

**RESTRICTED**  
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCE

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

45-1-1-529

**REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT**

(1) Place Detting (2) Date 1 January 1945 (3) Time 1620  
AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-17G (5) A. F. No. 42-38011 (6) Station AAF Station No. 106  
Organization: (7) 8th (8) 384th Bomb (H) (9) 546th Bomb (H)  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)  
PERSONNEL BH 2359

DUTY	NAME (Last name first)	RATING	SERIAL No.	RANK	PERSONNEL CLASS	BRANCH	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND	RESULT TO PERSONNEL	USE OF PARACHUTE
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
P	Ramsay, Walter E.	P	0-828769	2nd Lt.	18	AC	8th	None	None
CP	Wahlstrom, Harry L.	P	0-2059659	2nd Lt.	18	AC	8th	None	None
N	Mitchell, John G., Jr.	N	0-2068295	2nd Lt.	18	AC	8th	None	None
B	Mitchell, Jacklin W.	B	0-2068010	2nd Lt.	18	AC	8th	None	None
R	Marberg, Roy K.		11136271	Sgt.	38	AC	8th	None	None
TT	Hartman, John E.		35757596	Sgt.	38	AC	8th	None	None
BT	Lacey, Ray		38459423	Sgt.	38	AC	8th	None	None
TG	Kotys, Joseph		35928236	Sgt.	38	AC	8th	None	None
PG	Ehr, Willard		16117719	Sgt.	38	AC	8th	None	None

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED OR CHANGED

TO **RESTRICTED**

BY AUTHORITY OF CG AAF

(20) Ramsay, Walter E. (21) 0-828769 (22) 2nd Lt. (23) 18 (24) AC  
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personal class) (Branch)  
Assigned (25) 8th (26) 384th Bomb (H) (27) 546th Bomb (H) (28) AAF No. 106  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
Attached for flying (29) (30) (31) (32)  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)  
Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 15-1-44 (35) Pilot (36) 15-1-44 Instrument rating (37) 12-10-44  
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date) (Date)  
FIRST PILOT HOURS:  
(at the time of this accident)  
(38) This type B-17 174:05 (39) Instrument time last 6 months 39:45  
(39) This model B-17G 155:05 (40) Instrument time last 30 days 2:45  
(40) Last 90 days 91:00 (41) Night time last 6 months 42:20  
(41) Total 274:45 (42) Night time last 30 days None

props

**AIRCRAFT DAMAGE**

NF

DAMAGE				(49) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
(46) Aircraft	W	A		Aircraft complete wreck
(47) Engine(s)	03	308	03 03	
(48) Propeller(s)	02	30	03 03	

(50) Weather at the time of accident No low cloud; heavy fog; visibility 300 yards; no wind.

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident No  
(52) Cleared from AAF Station No. 106 To Combat (54) Kind of clearance Operational

(53) Pilot's mission Combat

(56) Nature of accident Landing accident - could not stop aircraft after landing. Ran off runway and struck a building to right of runway; could not turn left because congregation of people between aircraft and the runway.

(57) Cause of accident Pilot employed poor technique and failed to make a normal landing on his first attempt to land.

(58) Has Form 54 been submitted? No.

44-11-39-80-82

**SECRET**

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

Lt. Ramsay was returning from a nine hour combat mission with his No. 3 engine frozen and upon flying over England, found the weather very bad. He was down to 160 gallons of gasoline and did not feel that he could return safely to his home base. The weather between him and his home station was obviously bad, and, at the time he made the decision to land, he was flying at 7,000 feet in an area that was clear. He located the RAF base that they had chosen for their landing and proceeded to circle down to get in position for landing. The weather conditions changed rapidly while they were losing altitude and, by the time they were ready to land, visibility was less than 1500 yards.

Lt. Ramsay made his first approach to the field but was too high and had to go around. No. 1 engine was overheating to about 240 degrees and because No. 3 engine was frozen, Lt. Ramsay was over cautious in making his turn. By the time he was in position for landing again, the visibility had reduced to about 300 yards.

The surrounding terrain was hilly and very unfavorable for the low visibility approach procedure. The runway was also down hill and made landing very difficult. With wheels and flaps down, he approached the landing runway at about 130 MPH. HE WAS UNABLE TO GET THE AIRCRAFT DOWN ON THE FIRST END OF THE RUNWAY and flew about one-half (1/2) way down the runway, which was grass, about two (2) feet off the ground. His approach had been bad and at about 20 degrees out of alignment with the runway. Because of poor visibility, he was unable to stay on the grass runway and ran off to the right hitting several concrete obstacles about two (2) feet high en route to a WAAF site where he struck a building with his left wing. There were about thirty people standing on the right hand side on the far end of the runway, and he was unable to ground loop the aircraft to the left for fear of hitting them.

Lt. Ramsay had flown through several flak areas while on the mission, but it is unknown whether the engine malfunctions were direct results of flak damage.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** It is the opinion of this board that the pilot was 50% responsible for the accident in that he displayed poor judgment and technique by not being able to land his aircraft on his first attempt to get into this field. It is further believed that weather conditions are 25% responsible and pilot fatigue 25% responsible for the accident.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Mistakes made by this pilot will be brought to the attention of all pilots on this base.

Entry will be made in pilot's Form 5 file and 66-2.

The following ex-officio attended the Board Meeting:

N. HANSEN,  
Major, AC,  
Group 8-4.

J. K. HALEY,  
Major, AC,  
Flying Control O.

J. P. SCARBROUGH,  
1st Lt, A C,  
Weather Officer.

H. H. STROUD,  
Major, MC,  
Flight Surgeon.



Signature

*Robert E. Thacker*  
(Investigating Officer)  
ROBERT E. THACKER, Lieut Col, AC.

*George H. Kohnke, Jr.*  
GEORGE H. KOHNKE, JR., Lieut Col, AC.

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

Date 13 January 1945.

Hq SOS USAF

**SECRET**

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STATEMENT: BY 2nd LT. WALTER E. RAMSAY, CONCERNING LANDING ACCIDENT  
OF B-17 42-98014 ON 1 JANUARY 1945

1. About fifteen minutes after passing through flak on the German Coast, No. 2 Engine started to leak a little oil. As we weren't losing much oil, and the cylinder temperature, oil temperature and pressure remained normal, I decided not to feather it but keep a watch on it. Ten minutes later (approx.) the oil temperature started to rise and the pressure drop; I pushed the feathering button in. The Engine vibrated and refused to feather and started to windmill. It continued to windmill until it froze. I told the Bombardier to salvo the bombs in an attempt to stay in formation. At that we lost ground and being in Germany that far I decided to stay in the division line for fighter protection. I could hold altitude but not 150 I.A.S.

2. We followed the division line to France and about that time #1 cylinder temperature started to rise and the Engine ran rough. We cut back on that Engine to 32 inches and it ran smooth. Not having any fields charted in France and our altitude was about 19,000', I decided to land in England.

3. The southeast of England was covered with clouds. We crossed the channel at 12,000 feet. We hit the edge of the clouds and the Navigator had given me a heading to fly to Detting (R.A.F. Field listed as suitable for heavy bombers). We spotted the field at 7,000'. It was clearly visible and I circled trying to make contact with the darky station. I circled for 15 minutes with no results. Our altitude was 5,000 feet now. Both the Navigator and Bombardier were looking for aids for landing instructions. They couldn't find any and I couldn't so I noted which way the smoke was blowing and picked the longest runway. I came over the runway and made a slow turn to the left. When we came over the runway the field started to close in. I went around and when we came in we were high and would land too far down the runway. Our gas was low and #1 Engine was running rough so we couldn't go to another field. We came in the second time the visibility had dropped more, but we came out on the end of the runway about 20 degrees off its heading. The runway had about a 200 foot slope to it, so the ship wouldn't set down. My airspeed was down with #2 unfeathered and #1 rough. I decided I couldn't go around. Both my Co-Pilot and myself tried to keep it on the runway, but we went off to the right and to avoid hitting people that were on the right edge of the runway, I went straight ahead and crashed. No one was injured. The darky station said they didn't receive any of our transmissions. Damage to R.A.F. property was a small house that the left wing hit. We landed with the wheels down and full flaps. Detting Field was closed midnight 31 December 1944.

*Walter E. Ramsay*  
WALTER E. RAMSAY,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,  
Pilot.

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STATEMENT: BY 2nd HARRY L. WÄHLSTROM, CONCERNING LANDING ACCIDENT  
OF B-17 42-38014 ON 1 JANUARY 1945

1. On January 1, 1945 we crossed the North Sea and picked up considerable flak as we crossed the enemy coast. Ten or fifteen minutes after passing through the flak the number two engine cylinder head temperature was above the combat operating range. I opened the cowl flaps to cool off the engine. I could see oil bubbling out the cowl flap, but it wasn't excessive. This aircraft was the old type and didn't have a stand-pipe for feathering if the oil pressure was completely gone. We watched the oil pressure gauge and the pressure was gradually falling. The Pilot hit the feathering button when pressure was still in the green operating range. Immediately after depressing button the oil pressure dropped to zero and the prop didn't feather. The prop set up heavy vibration due to its windmilling. It finally froze in the low pitch position causing quite a drag. We dropped out of formation and salvaged our bombs. Number one engine was running rough periodically and becoming hot; we pulled number one throttle back to thirty-four or thirty-five inches. We tried to stay in trail of the formation, but we were gradually losing them. Our decision was to try and stay in the division line and cross southern Germany into France. We kept the air speed around 135 or 140 to maintain our altitude and we even climbed a little. Our average altitude across Germany was around 23,000'. Near the Frankfurt area we were attacked by one ME 262, but no damage resulted. Upon reaching France our Navigator plotted a course to cross the English Channel at the narrowest point; due to our low supply of gas we didn't want to chance flying over to much water. We picked out the nearest air field and started to descend. I tried to call darky several times, but could not get a response. The visibility in the area of the field looked good from 6,000 feet. We made a pass at the field, but we were not lined up with the runway and went around. The next time around we were a little too far to the right, but we cut the throttles and I dropped the flaps. The Pilot tried to round out and set her on the ground, but the runway and surrounding area ran down hill and we just kept floating along. After setting on the ground we put the brakes on, but didn't slow up. The left wing struck a small building being used to house W.A.A.F.'s; our landing gear was washed out on a trail. No one was injured. Visibility while we were circling the field was 1500 yds; when we came in to land it was 200 yds.

*Harry L. Wahlstrom 2nd Lt.*

HARRY L. WÄHLSTROM,  
2nd Lt. Air Corps,  
Co-Pilot.

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**SECRET**

STATEMENT: BY 2nd LT. JOHN S. MITCHELL, JR., CONCERNING ACCIDENT OF  
B-17 42-38014 ON 1 JANUARY 1945.

1. On Monday morning, 1 January 1945, we took off for our mission as briefed. We crossed the North Sea with out incident and hit the German coast a little after eleven thirty. As soon as we were over land we began to get flak, and it lasted about ten minutes, at twelve five our number two engine started to wind up and soon it was dead. We dropped out of formation and dropped our bombs hoping to be able to keep up with the formation. We continued to drop behind though. I added up the distance we had come and found it was almost exactly the same distance back as it was ahead. We stayed in the bomber stream and continued through Germany. We were shot at several times by flak but were not hit. When we reached France and the Gee Box came back in we set course for the narrowest point in the channel as we were running short of gas, and number one engine was not running smoothly. We crossed the channel at twelve thousand feet, and southeastern England was covered with clouds about seven thousand feet. We broke into clear weather and headed for the nearest airfield. It was the English base at Detting. We circled the field and descended, and could not contact them with our radio. We approached the field twice and the weather was closing in tighter all the time. On the third approach we put it down but the runway was going down hill and the plane wouldn't stay on the ground. We ran through a house and a row of trees to avoid hitting a crowd of people by the end of the runway.

*John S. Mitchell, Jr.*

JOHN S. MITCHELL, JR.,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,  
Navigator

**SECRET**

*John S. Mitchell, Jr.*

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STATEMENT: BY 2nd LT. JACKLIN W. MITCHELL, CONCERNING LANDING ACCIDENT OF  
B-17 42-38014 ON 1 JANUARY 1945.

1. We hit flak as we entered Germany which was north of the Elbe river. No. 2 engine may have been hit, we don't know, anyway the Pilot had to feather it soon after. He couldn't keep up with the formation. I salvaged the bombs North-East of Hamburg in an attempt to lighten the ship enough to stay in formation. It didn't help any.

We followed the general flight plan, and finally got out of Germany, after seeing plenty of flak from different targets, and some fighters. 10/10 over east most of the time. No. 1 engine wasn't too good and we were afraid to cross the channel where it was so wide. So in the attempt to bring the ship back to England, and home if possible, we flew to a point where the channel is the narrowest, and crossed hitting England close to Dover. We flew until we were nearly out of the overcast and then decided the closest and safest airport to land was Detting. Our gas supply was rapidly nearing zero. We circled Detting trying to get radio contact but it was useless. I saw the runway and by smoke bombs computed the wind, so we circled down for a landing, the ceiling was dropping with us only faster. We made 3 attempts and on the fourth I talked the pilot in and told him to level out. It would have been nearly perfect except the runway was downhill. I could see we, by now were heading 10 degrees right of the runway, but it was too late for the pilot to straighten it out. We hit the ground and by now if the pilot had attempted to get back on the runway, he would have hit some bystanders, standing near the runway. By good piloting he missed some buildings and etc. But the right wing hit the roof of a four room shack, finally stopping when the left wheel hit a bank which swung us around 90 degrees to the left. Everyone was soon out of the plane, and the R.A.F. personnel was there to take care of us. Only minor scratches were received. From the air the runway looked level with a rise at the far end. Visibility 100 yards or less.

*Jacklin W. Mitchell*  
JACKLIN W. MITCHELL,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,  
Bombardier.

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STATEMENT: BY SGT. ROY K. MARBERG, CONCERNING LANDING ACCIDENT OF  
B-17 42-38014 ON 1 JANUARY 1945

1. We flew through flak area immediately upon reaching German Coast. About fifteen or twenty minutes I noticed smoke coming out from # 2 engine. A few minutes passed during which time the engine was vibrating very bad. It kept this up for a while then prop suddenly stopped. By this time we had lost the formation, so we tried keeping in touch with the formation by cutting corners and meeting them. Our navigator plotted a course to the nearest emergency field in England which happened to be Detting. We arrived there around three forty-five in the afternoon. Pilot unable to contact the tower, using Darky Procedure and the runway was difficult to see. We flew a left hand pattern and came in for a landing. We were paralleled with the runway but off to the side. We went around again and approached runway again. This time we approached it at an angle out. The pilot was unable to turn it or go around again, as we had lost too much airspeed. We landed crossing the runway at about 20 degrees rolling across a field, through an anti-aircraft pit, across a road, through a wire fence. The left wing smashed into a house. We were beginning to run then we went through a row of trees, jumped an embankment and slid around about 90 degrees. I was unhurt and got out as fast as I could. Nothing was damaged in the radio room. I had time to contact HFF Station on the coast 70 U but got no answer from them. We landed at 1620 hours with no one injured.

*Roy K. Marberg*  
SGT. ROY K. MARBERG,  
Radio Operator.

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STATEMENT: BY SGT. JOHN E. HARTMAN, CONCERNING LANDING ACCIDENT OF  
B-17 42-38014, ON 1 JANUARY 1945.

1. After hitting flak from coast, about fifteen minutes later, No. 2 engine started to throw oil, so the pilot tried to feather it, but the prop froze, but did not feather. After dropping out of formation from lack of power, we kept going around to the other target, so we would have help from the other formation of planes.

Trying to get back to England we were low on gas.

After crossing the channel the Navigator picked out the nearest field on the coast to land, which was Detting. The fog was very thick and we could not see runway.

We tried to call the field on radio all the time we were flying around, but couldn't get an answer, after making a try to land we saw that there wasn't enough runway to land on.

We went around again, very low on gas, and number on engine cylinder head temperature was very high and engine running rough.

We came in again and not enough power on left side to get turned on to the runway, where we landed we were about 20 degrees off the runway.

Setting it down in the grass, we went through the field and hit a house where the W.A.F. were living, the left wing hit the house which pulled the plane around to a dead stop.

*John E. Hartman*

SGT. JOHN E. HARTMAN,  
ENGINEER.

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**SECRET**

STATION SICK QUARTERS  
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON  
AAF 106 APO 557

10 January 1945

STATEMENT

It is believed that mental and physical fatigue played a large part in the error in judgement made by 2nd Lt. Walter E. Ramsay, ASN O-828769, 546th Sqdn., 384th Bomb Group(H), on landing following operational mission, 1 January 1945, resulting in major damage to aircraft, B-17G 42-38014. Lt. Ramsay had flown operational missions 28, 30, 31 December and 1 January 1945, and during the last mission, which was of about 9 hours duration, he had to contend with a runaway, then later, a frozen propeller on one engine for most of the flight. I believe he was approaching the state of mental and physical exhaustion at the time of the accident.

*Henry H. Stroud*

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

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U.S. AIR FORCE

31 JAN 1945

360.33 1st Wrapper Ind.  
Hq, Eighth Air Force, APO 634, c/o Postmaster, New York, N.Y.

E-V-4

31 JAN 1945

TO: Chief, Flying Safety, AAF, Winston-Salem 1, N.C.

1. Transmitted herewith WDAAF Form No. 14 and allied papers on the following aircraft accident:-

a. 2nd Lt. Walter E. Ramsay, B-17G number 42-38014.

2. Concur.

For the Commanding General:

*Burnis Archer*  
BURNIS ARCHER,  
Maj. A.G.D.  
Asst. Adj. Gen.

1 Incl:

As above.

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SECRET

ACF 10-48432

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