

This is my story concerning the flight. Everything went well and I could see up ahead that there hadn't been much ground fire. As we approached the D.Z. other outfits were coming out in formation and we felt as though this was going to be a milk-run. My ship was the last ship of our group and when we went in our flaps were lowered to cut down our speed and while they were down the ground fire must have hit the flap control, because when the last paratrooper jumped I noticed the flaps didn't go up. We were lagging behind so it seemed to me all enemy fire was directed at us. I threw the photographer on top of his flack suit and parachute and I fell on the floor alongside him and we both stayed there until the firing at us had ceased. When he and I stood up and looked toward the cock-pit it was filled with smoke. I couldn't see the pilot at all. A minute or so later the radio operator and then the co-pilot came through the door from the cock-pit and a shot of flame came through which was close to 10 feet long. This more or less cleared the smoke for a short time and I could see the pilot working at the controls of the auto-pilot. The pilot then looked around at the co-pilot and radio operator and then yelled something to them. The co-pilot to the radio operator something and he in turn yelled for us to "bail out." We were between 500 and 600 feet when the order came through. I then turned to the photographer and told him to put his chute on and get out. Before we had gotten close to enemy territory I had told him to put on his chute and flack suit, but he kept insisting he wouldn't be able to take pictures if he had them off. I had even taken them back to his immediate vicinity and tried to argue with him to put them on but it didn't do any good. I turned toward the door after telling him to put his on and out I went. The last I saw of him was just reaching for his chute. Just as soon as I touched the ground I was fired upon. I must have run 150 or 200 yds. to get into a fox-hole. The following day American paratroopers found me. Since we were at such a low altitude when I jumped I didn't have a chance to look around to see if anyone else had jumped. When I was fired at I didn't have a chance to see where the plane hit. I heard 2 different stories about the men that jumped. I heard from a buddy I was the only one that bailed out, but the paratroopers told me they saw 2 of us come out, but one chute was a streamer and it was also on fire. It was also reported by my buddy that the plane hit east of the Rhine. This is all hearsay and I didn't see them myself. Before I left my pdn. I was told my pilot and co-pilot had been buried and the exact spots where they are buried.

All this took place on a C-46 type aircraft.

## CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name GARDNER, EDWARD J., JR. Rank 1/SGT. Serial No. 15085067
2. Organization 47 T.C.S. 313 T.C.G.P. Gp Commander FILER Rank LT. COL. Sqn CO PAUL W. STEPHENS Rank LT. COL.  
(full name) (full name)
3. What year 1945 month MARCH day 24 did you go down?
4. What was the mission, PARATROOPERS, target, DZ EAST OF WESEL., target time, 1017, altitude, 500 FT route scheduled, \_\_\_\_\_, route flown \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were you when you left formation? JUST LEAVING D.Z.
6. Did you bail out? YES
7. Did other members of crew bail out? CONFLICTING STORIES, OPPOSITE SIDE OF PAGE.
8. Tell all you know about when, where, how each person in your aircraft for whom no individual questionnaire is attached bailed out. A crew list is attached. Please give facts. If you don't know, say: "No Knowledge". ALL PARATROOPERS GOT OUT O.K. LEAVING ONLY THE CREW. NO KNOWLEDGE ON CREW.
9. Where did your aircraft strike the ground? NO KNOWLEDGE. SEE 7.
10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) NO KNOWLEDGE.
11. Where were they in aircraft? PILOT IN SEAT NO KNOWLEDGE.
12. What was their condition? NO KNOWLEDGE.
13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? PILOT-IN PILOT'S CO-PILOT + R.O. STARTING FOR REAR OF PLANE. THEY WERE AS FAR BACK AS THE NAVIGATOR'S TABLE. PHOTOGRAPHER WAS BEHIND THE DROP OFF BETWEEN THE 2 DOORS JUST REACHING FOR HIS CHUTE SO HE COULD PUT IT ON. SEE OTHER SIDE. THIS TOOK PLACE UPON GETTING OUT OF ENEMY FIRE. NONE HAD BEEN WOUNDED.
14. Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information. NO KNOWLEDGE.

(Any additional information may be written on the back)

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: Blending er, Bert Leroy  
 Rank: 1st Lt.  
 Serial number: 0-677232  
 Position: Crew (Bomber) ~~xxxxxx(Fighter)~~ Pilot

Did he bail out? No KNOWLEDGE

Where? No KNOWLEDGE

If not, why not? WE WERE VERY LOW. HE WOULD BE LAST TO LEAVE.

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: SAW HIM

TURN TO CO-PILOT AND TELL HIM TO TELL US TO JUMP.

Was he injured? HE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE.

Where was he when last seen? IN HIS SEAT TRYING TO SET AUTO-PILOT.

Any hearsay information: NONE

Source: NONE

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: HE HAS BEEN  
BURIED EITHER IN GERMANY OR HOLLAND. HIS GRAVE NO. AND  
ALL WERE IN MY ORDERLY ROOM ON THE DAY I WAS BEING  
TRANSFERRED FROM THE SQDN.

Total number of missions of above crew member: No KNOWLEDGE

Dates and destinations if possible: No KNOWLEDGE.

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: We i s e r, Robert Maurice  
 Rank: 2nd Lt.  
 Serial number: 0-76,558  
 Position: Crew (Bomber) ~~as Navigator (Bomber)~~ Co-pilot

Did he bail out? NO KNOWLEDGE

Where? NO KNOWLEDGE

If not, why not? MIGHT NOT HAVE HAD TIME

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: WHEN HE TOLD  
 RADIO OPERATOR TO TELL PHOTOGRAPHER AND I TO JUMP

Was he injured? NOT WHEN I LAST SAW HIM.

Where was he when last seen? AT NAVIGATOR'S TABLE ON WAY TO DOOR.

Any hearsay information: HE WAS BURIED EITHER IN HOLLAND OR  
 GERMANY. I WAS GIVEN THE GRAVE NO. AND ALL.

Source: ADJUTANT OF MY SQDN.

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: HE HAS BEEN  
 BURIED. ALL RECORDS OF THIS WERE IN MY ORDERLY ROOM THE  
 DAY I WAS LEAVING THE OUTFIT.

Total number of missions of above crew member: NO KNOWLEDGE.

Dates and destinations if possible: NO KNOWLEDGE.

## INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

File # 13120

Name of crew member: W o l f e, Emmett Leroy  
 Rank: Sgt.  
 Serial number: 33603438  
 Position: Crew (Bomber) or Pilot (Fighter) Radio Operator

Did he bail out? NO KNOWLEDGE

Where? IF HE BAILED OUT - BETWEEN DZ AND RHINE

If not, why not? MIGHT NOT HAVE HAD TIME DUE TO LOW ALTITUDE

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: HE CALLED DOWN TO PHOTOGRAPHER AND I TO BAIL OUT.

Was he injured? NOT WHEN I LAST SAW HIM.

Where was he when last seen? AT NAVIGATOR'S TABLE HEADING TOWARD DOOR.

Any hearsay information: NONE.

Source: NONE

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN OUT AND MIGHT HAVE BEEN SHOT WHEN HE LANDED.

Total number of missions of above crew member: I THINK HE HAD FOUR OR FIVE

Dates and destinations if possible: NORMANDY (6-6-44) HOLLAND (SEPT. 44) (2.)  
 RHINE (3-24-45)

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: H i g g i n's, Charles A. Jr.  
 Rank: 2nd Lt.  
 Serial number: 0-1648625  
 Position: Crew (Bomber) ~~as Pilot (Bomber)~~ Photographer

Did he bail out? NO KNOWLEDGE

Where? NO KNOWLEDGE

If not, why not? HE WOULDN'T PUT 'CHUTE ON IN FLIGHT

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: I TOLD HIM

TO HURRY AND GET HIS 'CHUTE ON AND GET OUT.

Was he injured? NOT WHEN I LAST SAW HIM.

Where was he when last seen? BEHIND THE DROP-OFF BETWEEN THE 2 DOORS.

Any hearsay information: NONE

Source: NONE

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: I WOULD SAY

HE WENT DOWN WITH THE SHIP DUE TO THE FACT WE WERE

SO LOW AND I HEARD THE PLANE HIT EAST OF THE

RHINE

Total number of missions of above crew member: NOT KNOWN

Dates and destinations if possible: NO KNOWLEDGE

mlw/5/18/45

1st. Lt. Bert L. Blendinger

Mrs. Bert L. Blendinger (wife) ✓  
55 Interstate Parkway  
Bradford, Pennsylvania

2nd. Lt. Robert H. Weiser

Mrs. Ruth B. Weiser (wife) ✓  
229 Brunswick Boulevard  
Buffalo, New York

2nd. Lt. Charles A. Higgins, Jr.

Mr. Charles Higgins, Sr. (father) ✓  
906 Dupont Road  
Wilmington, Delaware

T/Sgt. Edward J. Gardner, Jr.

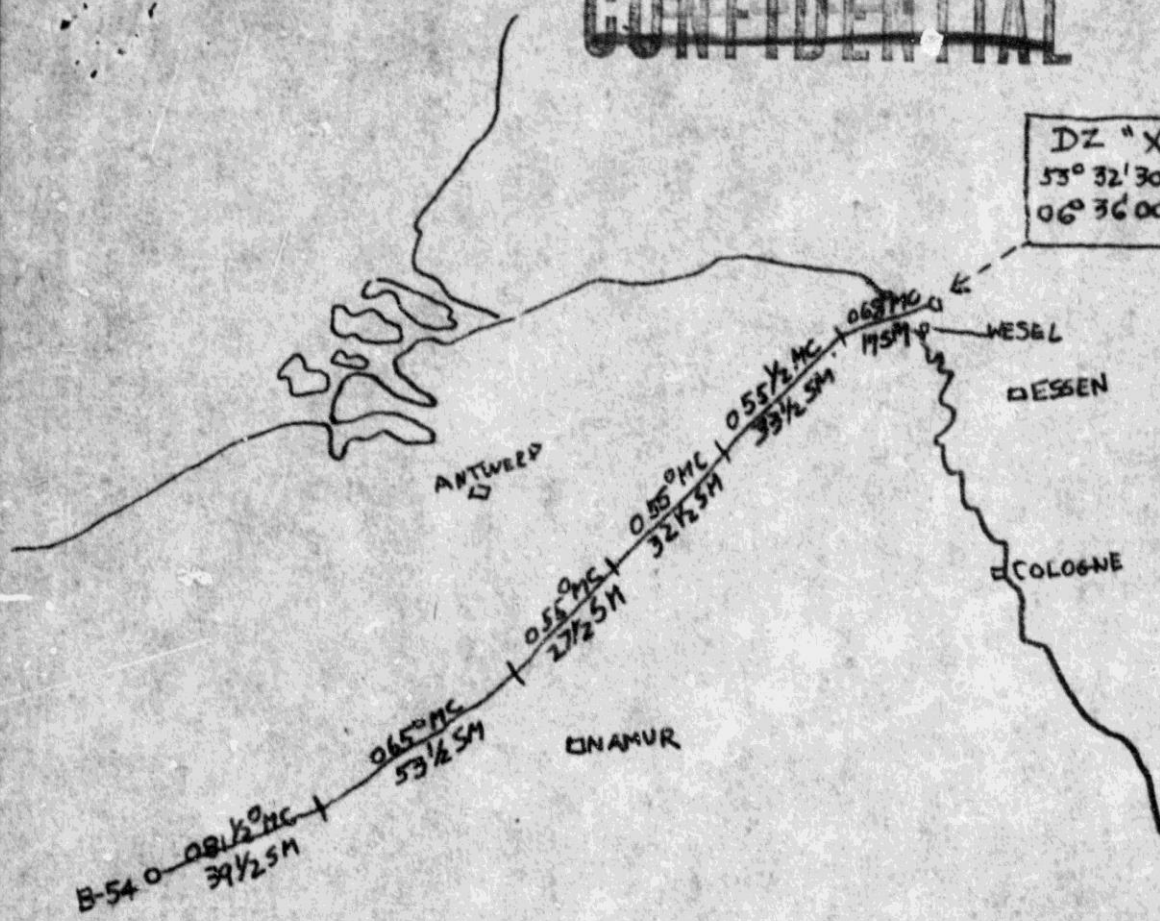
Mr. Edward J. Gardner (father) ✓  
45 Glendale Park  
Hammond, Indiana

Sgt. Emmett L. Wolfe

Mrs. Bertha Wolfe (mother) ✓  
36 East Grove Street  
Edwardsville, Pennsylvania

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DZ "X"  
53° 32' 30" N  
06° 36' 00" E



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Ltr, 47th TCSq, 513th TCGp.

Subj: "Supplemental Rpt. of Missing A/C"

28 Mar '45

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4. Before I bailed out, I told the photographer to put his chute on and bail out. I was nearest to the door when the bail out order came, so went out first. Just before I went out, I saw Lt. HIGGINS reaching for his chute. Sgt. Wolfe and Lt. WEISER were on the way to the door. After I bailed out, my back was to the plane all the way down and I saw neither what happened to the plane or whether any other chutes came out. I landed in an open area perhaps 200 yards from the Rhine near a large brown house.

*Edward J. Gardner Jr.*  
Edward J. Gardner, Jr.  
T/Sgt., Air Corps  
15085067

Subscribed and sworn to before me this date

28 March 1945

*William F. Lindenberg*  
WILLIAM F. LINDENBERGER  
Major, Air Corps  
Executive Officer

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47TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON  
313TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP  
APO 133, U.S. ARMY

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

28 March 1945

SUBJECT: Supplemental Report of Missing Aircraft.

TO : Commanding Officer, 313th Troop Carrier Group, APO 133, U.S. Army.

1. I was the Aerial Engineer aboard the C-46D, Aircraft No. 44-77581, participating on the combat operation "Varsity". Other members of the crew were: Pilot, 1st Lt. BERT L. BLENDINGER, O-677232; Co-pilot, 2nd Lt. ROBERT M. WEISER, O-765558; Radio Operator, Sgt. Emmett L. Wolfe, 33603438, and passenger Photographer, 2nd Lt. CHARLES A. HIGGINS, O-1648625.

2. We had been lagging slightly behind the formation as we approached the Rhine. We were flying No. 3 ship of the third element, second section of nine, second serial. We came into the DZ on course and encountered heavy fire from the edge of the woods west of the DZ. Just before we reached the DZ --- we had not dropped our troops -- I saw No. 2 ship in an element in front of us nose down toward the ground and hit and explode as short distance west of the DZ. It was in an open field. I had seen no fire or smoke coming from this plane prior to its crash.

3. We encountered some small arms fire over the DZ but got all of our troops and bundles off over the DZ, dropping on our Flight Leader, 1st Lt. EDWARD W. PAUL, JR., I then noticed that our flaps would not come back up, which slowed us up and forced us to drop behind the formation. After we made the right turn very heavy fire broke loose. One shell came through the left door, glanced off my helmet made a large hole in right side of the fuselage. We were trying to climb out but were not making much progress. The flaps seemed to stay about a half to a quarter down. Lt. HIGGINS had refused to put on his flak suit or chute, saying it interfered with his taking the pictures, and as we flew over the woods on the way west toward the Rhine through the heavy fire, I threw Lt. HIGGINS on top of his flak suit and got on top of him to afford some protection. A few seconds later I looked into the cockpit and all I could see was smoke. Sgt. Wolfe and Lt. WEISER came out of the cockpit and had walked about to the end of the navigator's table. Flames were shooting out of the cockpit into the cabin. The flames seemed to be coming out of the trap door behind the pilot's seat. These flames may have caught Lt. WEISER'S chute when he passed through. About that time Lt. BLENDINGER turned around and gave Lt. WEISER a message of some kind and Sgt. Wolfe yelled at Lt. HIGGINS and me to bail out. Just before this I had looked into the cockpit and it seemed to me that Lt. BLENDINGER was trying to set the automatic pilot.

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Document No.....

Missing Air Crew Report  
C-46D, No. 44-77581

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The following named personnel were the passengers in C-46D, No. 44-77581.  
These men are not being reported as casualties by this organization.

513th PARA INFANTRY REGIMENT

| <u>NAME</u>                         | <u>RANK</u> | <u>ASN</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| LANEY, RAY F.                       | 1st Lt.     | 01321218   |
| Veal, Emmitt D.                     | Pfc.        | 34358356   |
| Austin, Harold D. <i>no info</i>    | T/3         | 17049291   |
| Miller, Virgil E.                   | Cpl.        | 39705850   |
| Kramer, George M.                   | Pfc.        | 39218215   |
| Adkins, Joel R. <i>no info</i>      | S/Sgt.      | 38382655   |
| Harms, Robert L. <i>no info</i>     | Pfc.        | 36442089   |
| Hulse, Orville D. <i>no info</i>    | Pfc.        | 34886557   |
| Jacobs, Henry E. <i>no info</i>     | Pfc.        | 36771988   |
| Chaney, John R. Jr. <i>no info</i>  | Pfc.        | 33845766   |
| Cantrell, Jack <i>no info</i>       | Pvt.        | 34683853   |
| Steanson, Robert E.                 | S/Sgt.      | 38471271   |
| Cox, James C. <i>no info</i>        | T/Sgt.      | 38405944   |
| Gaulding, Richard R. <i>no info</i> | Pfc.        | 38270703   |
| Lee, Paul W. Jr.                    | Pvt.        | 34950690   |
| Trate, Blaine K.                    | Cpl.        | 33828467   |
| Averyt, Charles B. <i>no info</i>   | Cpl.        | 38471603   |
| Holmes, James F. <i>no info</i>     | Pfc.        | 36756783   |
| Foran, George D. <i>no info</i>     | Pvt.        | 34948455   |
| Sweet, Benjamin H.                  | Pfc.        | 36951154   |
| Dill, Gilbert W. <i>no info</i>     | Pvt.        | 42060947   |
| Givens, James R. <i>no info</i>     | Pvt.        | 35927888   |
| Dickerson, Vernon <i>no info</i>    | Cpl.        | 34630295   |
| Guttridge, Nelson A. <i>no info</i> | S/Sgt.      | 39337458   |
| Johnson, James R. <i>no info</i>    | T/5         | 36571084   |

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13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used Yes; (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 EYEWITNESS 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 None

Date of Report 26 Mar 45

17. REMARKS OR EYEWITNESS STATEMENTS:

*Maynard T. Swartz*  
(Signature of Preparing Officer)  
**MAYNARD T. SWARTZ**  
Major, Air Corps  
Commanding

After the Paratroops had dropped on the "DZ", I saw a ship on fire on our right and below us. From our maneuvering about it appeared that the ship was Lt. Blendinger's. Two chutes dropped from the plane and the plane went into a bank and crashed just beyond the DZ. The ship exploded when it hit the ground.



*Charles H. Wendorf*  
**Charles H. Wendorf**  
T/Sgt., Air Corps

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO: 26 MAR 1945:

*T. A. Nave*  
**T. A. NAVE**  
Captain, Air Corps.  
ADJ

Identifying marks:

AAF serial number painted on vertical stabilizer and rudder in 12 inch yellow block numerals. AAF Serial number painted in two inch block numerals on twenty four various places on the ship. A forty inch block N3 is ainted on both sides of the fuselage behind cockpit. An eighteen inch block "G" is painted on both sides of the vertical stabilizer

Revised: Headquarters, Ninth Air Force, 15 August 1944.  
Reproduced: Headquarters, 313th Troop Carrier Group, 1 September 1944.

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13420

Classification changed to **RESTRICTED**

by E. A. BRADONAS, Lt. Col., AC ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

by F. M. MURPHY, Capt., AC

date 1 MAR 1946

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 48 hours of the time an air crew member is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location, by Name Achiet, France : Command ~~44th~~ IX Tr Carr  
Group 513th Tr Carr : Squadron 47th Tr Carr : Detachment \_\_\_\_\_
2. SPECIFY: Place of Departure Achiet, France : Course 203 Mile NNE  
Target or Intended Destination Wesel, Germany : Type of Mission Paratroop Drop
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED:  
No clouds. Visibility 1/2 mile. Restricting smoke.
4. GIVE: (a) Day 24 Month Mar Year 1945 : Time 1000H : and Location NW of Wesel  
of last known whereabouts of missing aircraft.  
(b) Specify whether aircraft was last sighted ( ): last contacted by radio ( ): forced down ( ): seen to crash (x): or information not available (x)
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: \_\_\_\_\_
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, Model and Series C-45B : AAF Serial Number 44-77581
7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT, if any None
8. ENGINES: Type, Model and Series Pratt & Whitney R2800-51 : AAF Serial Number  
(a) FP-082798 : (b) FP-082797 : (c) Not applicable : (d) Not applicable
9. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial Number):  
(a) Not applicable : (b) \_\_\_\_\_ : (c) \_\_\_\_\_ : (d) \_\_\_\_\_  
(e) \_\_\_\_\_ : (f) \_\_\_\_\_ : (g) \_\_\_\_\_ : (h) \_\_\_\_\_  
(i) \_\_\_\_\_ : (j) \_\_\_\_\_ : (k) \_\_\_\_\_ : (l) \_\_\_\_\_  
(m) \_\_\_\_\_ : (n) \_\_\_\_\_ : (o) \_\_\_\_\_ : (p) \_\_\_\_\_
10. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW ~~WERE~~ REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty X  
ARE BELIEVED or (b) Non-Battle Casualty \_\_\_\_\_
11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 4 : Passengers 16 : Total 20  
(Starting with 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<br>(Last Name First)          | Rank          | Serial Number    | Current Status        |
|--------------------|--|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Pilot           | <u>BLENDINGER, BERT LEROY</u>              | <u>1st Lt</u> | <u>0-677232</u>  | <u>MIA</u> <i>KIA</i> |
| 2. Co-pilot        | <u>WEISER, ROBERT MAURICE</u>              | <u>2nd Lt</u> | <u>0-765558</u>  | <u>MIA</u> <i>KIA</i> |
| 3. Aerial Engineer | <u>Gardner, Edward James Jr</u>            | <u>T/Sgt</u>  | <u>15085067</u>  | <u>MIA</u> <i>RTD</i> |
| 4. Radio Operator  | <u>Wolfe, Emmett Leroy</u>                 | <u>Sgt</u>    | <u>33603438</u>  | <u>MIA</u> <i>RTD</i> |
| 5. PRO             | <u>HIGGINS, CHARLES A. Jr</u>              | <u>2nd Lt</u> | <u>0-1648625</u> | <u>MIA</u> <i>KIA</i> |
| 6.                 |  |               |                  |                       |
| 7.                 | <u>*Photo Det No. 59, 364th Sig Sv Co.</u> |               |                  |                       |
| 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:  
Check only one column
- | (Last Name First)             | Rank         | Serial Number   | Contacted by | Last Sighted | Saw Crash | Forced Landing |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. <u>Wendorf, Charles H.</u> | <u>T/Sgt</u> | <u>12034229</u> | <u>Radio</u> |              | <u>X</u>  |                |
| 2.                            |              |                 |              |              |           |                |
| 3.                            |              |                 |              |              |           |                |

(Over)

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2744

Document No. ....

Incl 3'

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Classification changed

to **RESTRICTED**

by E. A. BHADUNI Lt. Col., AG

by F. A. JENKINS, Capt., AG

Date 1 MAR 1968

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