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C O N F I D E N T I A L

353RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H), AAF
Office of the Commanding Officer
APO 520

E-1/erw

29 May 1944

SUBJECT: Witnesses' Statements--Loss of A/C # 42-97580 and Crew.

TO: Commanding Officer, 301st Bombardment Group (H), AAF, APO 520.

1. In response to letter, your Headquarters, dated 19 May 1944, Subject; Statements to Accompany Missing Air Crew Reports, the following witnesses' statements from men who saw A/C 42-97580 and crew, this organization, go down in Yugoslavia on the way to bomb Wollersdorf A/D, Austria are hereby submitted. Coordinates and time of aircraft accident are as follows: (46° 15' N, 14° 50' E, at 0849 hours).

a. Witnesses' Statements:

(1) Ship # 42-97580, B-17G, went into a steep dive, smoke trailing from number two (2) engine, then leveled off for a few seconds. Parachutes then began appearing. It went into a left bank and continued to spiral until it crashed. I saw eight (8) chutes before the crash. After crashing it exploded, the bombs also exploding.

Harry A. Fichtner

HARRY A. FICHTNER,
S/Sgt., (12075401)
Tail Gunner on A/C
42-3384 in 22 position.

(2) First noticed Ship # 42-97580 because it was losing altitude. Shortly after, I saw one chute open, then in quick succession I saw three more open. Plane banked to left and two more chutes came out, one delayed in opening. Plane went into a dive, pulled out and another chute came out. Then ship went into a spin and shortly after pulled out and seemed to disintegrate. I noticed what seemed to be bombs bursting on the ground below aircraft. Also noticed one piece of A/C burning and many pieces scattered over the mountain. I saw seven (7) chutes open but believe all personnel got out safely.

Jack R. Nichols

JACK R. NICHOLS,
Sgt., (18125004)
Ball Turret Gunner,
A/C 42-30385, 23
position.

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