt. Minnick, and
information from his scrap book



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AG 319.1 Cas

8th Ind.

PPA-8
JWF/JFR.
26 Sept. 1945.

HQ. UNITED STATES FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER, (Rear) APO 887, U. S. Army.

TO: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington, 25, D.C.

1. Forwarded herewith supplement to Missing Air Crew Report concerning aircraft number 41-39575, piloted by 1st Lt. James I. Minnick, O-1100247.

2. Records of this headquarters indicate the present status of 1st Lt. James I. Minnick, O-1100247, to be EUS, 12 April 1945, and S/Sgt. David F. Mc Cleaskey, 38340905, to be MIA, 9 March 1945.

FOR THE THEATER COMMANDER:

V. J. Horvath
V. J. HORVATH,
1st Lt. AGD,
Assistant Adjutant General. *eat*

✓
1 Incl: N/c (dup w/d)

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12954

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RESTRICTED
by E. A. BRADSHAW, Lt. Col., AC
by F. M. MURPHY, Capt., AC
Date: 12-12-1968

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