

6-21-45  
Y735  
19-015

WAR DEPARTMENT  
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES  
REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

45-6-2-507

13

San Giovanni Air Base,

(1) Place Cerignola, Italy. (2) Date 2 June 1945. (3) Time 2330H

AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-24H DO (5) A. F. No. 41-28809 (6) Station AFPO #520  
Organization: (7) 15th Air Force (8) 454th Bomb Gp (9) 739th Bomb Squadron (H)  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)

PERSONNEL BH

Y362

DUTY (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	Willfinger, Adrian F.	P	0-820922	Capt.	18	AC	15th AF	None	None
CD	Arnold, Robert G.	P	0-782116	2nd Lt.	18	AC	15th AF	None	None
CP	Ledford, Robert D.	P	0-704688	1st Lt.	18	AC	15th AF	None	None
	Schussler, Charles J.	E	13178324	T/Sgt.	38	AC	15th AF	None	None

~~PERSONNEL INFORMATION~~

(20) Arnold, Robert G. (21) 0-782116 (22) 2nd Lt. (23) 18 (24) AC  
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)

Assigned (25) 15th Air Force (26) 454th Bomb (27) 739th Bomb Sq (H) (28) AFPO #520  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)

Attached for flying (29) 15th Air Force (30) 454th Bomb (31) 739th Bomb Sq (H) (32) AFPO #520  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)

Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 27-6-44 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 27-6-44 Instrument rating (37) 1-6-45  
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date)

FIRST PILOT HOURS:

(at the time of this accident) ML TIO - 1 2  
(38) This type 192:30 (39) Instrument time last 6 months 14:05  
(40) This model 8:15 (41) Instrument time last 30 days 5:50  
(42) Last 90 days 49:35 (43) Night time last 6 months 25:10  
(44) Total 192:30 (45) Night time last 30 days 0:35

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

props

Five

DAMAGE	(46) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
(46) Aircraft <u>"X"</u>	<u>Completely destroyed</u>
(47) Engine(s) <u>"X"</u>	
(48) Propeller(s) <u>"X"</u>	

(50) Weather at the time of accident CAVU ET

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident Yes

(52) Cleared from SAN GIOVANNI AB (53) To Return (54) Kind of clearance Night Local

(55) Pilot's mission To be checked out on Night Landings and Take-Offs.

(56) Nature of accident Undershot runway - Aircraft crashed and burned.

TVI 09-17-22

(57) Cause of accident Undershot the runway.

(58) Has Form 54 been submitted? No.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

Aircraft number 41-28809 was making transition landings on the night of 2 June 1945. 2nd Lt Robert C. Arnold was flying as pilot and Capt. Adrien F. Willfinger as check pilot. On the first landing that Lt Arnold made, his base leg was normal. On his final approach he was excessively low. Captain Willfinger instructed him to add power several times. At no time did Captain Willfinger touch the controls. As Captain Willfinger started to turn on the lights the airplane hit the ground about one and one quarter miles from the runway.

The tower called the airplane and instructed the pilot to pull up and go around as his approach was too low.

As Captain Willfinger was flying in the capacity of instructor-check pilot he is credited with 100 percent pilot error. He realized that the airplane was dangerously low but did not take the controls.

*William E. Kavach*

WILLIAM E. KAVASCH,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Investigating Officer.

*Howard A. Isaacs*

HOWARD A. ISAACS,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Investigating Officer.

*William E. Hubbard*

WILLIAM E. HUBBARD II,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Senior Officer - Aircraft  
Accident Investigation Board.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(Investigating Officer)

Date 11 June 1945

DATE	STATION	GROUP No. & TYPE	AIRCRAFT MODEL
2 June 1945	APO 520	454th Bomb Group (H)	B -24 H
CREW CHIEF OR AERIAL ENGINEER T/Sgt. Chas. J. Schussler		SQUADRON No. & TYPE 739th Bomb Squadron (H)	AIRCRAFT SERIAL No. 41-28809
PERG. CLASS	NAME - ASN. - GRADE - ORGANIZATION	USE AS DIRECTED LOCALLY	FLIGHT DATA
18	Willinger, A. R. Captain 0-820922	P N	FROM: APO
		1:40	TO: 21:30
18	Bland, Ray A. 1st Lt. 0-825092	QD N	MISSION: 520
		1:15	NO. OF LANDING: 4
18	Hobai, John, 2nd Lt., 0-927916	CP N	FROM: 22:45
		1:15	TO: 22:45
38	Schussler, Charles J. T/Sgt. 13178324		MISSION: 23:20
		1:15	NO. OF LANDING: 4
18	Arnold, R. G. 2nd Lt., 0-782116	QD N	FROM: 1:40
		0:35	TO: 1:40
18	Ledford, Robert D. 1st Lt., 0-704688	CP N	MISSION: 1:40
		0:35	NO. OF LANDING: 4
	Night check out for Lt. B land		
	CERTIFIED CORRECT: <i>W.C. Henderson</i>		
	W.C. HENDERSON, Captain, Air Corps, Operations Officer		
WAR DEPARTMENT A. A. F. FORM NO. 1 REV. 11 JAN. 48		AIRPLANE FLIGHT REPORT - OPERATIONS	
CHECKED: LEGIBLE AND CORRECT		TRANSCRIBED: TOTAL FLIGHT TIME ENTERED ON FORM 1A	TOTAL FLIGHT TIME 1:40



**AIRPLANE FLIGHT REPORT - ENGINEERING**

INSPECTION STATUS				SERVICING AT STATION OF TAKE-OFF (CHECK IMMEDIATELY BEFORE TAKE-OFF)												
	DATE OF OR HOURS DUE	INSPECTED TODAY		SERVICE	FUEL (GALLONS)		OIL (QUARTS)								RADIATOR CHECKED	
		BY	STATION		SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	No. 1		No. 2		No. 3		No. 4			
PREFLIGHT	6/2/45	S	APO # 520				SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS
DAILY	6/2/45	S	APO # 520													
25 HOURS	715:35			1st		2700		128		128		128		128		
50 HOURS	740:35			2d												
100 HOURS	740:35			3d												
				4th												
				5th												
INSPECTION OF AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT				STATUS TODAY		EXPLANATION: <b>Pilots clock missing top</b>										
EQUIPMENT	SYMBOL	INSPECTED BY	STATION	1.	2.	<b>Escape hatch faulty, Bomb Window</b>										
BOARDSHIP						<b>Cracked, #2 Carb. Air Temp Out</b>										
GUNNERY				3.	4.											
CHEMICAL				EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE												
COMMUNICATIONS	M	Moser	APO # 520	WHEN THE "STATUS TODAY" IS INDICATED BY A RED SYMBOL, AND AN "EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE" HAS NOT BEEN GRANTED BY AN AUTHORIZED MAINTENANCE OFFICER, THE PILOT OF THE AIRCRAFT WILL SIGN THIS RELEASE BEFORE FLIGHT.												
PHOTOGRAPHIC				RELEASED FOR FLIGHT <b>W/ R A BLAND</b>												
NAVIGATION																
REMARKS: PILOTS AND MECHANICS—SEE INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE FRONT COVER				AIRCRAFT AND ENGINE TIME RECORD (ENTER IN HOURS AND MINUTES)												
<b>A-5 Rudder controls vibrates</b>				ENGINE	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4								
				HOURS TO DATE	145:30	264:05	97:05	176:19								
				HOURS TODAY	1:40	1:40	1:40	1:40								
				TOTAL	147:10	265:45	98:45	177:59								
				OIL CHARGE DUE	100 hr insp											
				CHEM. CLEAR- ING DUE	Daily											
				AIRCRAFT	HOURS TO DATE	713:05										
					HOURS TODAY	1:40										
					TOTAL	714:45										
				TIME				SERVICED								
				Pilot's mic. was removed cleaned and repl. OK now (S/Sgt Moser)				BATTERIES								
				Astor compass removed (Lt Oner)												
				Guns prepared for storage.												
DATE	AIRCRAFT ORG. DATA		AIRCRAFT DATA		ENGINE DATA											
6/2/45	AIR FORCE 15 AAF		COMPONENT A A F		ENGINE MODEL R-1830-43											
STATION APO # 520, NY	COMD., SERV. COMD. OR DEPT 304 Wing		AIRCRAFT MODEL B-24H		SERIAL No. CP-309069		SERIAL No. CP-30782									
GROUP ORG. OR ENGINEER	GROUP No. AND TYPE 454 B. (H)		AIRCRAFT SERIAL No. 41-28809		SERIAL No. 42-59917		SERIAL No. 41-14932									
	SQUADRON No. AND TYPE 739th B. (H)				TOTAL FLIGHT TIME → 1:40											
Sgt Schaefer																

739TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF  
Office of the Operations Officer  
APO 520

US Army

C/AFW/pjg

S T A T E M E N T

In the process of checking pilots on night landings at San Giovanni on 2 June 1945, the following accident occurred in ship #41-28809. 2ND LT. ROBERT G. ARNOLD was at the controls and a normal take-off was made to the north. The pattern was flown at a safe altitude. We climbed to two thousand (2,000) feet on the cross wind leg, and flew the down wind leg at the above altitude.

The check list was used and the gear was put down and checked before turning base leg. We lost five-hundred (500) feet on base leg and turned on the approach at fifteen-hundred (1,500) feet. We proceeded to make a normal approach with full flaps at 130 miles per hour. We proceeded to lose altitude and I instructed the Pilot not to lose anymore altitude when I realized that we were down to five-hundred (500) feet above the ground according to the altimeter. I instructed the Pilot at least three times to add power. He was a little slow or did not realize that we were low.

I was in the process of turning on the landing lights, which I normally do at four or five-hundred feet above the ground, at this time the airplane hit the ground and that is all that I can remember until the plane came to a halt. I hit the switches and left the airplane through the Co-Pilot's window. The Pilot and Co-Pilot and Engineer left the wreckage through the top hatch. We then proceeded to a safe distance from the wreckage in case of fire.

*Adrian F. Willfinger*  
ADRIAN F. WILLFINGER,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Pilot.

739TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF  
Office of the Operations Officer  
APO 520 US Army

C/RGA/pjg

S T A T E M E N T

On the night of 2 June 1945, I, ROBERT G. ARNOLD, 2ND LT., AC, was scheduled to make three night transition landings and take-offs with CAPTAIN ADRIAN F. WILLFINGER as check pilot.

At eleven o'clock I traded places with 1ST LT. RAY F. BLAND in airplane #41-28809 attached to the 739th Bomb Squadron. The plane was taxied into take-off position. The pattern was left hand traffic, taking off to the north on the east runway at San Giovanni Airdrome.

I made a normal take-off and at an indicated altitude of 1,000 feet started a slow climbing turn to the left. I leveled off at 2,000 feet and rolled out on reciprocal runway heading. I then called for the landing check list and went through the normal landing check list procedure. Although there was no check in the airplane I flew an estimated thirty (30) seconds beyond the end of the runway and started a slow letdown at 150 miles per hour on to the base leg.

Captain Willfinger called the tower on the base leg and put down 10° Degrees more of flaps after the Engineer had called from the flight deck that the gear was down and locked. As I turned on to the final approach, Captain Willfinger completed the landing check list and then the Engineer came up between the seats and called out the airspeed. The altimeter read 1400 feet. On the final approach, I was unable to see the ground directly below me, and the distance the airplane was from the runway was difficult to estimate. After I had lined up on the runway, I concentrated on establishing a power-on glide of 130 miles per hour cross checking the altimeter and the lights marking the end of the runway. Approximately halfway down the final approach, Captain Willfinger said, "You'd better hold her level for awhile, your still pretty far out". I started to ease on the power and it was only a short interval of time later when we hit. We were in a very slight decent at the time and the altimeter indicated slightly below 800 feet. This was seconds before we hit.

The last time I made a night landing was on a well lighted field at Casper, Wyoming, December 1944 and this was my third landing on San Giovanni, Airfield.

I realize that lack of judgement in night flying was a attributing factor, but I also believe that the altimeter was not functioning properly. I realize that my pilot technique was deplorable and I am deeply grateful that no one was injured.

These are my personal opinions.

*Robert G. Arnold*  
ROBERT G. ARNOLD,  
2nd Lt., Air Corps,  
Pilot.



739TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF  
Office of the Operations Officer  
APO 520 US Army

C/CJS/pjg

S T A T E M E N T

I was Engineer on plane #41-28809. I was kneeling between the Pilot and Co-Pilot calling the air-speed. The air-speed, when we hit, was about 130 to 140. The altimeter was reading between 450 and 850 feet when we hit. How I know that is about as close as I could come is because the altimeter and air-speed set right next to each other.

I did not see the ground because I was watching the instruments. The landing gear was down and locked. The bomb-bay door's were cracked and the flaps were down.

When we hit, I closed my eyes, and when I opened them I could not see because of the dust. I thought the hatch would be stuck, but it came right open. I climbed out on top and looked down, and the Instructor Pilot was coming out of the Co-Pilots window. The Pilot came out after me. The three (3) of us stood on the ground waiting for the Co-Pilot, who was riding the radio-man's position, to come out. At last, he came out and fled down to the ground beside us. We then put some space between the plane and us.

All this time, #2 engine was turning over. Just as the Co-Pilot was coming out #2 started to burn. We got about five-hundred (500) feet from the plane and waited for the trucks to come.

*Charles J. Schussler*  
CHARLES J. SCHUSSTLER,  
T/Sgt., Air Corps,  
Engineer.

3 June 1945.

S T A T E M E N T

At 2330 hours, 2 June 1945, aircraft 809 of the 739th Bombardment Squadron called Carol Tower on approach, landing north on west runway. I was acting as observer in the Tower. When aircraft turned on approach he was low, but not too low. Aircraft landing lights were not switched on. When it was determined that the aircraft was too low for a safe landing I ordered the tower operator to call the pilot and tell him to go around. This order was carried out in a routine manner. A few seconds later the aircraft disappeared from sight. I gave the alarm to the fire trucks and ambulance. They immediately went into action. At the same time I could see fire approximately one half mile from the south end of the west runway. The 454th Bomb Group S-3 Section was notified at this time.

*Paul W. Garritson*  
PAUL W. GARRITSON,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Control Tower Officer.



3 June 1945.

S T A T E M E N T

At approximately 2330 hours, 3 June 1945, aircraft No. 809 called Carol Tower on turning into the final approach. He was cleared number one to land north on the west runway.

Captain Garritson, who acted as traffic observer, the tower operator, and I watched A/C 809 descend. Inasmuch as the ship did not put his landing lights down and there was no horizon, it was not possible to determine how close it was to the ground until it was about a mile from the end of the runway. At which time he was told to pull up and go around. There was no response and five seconds later the aircraft disappeared from view.

Fire trucks and ambulances were notified immediately.

  
ROBERT F. BAKER,  
Captain, Air Corps.

