

**WAR DEPARTMENT  
HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES  
WASHINGTON**

**The MISSING AIR CREW REPORT**

**14228**

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate by each Army Air Forces organization within 48 hours of the time an aircraft is officially reported missing.

1. ORGANIZATION: Location Torretta, Italy Command or Air Force 15<sup>th</sup> AF  
Group 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Gp (H) Squadron 767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq (H)
2. SPECIFY: Place of departure Torretta, Italy Course straight to target  
Target Moosbierbaum, Austria Type of mission combat
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED:  
Good - CAVU
4. GIVE: [a] Date 31 Jan 1945 Time 1530 Last known position Over Adriatic, approx 70 miles from Vis, Yugo.  
[b] Specify whether:  Last sighted,  Forced down,  Seen to crash,  
 Last contacted by radio,  No information
5. AIRCRAFT [LOST] [~~BELIEVED LOST~~] AS A RESULT OF: [Check one only]  
 Enemy aircraft,  Enemy anti-aircraft,  Other **Engine trouble and ran out of fuel.**
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, model & series B-24 L AAF Serial Number 44-49501
7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT: Red Head
8. ENGINES: Type, model & series P&W R-1830-43A AAF serial Number [a] CP-316953  
[b] CP-317175 [c] CP-317554 [d] 41-317191
9. INSTALLED WEAPONS: [Make, type and serial number] All Browning Cal. 50  
[a] \_\_\_\_\_ [e] \_\_\_\_\_ [i] \_\_\_\_\_  
[b] \_\_\_\_\_ [f] \_\_\_\_\_ [j] \_\_\_\_\_  
[c] \_\_\_\_\_ [g] \_\_\_\_\_  
[d] \_\_\_\_\_ [h] \_\_\_\_\_
10. PERSONNEL LISTED BELOW REPORTED AS:  Battle Casualty,  Non Battle Casualty
11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 10; Passengers 0; Total 10  
[If more than 12 persons aboard aircraft, use separate sheet]

CREW POSITION	FULL NAME [Last, First, Initial] RANK, SERIAL NUMBER	CURRENT STATUS	NEXT OF KIN, RELATIONSHIP AND ADDRESS
[1] Pilot	Delana, Edward K., 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. 0-721598	KIA	Mr. Edward K. Delana (Father) 5339 Wayne Ave., Chicago, Ill.
[2] Co-pilot	Hower, Frank F., 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. 0-714707	KIA	Mrs. Mary C. Hower (Wife) 438 E. 4 <sup>th</sup> St., Bloomsburg, Pa.
[3] Nav	Ungethuem, John O., 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt. 0-2066117	KIA	Col. Walter J. Ungethuem (Father) Plympton Green, Mass
[4] Photo	Steelman, Raymond A., S/Sgt. 39084239	KIA	Mrs. Ida M. Steelman (Mother) Rte. #2, Saskellawa, Oklahoma
[5] NTG	Gross, William M., Pfc. 37564090	KIA	Mrs. Anna Gross (Mother) 1007 Virginia Ave., St. Paul, Minn
[6] RWG	Gomez, Richard J., Cpl. 32920953	KIA	Mr. Harry Gomez (Father) 122 W. 27 <sup>th</sup> St., Bayonne, N.J.
[7] LWG	Neel, Robert C., Cpl. 33192948	RTD	Mrs. Cora E. Davis (Mother) 220 46 <sup>th</sup> St., Pittsburgh, Pa.
[8] TTG	Olsen, Wallace D., Cpl. 39924178	RTD	Mrs. Mabel J. Olsen (Mother) 1285 1 <sup>st</sup> East St., Logan, Utah
[9] BTG	Nourse, William, Cpl. 31241043	RTD	Mr. George Nourse (Father) Box 139, Harding, Mass.
[10] TG	Peterson III, Carl B., Cpl. 13200966	RTD	Mr. Carl B. Peterson, Jr. (Father) Providence Road, Secane, Pa.
[11]			
[12]			

12. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT AND CHECK APPROPRAITE [one only] COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAME:

NAME IN FULL	RANK	SERIAL No.	CONTACTED BY RADIO	LAST SIGHTED	SAW CRASH	SAW FORCED LANDING
[1] William Nourse	Cpl.	31241043		X		
[2] Wallace D. Olsen	Cpl.	39924178		X		
[3] Carl B. Peterson	Cpl.	13200966		X		
<b>III</b>						
[4]						

13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

Parachutes were used,  Persons were seen walking away from the scene of the crash,

Other reasons [specify] **Four (4) personnel returned to duty.**

14. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPH, MAP OR SKETCH SHOWING LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT.

15. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTIONS OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

16. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SEARCH HERE: **Aircraft ditched in enemy territory; no search made by this organization.**

Date: 12 May 1945

/s/ William L. Hallauer  
 Captain, Air Corps

767TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)  
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP  
APO 520 US ARMY

STATEMENT

Returning from a mission to Moosbierbaum, Austria, we were having some difficulty with one engine. As we neared the Adriatic, our pilot called the lead ship and reported this fact and also that we were low on fuel. We still had our bombs due to the fact that the target had been totally obscured by clouds and no bombs had been dropped by the group. Our instructions were to go out over the water, release our bombs, and then fly back over land to a point opposite Vis, and if we thought we could make it proceed to Vis. After some difficulty with the bomb racks our navigator got rid of the bombs; then according to instructions we went back over land for a while, then back out to sea for the approach to Vis.

We were at about 14000 feet when the pilot called and said to prepare for ditching, and then he brought the ship down to 8000 feet. At 8000 feet all our engines suddenly cut out. When the ship hit the water there were four men on the flight deck and six men in the waist. We hadn't had time to prepare the ship in any way or get rid of any of the equipment and the bomb bay doors were open. We were in a gliding turn to the left just before we hit. Upon impact I was flung against the inside of the plane and was almost instantly covered with water.

When I got to the surface, I saw Cpl. Peterson in a raft and Pfc. Gross, Cpl. Olsen and Cpl. Neel still in the water. All of us were suffering from injuries. I managed to get on a second raft which apparently was punctured because it sank shortly after and again I was in the water. In the mean time Cpl. Olsen and Cpl. Neel had managed to get in the same raft with Cpl. Peterson which was now the sole raft afloat so Pfc. Gross and I were the only ones still in the water. The water was very cold and rough, and the men in the raft were having a hard time from drifting one way as Gross and I were being carried in an opposite direction. I spotted a piece of broken wing and climbed on to keep from being carried away and catch my breath, and urged Gross to do likewise. The others told me to get off before it sank and keep edging the raft nearer to me. Meanwhile Gross had been drifting further away. When I thought they had the raft as near as they could get it I swam to it and was helped in. By this time Gross was out of sight and could not be located by us. This was the last we saw of him.

After the crash which completely tore the plane to pieces I at no time saw Lt. Delana, Lt. Hower, Lt. Ungethuen, S/Sgt. Steelman, or Cpl. Gomez. The four of us who got in the raft spent twenty-two hours on the open sea and were picked up the next day by Air Sea Rescue. No radio procedure was used except one call by the pilot on V.H.F. due to the sudden ditching of the aircraft.

/s/ William Nourse,  
Sgt. 31241043  
767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq (H)

## STATEMENT

While returning from a bombing mission on Moosbierbaum, Austria on 31 January 1945 our aircraft, nicknamed "Red Head", was forced into the Adriatic Sea with four dead engines due to lack of fuel. The lack of fuel and the resulting crash may be attributed to several reasons. First of all we had a new aircraft and the fuel consumption was exceedingly high. Also being forced to carry the bomb load home because the mission was a planned visual mission and the 8/10ths cloud undercast we encountered over the target made visual bombing impossible, increased the fuel consumption to a greater degree.

The undercast made it almost impossible for proper navigation also, so the pilot reported his low supply of fuel and difficulty to the lead ship and was instructed that he could break formation in order that he might release his bombs over the water. At the time we broke formation the undercast had cleared to 2/10ths percent.

In attempting to release the bombs it was discovered that neither the releases nor the emergency release would operate, and we deduced that they were frozen. This made it necessary for the navigator – we had no bombardier and the armorer was suffering from anoxia – to release them physically which took about twenty minutes. He had only just got back to his compartment and was orienting himself to his position when all four engines quit. There was no panic at all in the plane as the aircraft maintained a level course until at an extreme low altitude, at which time the left wing went down and the plane struck the water. Corporals William Nourse, Carl Peterson, Robert Neel, Pfc. William Gross and myself were the only persons in the immediate area. At no time did I see any signs of the others and from the wreckage strewn about and the position of the plane in the water I think the remainder of the crew must have been killed instantly.

When the plane struck the water I was evidently knocked unconscious as I do not remember anything until the water revived me. I found myself beside the plane, and upon looking around I saw Cpl. Peterson in a raft about fifty feet away and Cpl. Neel right beside me in the water. We both swam out to the life raft and climbed in from opposite sides, with the aid of Cpl. Peterson, so that the raft would not turn over. Once in the raft I saw Cpl. Mourse and Pfc. Gross in the water near the plane and swimming towards a floating wing of the aircraft. Cpl. Nourse reached the wing and climbed on it while Pfc. Gross just about made the tip of it when the current started to carry him away. We started to paddle the raft towards the men and when we got about fifteen feet away from the end of the wing which was the closest we dare get, Cpl. Nourse left the wing and swam the short distance to us and we pulled him into the raft. Meanwhile Pfc. Gross had been drifting further away and despite all our efforts to reach him the distance between us kept getting wider until in about forty-five minutes he had drifted out of sight.

We floated in the raft for twenty-two hours and were then spotted by a B-24 and then picked up by a PBY and flown to the Foggis hospital. This statement is made as I observed visually and heard over the interphone system as to the proceedings of the entire flight.

/s/ Wallace D. Olsen

Sgt., 39924178  
767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq (H)

While returning from the unsuccessful raid of 31 January 1945 on Moosbierbaum, Austria our engineer, Richard Gomez, noticed that we were low on fuel. He immediately notified the pilot, Lt. Edward Delana, of this. The pilot did not become alarmed when he first learned of this but stuck with the formation for about ten more minutes when he called the flight commander for permission to leave the formation so that we could drop our bombs. The permission granted, we flew out over the Adriatic to drop the bombs. Our release system was locked or frozen so we could not get them out. Our navigator, Lt. Ungethuen, went back into the bomb bay and somehow managed to kick them out with the aid of a screw driver after some difficulty. After we got rid of the bombs we headed back for land while the navigator went back up in the nose of the plane to his navigation table, charts, etc. By this time we were lost, so the pilot decided to go back out to sea and find the emergency landing field of Vis.

We were at 14000 feet when the pilot called and said that we might have to ditch. One of our engines, No. 4, was already giving us trouble, and we had started to lose altitude. When this engine came in again we were at about 8000 feet. We flew along at this altitude for a few minutes when the pilot ordered to prepare to ditch. A few seconds later all four engines went out at once. We didn't have time to prepare for ditching. The only things thrown over board were the two waist windows which Olsen and I threw out. By the time the windows were out we were only a few hundred feet above the surface of the water. I did not have a chance to take my ditching position. We hit with our left wing low and the bomb bay doors open. All that I can remember is that there seemed to be the most ungodly explosion and crumpling I have ever heard and then everything went black.

When I came to, I was the only one on the surface of the water. There was wreckage scattered for fully a quarter mile square. I spotted a dingy about 50 or 60 feet from where I was and swam to it and climbed in. A few minutes later when I had regained my breath and was able to think more clearly I saw Cpl. Nourse, Cpl. Neel, Cpl. Olsen and Pfc. Gross in the water, trying to reach another dingy near the wreckage. I never saw any of the rest of the men of the crew. Pfc. Gross drifted away in his Mae West when he didn't hold on to a wing section that was floating near the plane. I paddled toward the main part of the wreckage and was able to pick up Cpl. Neel and Cpl. Olsen who swam out to meet me. Neel was nearly out cold and layed in the bottom of the raft. It was all that Olsen and I could do to pick up Cpl. Nourse. It took all of our strength to paddle close enough to the wing section he was on so that he could swim the little distance to the raft. By the time we got Nourse into the dingy Pfc. Gross had drifted nearly out of sight. We didn't have the strength to paddle to him as the wind was pushing us one way and the current was carrying him in the opposite direction. All we could do was watch him fade out of sight with only his Mae West to keep him afloat. We spent a long and miserable night on the sea and the next afternoon we were picked up by Air Sea Rescue.

/s/ Carl B. Peterson III  
Cpl. 13200966  
767<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq. (H)

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Hower, Frank F.**  
Rank: **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.**  
Serial number: **0-714707**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Co-Pilot**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Being at controls of ship.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Five minutes prior to plane striking water.**

Was he injured? **He was not seen to emerge from wreck of plane.**

Where was he when last seen? **At controls of plane.**

Any hearsay information: **None.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **My opinion is based on the fact that due to the circumstances under which our plane struck the water, the terrible force of its striking and the position of his section of the ship being completely under water after coming to rest and our being in the immediate area for several hours and seeing no one come out of the ship led us to believe that all had been killed instantly.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Three.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **Dec. 27, 1944 – Northern Italy; Jan. 2, 1945 – Brennar Pass; Jan. 31, 1945 – Vienna, Austria.**

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Delana, Edward K.**  
Rank: **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.**  
Serial number: **0-721598**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Pilot**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Pilot of plane during ditching procedure.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Five minutes before plane struck water.**

Was he injured? **He was not seen to emerge from wreck of ship.**

Where was he when last seen? **At controls of plane.**

Any hearsay information: **None other than that which was observed.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **My opinion is based on the fact that due to the circumstances under which our plane struck the water, the terrible force of its striking and the position of the ship after coming to rest and our being in the immediate area for several hours and seeing no one come out of the ship led us to believe that all had been killed instantly.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Three.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **Dec. 27, 1944 – Northern Italy; Jan. 2, 1945 – Brennar Pass; Jan. 31, 1945 – Vienna, Austria.**

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Gross, William M.**  
Rank: **Pfc.**  
Serial number: **37564090**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Nose Turret Gunner**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Over water and pilots order to stay with ship in ditching position.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Approx. fifteen seconds before ship struck water.**

Was he injured? **Very badly, visually having head bleeding badly.**

Where was he when last seen? **In ditching position aft command deck.**

Any hearsay information: **None.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **He was seen to emerge from wreck of plane and seen to crawl on to portion of wing. With fear of being entrapped with sinking wing he removed himself from wing into water. But being apparently dazed or too badly injured to help himself he was carried by the wind and current from us and we, being in an exhausted condition, were unable to reach him. Our supposition is that he drowned or died from injuries. He was not seen the next day by airplane rescue party. No later information was received by base headquarters of his recovery.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Three.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **Dec. 27, 1944 – Northern Italy; Jan. 2, 1945 – Brennar Pass; Jan. 31, 1945 – Vienna, Austria.**



INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Ungethuem, John O.**  
Rank: **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.**  
Serial number: **0-2066117**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Navigator**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Piltos order to stay with ship in ditching procedure.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Six minutes prior to plane striking water.**

Was he injured? **Believing he was killed instantly.**

Where was he when last seen? **In ditching position on flight deck.**

Any hearsay information: **None.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **My opinion is based on the fact that due to the circumstances under which our plane struck the water, the terrible force of its striking and the position of his section of the ship being completely under water after coming to rest and our being out of the ship led us to believe that all had been killed instantly.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Three.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **Dec. 27, 1944 – Northern Italy; Jan. 2, 1945 – Brennar Pass; Jan. 31, 1945 – Vienna, Austria.**

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Gomez, Richard J.**  
Rank: **Cpl.**  
Serial number: **32920953**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Right Waist Gunner**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Over water and pilots order to stay with ship during ditching procedure.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Five minutes prior to plane striking water.**

Was he injured? **Not until plane struck the water.**

Where was he when last seen? **In ditching position on flight deck.**

Any hearsay information: **None.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **His condition was same as pilot, co-pilot and navigator being that the forward part of the ship went under water immediately with no chance of any recovery. Also our supposition is that since no one emerged from that section of the ship the upper turret came loose and killed or pinned them down so there was no possible chance of any release of these men.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Three.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **Dec. 27, 1944 – Northern Italy; Jan. 2, 1945 – Brennar Pass; Jan. 31, 1945 – Vienna, Austria.**

INDIVIDUAL CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of crew member: **Steelman, Raymond A.**  
Rank: **S/Sgt.**  
Serial number: **39084239**  
Position: Crew (Bomber) **Photo**

Did he bail out? **No.**

Where? :

If not, why not? **Over water and pilots order to stay with ship in ditching position.**

Last contact or conversation just prior to or at time of loss of plane: **Fifteen seconds before ship struck water.**

Was he injured? **Not until ship struck water.**

Where was he when last seen? **In ditching position on aft command deck.**

Any hearsay information: **None.**

Source:

Any explanation of his fate based in part or wholly on supposition: **He was not seen to emerge from wreck by me or other men and our belief is that he was apparently caught on some obstruction of the ship and was carried to his death by drowning or possibly immediate death by injuries. Our being in the area for several hours after crash.**

Total number of missions of above crew member: **Thirty-four.**

Dates and destinations if possible: **He, not being as assigned crew member, I do not have information regarding all of his missions.**

## CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name Robert C. Neel Rank Sgt. Serial No. 13089267
2. Organization 461<sup>st</sup> Gp Commander Lawhon Rank Col Sqn CO Poole Rank Major.
3. What year 1945 month January day 31 did you go down?
4. What was the mission, Vienna, target, Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, target time, 12:15, altitude, 24,500 ft route scheduled, Lake Balaton, route flown by way of Yugoslavia.
5. Where were you when you left formation? Flying number 4 in "A" box.
6. Did you bail out? No.
7. Did other members of crew bail out? No.
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".
9. Where did your aircraft strike the ground? We ditched in the Adriatic off the coast of Yugoslavia.
10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) Delana (pilot), Hower (co-pilot), Ungethuem (navigator), Gomez (engineer), myself (radio), Steelman (photo), Nourse, Gross, Peterson, Olsen (all gunners).
11. Where were they in aircraft? At ditching positions.
12. What was their condition? All OK.
13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? I was in the waist at my ditching position on the command deck of a B-24L. Steelman, Nourse and Gross wre sitting on the command deck also. I never saw the boys up forward but I saw Gross after the crash and he was badly gashed across the forehead and by the time we got the raft to get him he drifted away and we couldn't find him.
- 14 Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information.

## CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name Wallace D. Olsen Rank Sgt. Serial No. 39924178.
2. Organization 461<sup>st</sup> Gp Commander Lawhon Rank Col Sqn CO Poole Rank Major.
3. What year 1945 month January day 31 did you go down?
4. What was the mission, third, target, Vienna, Austria, target time, 11:43, altitude, 23,000 ft route scheduled, northeast on Yugoslavian coast, route flown same.
5. Where were you when you left formation? Approx. 100 miles north of Island of Vis. Also approx. 250 miles from home base.
6. Did you bail out? No.
7. Did other members of crew bail out? No.
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". No men bailed out of plane.
9. Where did your aircraft strike the ground? Approx 85 miles north of emergency field on Island of Vis in center of Adriatic Sea.
10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) All men were in plane when plane struck water but only five men emerged from wreck of plane.
11. Where were they in aircraft? All men were in normal and designated positions.
12. What was their condition? No physical injuries until after crash.
13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? All men were suffering mildly from emotional shock but were capable of doing required work to get in position and prepare for crash.
- 14 Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information. None.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Frank F. Hower**

**Mrs. Mary C. Hower (Wife)  
705 Reywick Road  
Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Edward K. Delana**

**Mr. Edward K. Delana (Father)  
5339 Wayne Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John C. Ungethuem**

**Colonel Walter J. Ungethuem (Father)  
Box 55, 38 Main Street  
Flympton, Massachusetts**

**S/Sgt. Raymond A. Steelman**

**Mrs. Ida M. Steelman (Mother)  
Rural Route Number Two  
Saskawa, Oklahoma**

**Cpl. Richard J. Gomez**

**Mr. Harry Gomez (Father)  
122 West 27<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bayonne, New Jersey**

**Pfc. William M. Gross**

**Mrs. Anna Gross (Mother))  
1007 Virginia Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota**