

**RESTRICTED**

WAR DEPARTMENT

U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

**REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT**

ACCIDENT No. \_\_\_\_\_

45-11-30-510

(1) Place AAF Station 106 (2) Date 30 November 1944 (3) Time 1755.7  
 AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-17G DO (5) A. F. No. 43-38542 (6) Station AAF 106  
 Organization: (7) 8th (8) 38th Bomb (H) (9) 54th Bomb (H)  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)

**PERSONNEL**

| DUITY (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) |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| P          | Gabel, Raymond J.           | P           | 0-807736        | 1st Lt    | 18                   | AC          | 8th                       | Nil                      | Nil                   |
| CP         | Robilotta, Robert F.        | P           | 0-551734        | 2nd Lt    | 18                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| N          | McCarthy, Robert G.         | N           | 0-1997848       | 2nd Lt    | 18                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| B          | Long, Neal E.               | B           | 0-722505        | 2nd Lt    | 18                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| R          | Snow, James K.              |             | 15195647        | T/Sgt     | 38                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| E          | Airhart, L. G.              |             | 18181345        | T/Sgt     | 38                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| BT         | Spradlin, Clifford G.       |             | 34266598        | S/Sgt     | 38                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| TG         | Kolinak, Henry J.           |             | 38559793        | S/Sgt     | 38                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |
| FG         | Daniel, Paul F.             |             | 39575071        | S/Sgt     | 38                   | AC          | 8th                       | "                        | "                     |

**PILOT CHARGED WITH ACCIDENT**

(20) Gabel, Raymond J. (21) 0-807736 (22) 1st Lt (23) 18 (24) AC  
 (Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personal class) (Branch)  
 Assigned (25) 8th (26) 38th Bomb (27) 54th Bomb (H) (28) AAF 106  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
 Attached for flying (29) \_\_\_\_\_ (30) \_\_\_\_\_ (31) \_\_\_\_\_ (32) 2354  
 (Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
 Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 30 Aug 43 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 30 Aug 43 Instrument rating (37) 16 June 1944  
 (Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date)

**FIRST PILOT HOURS:**

(at the time of this accident)

|                              |               |                                    |              |
|------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| (38) This type <u>B-17</u>   | <u>393:25</u> | (42) Instrument time last 6 months | <u>33:15</u> |
| (39) This model <u>B-17G</u> | <u>335:20</u> | (43) Instrument time last 30 days  | <u>4:00</u>  |
| (40) Last 90 days            | <u>232:25</u> | (44) Night time last 6 months      | <u>1:00</u>  |
| (41) Total                   | <u>851:55</u> | (45) Night time last 30 days       | <u>0:00</u>  |

**AIRCRAFT DAMAGE**

NF 104 12/30/44

| DAMAGE            | (49) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS |   |   |   |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---|---|---|
|                   | 1                          | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (46) Aircraft     | 3                          | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (47) Engine(s)    | 0                          | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| (48) Propeller(s) | W                          | W | W | W |

Both inner wing panels and nacelles; forward section and tail section of fuselage.

(50) Weather at the time of accident 2/10ths cloud; 1,200 feet base; visibility 2500 yards; wind SW 7 M.P.H.

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident NO

(52) Cleared from AAF Station 106 (53) To Combat (54) Kind of clearance Operational

(55) Pilot's mission Operational

(56) Nature of accident Landing accident

(57) Cause of accident Carelessness - co-pilot raised wheels on final approach when the aircraft started to go around and forgot to put them down when pilot changed his mind and decided to land.

Bridge 03 21

**DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT**

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

GEORGE H. KOEHN, JR., Lt. Col.,  
(Investigating Officer)

ARTHUR E. BEAN, JR., Major, AC

ALEXANDER C. STRICKLAND, Major, /

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

The Group was returning from an operational mission at night in Group formation. As the Group approached the field the Squadrons took interval and the lead squadron peeled off for a landing. The ceiling was about 1200 ~~xxx~~ feet with 2 to 4/10ths cloud coverage and visibility was limited to 2500 yards due to haze. The squadron in which Lt. Gabel was flying peeled off for a landing. Lt. Gabel was number three in the traffic pattern. His crew went through their normal before-landing procedure and the aircraft was prepared for a normal landing with wheels and flaps down as they turned on the final approach. The control tower told the number two ship in the traffic pattern with landing lights on to go around. Lt. Gabel had his landing lights turned on but he did not know whether he was number two or number three on the final approach. He believed that the first ship in the traffic pattern had landed and that he was number two in the pattern so his co-pilot threw the landing gear switch in the up position and started to work the flaps up. At this time Lt. Gabel saw that the airplane ahead of him was going around so he announced over the interphone that he was going ahead and land. About this time they hit prop wash of the airplane ahead of them and the co-pilot helped Lt. Gabel with the controls. They dived from approximately 400 feet to 250 feet, which put them in the clear again, and proceeded on their final approach for the landing. Lt. Gabel forgot to have his crew check for wheels down and the co-pilot forgot to put the wheels down. Major Booska, Squadron Commander, was in the caravan and though he was watching Lt. Gabel's airplane on the approach he could not determine whether or not the wheels were down because he was blinded by the landing lights. As the airplane passed the caravan he did see that the wheels were not extended and he called over the radio for the airplane to go around. Lt. Gabel heard the call but by this time some part of the airplane had already touched the runway; he heard the scraping noise and decided it was too late to attempt to go around so he proceeded to crash land the airplane with wheels up.

It is the opinion of this board that the accident was 100 per cent pilot error with 60 per cent allocated to the pilot and 40 per cent to the co-pilot. The accident was a result of carelessness on the part of the pilot and co-pilot when they failed to check to be sure that their landing gear was down before landing. It is believed that this carelessness displayed was not due to poor procedure or indifference but was aggravated by the circumstances that surrounded the accident. The crew had just completed flying nine hours of formation, most of which was at an altitude ranging from 20,000 to 28,000 feet, on a deep penetration into Germany. In addition it was also the first night return from an operational mission for all crews participating on this mission and this, plus low visibility, pilot fatigue, and the additional nervous stress caused by other units flying in the area, were all contributing factors that would tend to grant leniency towards this case.

No recommendations for preventive action.

Records of this accident will be made on Army Air Force Form 5's and 66-1's of the Pilots concerned.

The following personnel attended the board meeting ex Officio:  
Maj Haley and Lt Loter, Flying Control; Maj Hansen, S-4; Capt Palmer, Group Engineering; Lt Horak, Weather; Maj Stroud, Surgeon.

Signature

*George H. Koehne, Jr.*  
GEORGE H. KOEHNE, JR., Major, AC.

*Arthur E. Bean, Jr.*  
ARTHUR E. BEAN, JR., Major, AC.

*Alexander C. Strickland*  
ALEXANDER C. STRICKLAND, Major, AC

Date 7 December 1944.



544TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Operations Officer

30 November 1944.

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident.

TO : Commanding Officer, 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF, AAF  
Station 106, APO 557.

1. Following is statement of 1st Lt. Raymond J. Gabel, this Squadron, concerning accident of B-17G, A/G #43-38542:

" Approached the field in position heading for runway 30, made gliding turn short of the field to the right in order to approach runway 24. Flew over 24 and circled field four or five times. Traffic in area was heavy."

" During the time we circled the field waiting for other Squadrons to land, we went through "before landing check". Autopilot turned off, boost ~~were~~ on and prop speed 2300 RPM and supercharger advanced to take-off position. On the third approach to the field we expected to peel off but another squadron came in first and our squadron circled again. On the next approach we were told to "peel off" and immediately after peel-off, wheels were extended and flaps used. Pattern was flown at 135 IAS."

" Upon turning on to approach we were close on to ship in front of us Cherub called for #2 on approach to go around. We pulled up gear and started to "milk-up" flaps. Ship front of us started around giving us full clearance to runway. I immediately decided not to go around but continue the glide to the runway. Flaps had not moved up more than one-quarter and we put them down again apparently forgetting to put wheels down. Hit prop wash at approximately 400 feet and dove through running air speed to 125 MPH. Slowed to 115 and reached end of runway at 110, when we leveled ship off for landing. At the time Cherub called to go around, ship scraped the ground. Actual contact with ground was at 90 MPH, IAS. Upon receiving Cherub's message, ship was in dangerous attitude and pilot could not tell whether inboard prop blades or ball turret had scraped runway. After complete contact with runway, we were able to control plane to some extent and tried to swing right off concrete. Immediately after plane came to stop, ball turret started burning and crew left ship through main entrance door. Co-Pilot, Engineer and Navigator suffered minor cuts and bruises."

For the Squadron Commander:

*Raymond J. Gabel*  
RAYMOND J. GABEL,  
1st Lt., Air Corps,  
Pilot.

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344th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Operations Officer

30 November 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident.

TO : Commanding Officer, 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF Station 106,  
APO 557.

1. Following is statement of 2nd Lt Robert F. Robilotta, this Squadron,  
concerning accident of B-17G, A/C # 43-38542:

" Approached field in Squadron formation, circled field four or five  
times, allowing other formations to enter traffic for landing."

" While circling field, I went through "before landing check". Setting  
prop speed to 2300 RPM and supercharger advanced to take-off position. Wheels up  
until peel off signal was given. Upon the fourth approach to the field we were given  
the signal to peel off. Immediately after peel off wheels were extended and one  
third flaps were used. Pattern was flown at 135 IAS."

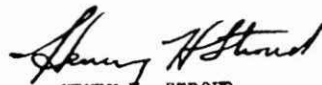
" Turning on the final approach I called cherub and gave them our position  
full flaps were down at the time. Cherub called for # 2 ship on the approach to go  
around. Immediately I pulled the wheels up and started to milk flaps up. The  
ship in front of us started to pull up giving us full clearance to landing runway.  
Pilot deciding not to go around continued glide and called for full flaps. Hit prop  
wash at approximately 400 feet, dove plane to pick up air speed to 125 IAS. Slowed  
to 115 IAS, reached end of runway at 110 when we leveled ship off for landing. In  
the excitement had neglected to lower wheels. At that time cherub called to go  
around. Upon receiving call ship had scrapped the ground. Actual contact with  
the ground was at 90 IAS. Plane was under control and pilot had tried to swing off  
the concrete. Ball turret started to burn and crews left ship through main entrance  
door. Minor cuts and bruises were suffered by Co-Pilot, Navigator and Engineer."

For the Squadron Commander:

*Robert F. Robilotta*  
ROBERT F. ROBILOTTA,  
2nd Lt, Air Corps,  
Co-Pilot.

STATEMENT BY MAJOR HENRY H. STROUD CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF NOVEMBER 30,  
1944 INVOLVING AIRCRAFT E#17G 43-38542:

It is felt that the combination of night landing, normal physical and mental fatigue incident to a long mission and the excitement caused by getting into prop wash all enter into the general omission by three members of the crew.

  
HENRY H. STROUD,  
Major, Medical Corps,  
Group Surgeon.

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544TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Operations Officer

30 November 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Accident

TO : Commanding Officer, 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF, AAF  
Station 106, APO 557.

1. Following is a statement of T/Sgt L. G. Airhart, Engineer on A/C  
43-38542, piloted by 1st Lt. Raymond J. Gabel:

"Our squadron approached the field in the dark and swung  
over runway 24. Due to the traffic jam we went around four or five times.  
The entire crew was on the alert for other aircraft which were coming in  
close from all directions."

"On the first time around we went through the "before landing"  
check; autopilot off, boost pumps on, supercharger full on, 2300 RPM then  
on the "peel off" we put down the landing gear and I checked them visually."

"We made the pattern at 135MPH and used 1/3 flaps as needed. ON  
the final approach Cherub said go around and we pulled up wheels and stated  
"milking up" flaps. No. 1 man on the approach, we were #2, went around again  
so we decided to go in. The flaps were put back down and I guess we forgot  
the wheels. At 400 feet we hit "prop wash" which gave us some trouble, we  
hit the runway at 110 MPH and landed at 90 MPH. After we hit I was knocked  
up against the controls and radio compass and didn't notice much until I  
realized the plane was on fire."

"Everyone went out through the waist doors and were safe  
except for minor injuries."

*L. G. Airhart*

L. G. AIRHART,  
T/Sgt., Air Corps,  
Engineer.

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544TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) ARMY AIR FORCES  
Office of the Operations Officer

30 November 1944.

SUBJECT: Statement of Aircraft Accident.

TO : Commanding Officer, 384th Bombardment Group (H), AAF, AAF  
Station 106, APO 557.

1. Following is the statement of S/Sgt Henry J. Kolinek, Tail Gunner on A/C 43-38542, piloted by 1st Lt. Raymond J. Gabel.

" As we peeled off the pilot called and told me to get back in the tail with the aidis lamp. I immediately went back to the tail with the lamp. As I went back the tail wheel was down. I proceeded on to the tail and started using the lamp. When the plane hit the ground I started for the waist and when the plane stopped I left."

*Henry J. Kolinek*  
HENRY J. KOLINEK  
S/Sgt., Air Corps,  
Tail Gunner.

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HEADQUARTERS  
AAF STATION NO. 106  
Office of the Flying Control Officer

R-B-1

7 December 1944

SUBJECT: Aircraft Accident.

TO : COMMANDING OFFICER, AAF Station No. 106, APO 557.

1. At approximately 1755 hours 30 November 1944, A/O No. 8542, pilot Lt. Gabel was given permission to peel off and land. It was beginning to get dark and there was a slight haze.
2. The aircraft was no. 2 on final approach with landing lights on. The no. 1 aircraft on the approach went around, aircraft 8542 came in for a landing with wheels up.
3. The aircraft skidded down the runway, coming to rest by the north south runway intersection, ambulance and crash tender was dispatched.

*J. W. Loter*  
J. W. LOTER  
1st. Lt. & C.  
FCO

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