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487 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

NOVEMBER 1943

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6 Nov 1943

487TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 520, c/o Postmaster, N.Y.

November 8, 1943.

SUBJECT: Abandonment of A/C #41-30544 on November 6, 1943 at Sava, Italy.

TO : Commanding Officer, 340th Bombardment Group (M), AAF, Base.

1. As requested the following report of the abandonment of A/C #41-30544 at Sava, Italy on November 6, 1943 is hereby submitted. The personnel in the airplane at the time were: 2nd Lt. LEE R. COX, O-735531, Pilot; 2nd Lt. CHANDLER M. AYER, O-673014, Bombardier; T/Sgt. HAROLD F. WEISINGER, 18047491, Crew Chief; Pvt. ROBERT L. JOHNSON, 16024986, Engineer; S/Sgt. HARRY HARASAVICH, 32231177, Passenger and S/Sgt. Temple, 12th Air Force, passenger.

"At approximately 11 o'clock on November 6 we and two other planes took off from Eloucina airport at Tunis for a flight to San Pancrazio, Italy. Lt. Cox was piloting the ship in which I was riding. Lt. Charles P. McCabe and Lt. Harold H. Hague were the pilots of the other two planes. We were first to take off, Lt. McCabe next and Lt. Hague followed. Before leaving the ground the pilots had agreed on circling the field once so all could leave in formation at the same time. Lt. Hague joined us shortly after the takeoff and before we had more than half completed our circle. After finishing the first circle we made another half circle but Lt. McCabe failed to join so we departed on course. We flew across Cape Bon to the east coast then circled three times more. Lt. Cox decided to fly back and land when we still failed to locate Lt. McCabe's plane. We could not contact Lt. McCabe and neither could the control tower contact him after we landed.

We took off again at approximately 1345 and flew direct to Malta, altered course to the southeast tip of Sicily, then to the toe of Italy. Passing east of Catania we could see it was closed in. Mt. Etna was completely covered with clouds. We flew contact at 800 to 900 ft. to Point Alice with Lt. Hague following us. At this point Lt. Hague apparently turned back. We did not sight him again. We ran into rain about this time.

Taking a course of 28° we flew to a point on the coast directly south of San Pancrazio airfield. We circled to make sure of our position and then departed on a heading of 360° which would bring us directly over our field. The time then was 1650. Flying for approximately three minutes we made a 180° turn to the left and came back to the coast. Circling again we departed on the same heading we had taken before, this time firing two red flares with an interval of about one minute and a half between each. Still failing to see the field runway lights we again turned to the left and back to the coast. All this time we were flicking our landing lights on and off. The ceiling had lifted to between 1500 and 1800 ft. by this time. I was able to see Brindisi, but the runway lights were also out there. We started to Taranto but were afraid of hitting barrage balloons so we turned back and continued circling over this area, during which time we were constantly turning our landing lights off and on. We still failed to sight our airfield and by this time our fuel supply was getting low. We then decided to abandon the airplane.

We were on a heading of 90° when the first man left the ship. We then turned on a heading of 330° and the rest of us jumped. The first man must have landed somewhere between Taranto and Sava and the rest of us around Sava. At the time the ship crashed it was about 1830. The pilot, Lt. Cox, climbed to 4000 ft. for us to jump and we could see the ground very clearly at that altitude or as clearly as darkness would permit. Most of us landed safely. Group Statistics reported Sgt. Temple, a passenger from the 12th Air Force as having a broken leg. Also one of our men sprained an ankle.

Everything I have written here is true to the best of my knowledge.

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CHANDLER M. AYER,
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
Bombardier.

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487TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 520, c/o Postmaster, N.Y.

November 8, 1943.

SUBJECT: Abandonment of A/C #41-30544 on November 6, 1943 at Sava, Italy.

TO : Commanding Officer, 340th Bombardment Group (M), AAF, Base.

1. As requested the following report of the abandonment of A/C #41-30544 at Sava, Italy on November 6, 1943 is hereby submitted. The personnel in the airplane at the time were: 2nd.Lt. LEE R. COX, O-735531, Pilot; 2nd.Lt. CHANDLER E. ANTER, O-673014, Bombardier; T/Sgt. HAROLD F. WEISINGER, 18047491, Crew Chief; Pvt. ROGER L. JOHNSON, 16024964, Engineer; S/Sgt. NANNY HARASAVICH, 32231177, Passenger and S/Sgt. Temple, 12th Air Force, passenger.

"We left Tunis air base at approximately 1330 after filling all gasoline tanks which took a total of 212 gallons. There was a ceiling of about 3000 ft. and fair visibility which seemed to start closing in when we reached the coast of Italy. It began to rain and it was starting to get cloudy as we reached the coast off the air base so the pilot, Lt. Cox, flew the plane along the shore to make sure of being at the right place. We then flew in the direction of the field and we could see the surrounding towns and the traffic on the road pass the base by their headlights.

We then shot a double red flare and circled the field but we could not see any runway lights or signals so we shot another flare and we couldn't get any signal from the field and we were running low on fuel so the pilot told the crew to get our chutes ready and be ready to jump. He circled the vicinity of the field again and then we started to gain altitude and the navigator told us we were about 15 miles from the field when we were ready to jump which was about 1845. It was still raining, but it was a happy landing."

ROGER L. JOHNSON,
Pvt., Air Corps,
Engineer.

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187TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 520, c/o Postmaster, N.Y.

November 8, 1943.

SUBJECT: Abandonment of A/C #41-30544 on November 6, 1943 at Sava, Italy.

TO : Commanding Officer, 340th Bombardment Group (M), AAF, Base.

1. As requested the following report of the abandonment of A/C #41-30544 at Sava, Italy on November 6, 1943 is hereby submitted. The personnel in the airplane at the time were: 2nd Lt. LEE R. COX, O-739531, Pilot; 2nd Lt. CHANDLER M. AUTER, O-673014, Bombardier; T/Sgt. HAROLD F. WEISINGER, 18047491, Crew Chief; Pvt. ROGER L. JOHNSON, 16024984, Engineer; S/Sgt. HARRY HARASAVICH, 32231177, Passenger and S/Sgt. Temple, 12th Air Force, passenger.

"We left Tunis at about 1330 on November 6 for San Pancrazio. The plane was serviced before takeoff. It started to rain when we reached the coast of Italy. We followed the coast and found the approximate location of the field at San Pancrazio. When the navigator gave the signal we shot out two red-red flares at an interval of about three minutes. This was about 1730. We circled several more times blinking the landing lights but could see no runway lights.

The plane was running low on gas so the pilot climbed to about 4000 ft. and gave us the signal to bail out. I left the plane at about 1845. It was still raining at that time."

HAROLD F. WEISINGER,
T/Sgt., Air Corps,
Crew Chief.

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Supporting Document (4)
Nov 43For Historical Purposes of 12th USAAF487TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (B) AAF
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 520, c/o Postmaster, N.Y.

November 8, 1943.

SUBJECT: Abandonment of A/C #41-30544 on November 6, 1943 at Sava, Italy.

TO : Commanding Officer, 340th Bombardment Group (B), AAF, Base.

1. As requested the following report of the abandonment of A/C #41-30544 at Sava, Italy on November 6, 1943 is hereby submitted. The personnel in the airplanes at the time were: 2nd Lt. LEE R. COX, O-739531, Pilot; 2nd Lt. CHANDLER W. AUTER, O-673044, Bombardier; T/Sgt. HAROLD F. MELBINGER, 18047491, Crew Chief; Pvt. ROGER L. JOHNSON, 16024984, Engineer; S/Sgt. HARRY HARASAVICH, 32231177, Passenger and S/Sgt. Temple, 12th Air Force, passenger.

"On November 6 at 100 hours I and two other ships took off from Elouina airport at Tunis. I was to lead the formation as I had a bombardier-navigator in my ship. Lt. Charles P. McCabe was second to take off and Lt. Harold H. Hague last. I was to circle the field once, then head out on course. Lt. McCabe never did join the flight. I went on out to the coast and kept circling, but he didn't join the flight. The other ship and I returned to the airport and landed. We tried to contact Lt. McCabe from my ship and also when we got on the ground the tower tried to contact him. We had lunch and then decided to take off again.

The weather report we got in Tunis, said the ceiling was at 3000 ft. and that the weather was on the west coast of Sicily and over Sardinia. It was clear all the way to Malta. From there we flew to the southeast tip of Sicily, then we took a heading to a point on the southern tip of Italy. Catania was closed in. It was very black around Mt. Etna. We followed the coast of Italy around to Point Alice. We saw rain ahead, so we took a course of 28° which would bring us out at a point just below San Pancrasio. We ran into a little rain but we could always see the water and horizon. We flew most of the way at 600 to 800 ft. When we reached the coast we flew up and down to get our bearings. When we did find the check point we took a course to San Pancrasio and flew for two minutes then started circling. We kept blinking our landing lights and finally we shot two red flares. We never did find the field.

We kept circling until we finally lost our bearings and had to fly back to the coast and try to pick up our check point. I couldn't call in because my transmitter had gone out just before I got to Malta, and I didn't have a radio operator. We were afraid to try to get in at Taranto because we weren't sure where the field was and there were barrage balloons around the harbor. The ceiling then was about 1500 to 1800 ft. We couldn't go to Brindisi for the same reason. After several attempts to find the field, we decided it was time to bail out. We were running low on fuel. We couldn't make it back to Malta and we knew the field at Catania was closed in. I climbed to 4000 ft. The engineer told men in the back to bail out. The plane was travelling 330° when we bailed out.

After we were all clear, the plane started a shallow back to the left, and made two complete circles around me before crashing southwest of Sava, near Lizzano. I also landed southwest of Sava. All the crew escaped with minor injuries except for Sgt. Temple, who according to a report from Group Statistics, broke a leg when he landed. Sgt. Harasavich sprained an ankle when he landed and I was scratched up a bit when I landed on top of a house."

LEE R. COX,
2nd Lt., Air Corps,
Pilot.

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