

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

(1) Place Huntington Lake, California (2) Date 6 December 1943 (3) Time Unknown
AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model E-24 H (5) A. F. No. 42-7674 (6) Station Hammer Fld, Fresno, Calif.
Organization: (7) 4th Air Force (8) 461st BG (H) (9) 766th Bomb Sqdn (H)
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)

PERSONNEL

DUTY	NAME (Last name first)	RATING	SERIAL NO.	RANK	PERSONNEL CLASS	BRANCH	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND	STATUS OF PERSONNEL	USE OF PARACHUTE
(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
P.	Darden, William H.	P.	0-38928E	Capt.	02	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown
CP	Settle, Marion C.	CP	0-806149	2nd Lt.	1201	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	S.E.
N	Schlosser, Samuel J.	N	0-757409	2nd Lt.	1201	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown
E	Nyswonger, Franklin	E	16009396	S/Sgt.	1200	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown
AE	Mayo, Dick E.	AE	35448517	Sgt.	1220	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown
RO	Berulid, George J.	RO	32568869	Sgt.	1220	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	S.E.
TG	Spangle, Richard I.	TG	219013003	Sgt.	1220	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown
E	Vande Plasch, Donald	E	36279044	Sgt.	1220	AAF	4th AF	Unknown	Unknown

PILOT CHANGED WITH ACCIDENT

(20) Darden, William H. (21) 0-38928E (22) Captain (23) 01 (24) AAF
(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)
Assigned (25) 4th Air Force (26) 461st BG (H) (27) 766th B Sq. (H) (28) Hammer Fld, Fresno, Calif.
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Attached for flying (29) 4th Air Force (30) 461st BG (31) 766th B Sq. (H) (32) Hammer Fld, Fresno, Calif.
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron) (Station)
Original rating (33) Pilot (34) 11/21/39 Present rating (35) Pilot (36) 11/21/39 Instrument rating (37) Oct. 9, 1943
(Rating) (Date) (Rating) (Date) (Date)

FIRST PILOT HOURS:

(at the time of this accident)

(38) This type 235:10 (42) Instrument time last 6 months 39:55
(39) This model 235:10 (43) Instrument time last 30 days 1:25
(40) Last 90 days 122:30 (44) Night time last 6 months 28:55
(41) Total 1453:05 (45) Night time last 30 days 2:40

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

DAMAGE	(40) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
(46) Aircraft <u>Unknown</u>	Unknown
(47) Engine(s) <u>Unknown</u>	
(48) Propeller(s) <u>Unknown</u>	

(50) Weather at the time of accident CAVU
(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident No
(52) Cleared from Hammer Fld (53) To Hammer Fld (54) Kind of clearance Contact
(55) Pilot's mission Routine mission searching for aircraft #42-7674
(56) Nature of accident Agency landing on Huntington Lake
(57) Cause of accident Undetermined

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

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

This airplane was on a search mission over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Pilot executed a peel off turn in order to separate from the formation at the stated interval of fifty (50) seconds between planes. At this point the airplane was approximately N.E. of Huntington Lake at approximately nine thousand feet (9000) altitude. The terrain is rough with elevations of seven thousand (7000) to (10000) feet in the immediate vicinity. The pilot sensed some difficulty which is not clearly defined by the testimony of the co-pilot and ordered the crew to jump. Two survivors left the plane and parachuted to safety. Parts of the airplane were found in Huntington Lake. It is assumed that the airplane and all others on board were lost in the lake.

A strong wind from the southeast is believed to have caused a downdraft which confused the pilot momentarily. It is believed that the low altitude with reference to surrounding terrain and the pilots' lack of familiarity with the terrain caused him to commit himself to a landing in the lake as an emergency procedure. He was apparently unable to maneuver so as to avoid a down-wind landing. There is no definite evidence to show mechanical difficulties resulting in a lack of power.

It is the opinion of the Board that the accident is attributable to personnel error.

Pilot 50%
Undetermined 50%

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Signature: John E. Doherty, Maj., AG, Pres.
Harry L. Mitchell, Maj., AG, Mem.
Edward W. Spalding, 1st Lt., AG, Sec.

Date

STATEMENT MADE BY CO-PILOT

Lt. Settle: I was on a search mission that morning and believe there were 9 or 10 planes in the flight element. We were in the 3rd element. We were to peel off at 50 second intervals. That would make us next to the last plane to peel off. We peeled off and one prop governor went out. It was No. 2 prop. I pulled back on it and told him it sounded all right. The Captain said, "All right, hell, get out of here." We were losing altitude. He told the engineer to change fuses and then changed his mind and didn't say what fuses. He repeated orders telling crew to bail out. The Captain was repeating to bail out all the time when I got out. The bomb bay doors would not open. The engineer was busy putting on his chute. It was dark. I could not open the bomb bay doors. I could not locate the control to get the bomb bay doors open so I stepped back on the catwalk. The engineer opened the doors and I bailed out. Just before the doors were opened, the landing gear warning horn sounded. It went off again so throttles must have been ~~closed~~. I could see some of the instruments. The engines were putting out ~~say~~ 25 inches on all four engines. The horns quit blowing after they blew once and that's all I remember.

I did see the tachometer. Looked out at props. Checked it, and Captain Darden told me to reduce power. and to pull back just a little and it sounded all right.

Question: Before you left the co-pilot's seat, were all four engines functioning?

Lt. Settle: They were running but losing altitude.

Question: Did Captain Darden make an effort to keep from losing altitude?

Lt. Settle: It was a matter of seconds. We didn't know altitude of airplane. Nor do I recall the attitude or airspeed.

We were going down at that instant. Prior to that time, we were fixing to climb over the mountains ahead around 11,000 feet. Fixing to fly 2000 R.P.M., 32 in. hg. Would have been enough power to climb if something hadn't gone wrong. Naturally didn't know what was happening because we should have been climbing. 20.000 RPM and 30" hg. at the time.

When I bailed out, we had changed the direction from south back to west. We were down between the mountain peaks when I bailed out. The radio operator bailed out after me. He landed 1/2 mile from the lake side.

Question: Did you try to spot the plane?

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Lt. Settle: No sir.

Question: Was any other warning given other than verbal orders to bail out?

Lt. Settle: Sir, he was pushing the button but I didn't hear the bells in the nose tail and tail turret. I did see him pushing on the alarm bells and saying to bail out when I left. He stayed on the interphone.

Question: Did the plane seem to be flying normal?

Lt. Settle: Slower than ^{and} other type B's. Ran as good as others just as fast.

Question: Did you change the throttles when you peeled off?

Lt. Settle: No sir. I pulled back the prop on No. 2. The only reason I had ridden with him before and had his instructions to reduce R.P.M. before reducing throttle.

Question: Was any steep turn made?

Lt. Settle: I imagine he did turn. I was in the bomb bay at that time. Didn't feel any hard pull. No sir, no sensations. Made good turn down to valley. Headed directly down.

Question: How high?

Lt. Settle: Somewhere between 3 and 5 hundred feet.

Question: Did you notice any unusual atmospheric changes?

Lt. Settle: No sir, only a cloud. If we hadn't turned, we would have hit the cloud. I believed we turned about 2 miles before reaching the cloud.

We were probably 1,000 feet above the valley floors and barely above the peaks. The whole formation was to be at 10,000 feet.

There were two very high peaks in front of us and we had to turn to avoid them. I think we were above the peaks but losing altitude.

I am a first pilot but was acting co-pilot and in no position to take over as he was the commanding-officer.

Question: You mentioned a cloud ahead of you. Was there very much cloudiness that morning?

Lt. Settle: Ahead, but not where we were.

Question: Could you tell anything about the wind?

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Lt. Settle: over the lake it was blowing west. pretty strong and later that afternoon I went out over the lake in a boat and the waves almost turned it over. Pretty strong wind. It was from the east. Blowing east to the west. two high peaks just in front might creat a down draft.

Question: Did you notice the airplane slowing up?

Lt. Settle: Just noticed the airplane descend.

Question: How close to the cloud were you?

Lt. Settle: I would estimate at least 2 more miles would have carried us into the edge of it.

Question: Any electrical activities noticed? (Atmospheric)

Lt. Settle: No sir.

Question: You say you recall hearing the landing gear warning horn?

Lt. Settle: Yes, after trying to open the bomb bay doors. I looked back and saw the manifold pressure was back to 25 inches.

Lt. Settle: If he hit the flap handle it was after I left. He could have done everything possible while I was opening the bomb bay doors, like putting full power.

Question: What was the briefing?

Lt. Settle: Briefing was carried out, and we were the lead element. The fellow in 729 was the third ship.

Question: Method of search?

Lt. Settle: Flying in a straight line, each one was to peel off after the first 50 seconds, covering a pretty wide area and still be rather far apart. The first plane started peeling off over Shaver Lake. 50 second intervals would give each one time to check and search his area.

Question: Were you warned about the mountains?

Lt. Settle: We were due to fly about 500 feet above the ground. Special directions definite headings from each point gave you headings you should fly.

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Question: Was any mention made of type of weather?

Lt. Settle: No sir.

Question: No velocity of wind?

Lt. Settle: Don't know, may have been mentioned, I do not recall.

Question: Where were the other men riding?

Lt. Settle: Two in the tail and two in the nose. The men in the tail could have gotten out.... we could have been over the ridge, saw the trees and decided they would rather risk the lake than the trees.

Question: You didn't see them?

Lt. Settle: The door was closed. There was no scrambling around in the nose, no one trying to get out. That's the reason that I thought they had jumped. It seemed that they hadn't. No evidence was found of anyone else having jumped. Searchers found where we fell.

Question: Did the Captain get on the interphone?

Lt. Settle: ^{and I was} We were on command set. Pilot had a ground connection, and was on the interphone. Everything he said to me went on the interphone. the radio operator never could find the trouble. He stayed on the interphone so he wouldn't block out other communications. He decided to stay on the interphone. He couldn't say a thing but what was heard on the interphone.

Question: Do you recall the engine sounds?

Lt. Settle: Really didn't have sound of having full power. Even in the bomb bay you could feel that.

C. Lee M. Settle, 2nd Lt. A.C.

STATEMENT MADE BY RADIO OPERATOR

Question: Sergeant, what was the first notice of anything wrong?

Sgt. Barulic: Never noticed anything before he said to bail out. The captain. I could hear him yelling. The first time I heard him say bail out, I took off my head sets and started getting ready.

Question: Did he get on interphone?

Sgt. Barulic: Must have gotten on interphone.

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Question: After hearing the Captain give the command to bail out, what did you do?

Sgt. Barulic: ^{Searched} Started getting my ~~E~~ Type chute on. It takes some time to get it on. I got all ready to bail out. Went second.

Question: Where was the co-pilot?

Sgt. Barulic: Trying to open bomb bay doors standing almost against the bomb racks. There was room for three.

Yes, I could hear the warning horn slowing as I was getting my chute on. Looked and noticed the Captain was calling to bail out so I ~~followed him~~ rushed the Lieutenant out.

Question: Do you recall engine sounds?

Sgt. Barulic: At that time they seemed kind of quiet, losing altitude. Sort of felt that.

Sgt. George S. Barulic

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C O P Y

461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), AAF
OFFICE OF THE GROUP SURGEON
HAMMER FIELD, FRESNO, CALIF.

C O P Y

12 December 1943

SUBJECT: Informal report of Aircraft Accident

TO :

1. In compliance with Memorandum 25-1, Headquarters, Fourth Air Force, dated 18 November 1943 the following informal report is submitted concerning the crash of Airc. B-24H, No. 42-1674, on 6 December 1943.

(a) Above named aircraft, 460th Bombardment Squadron, piloted by Captain William H. Darden, was assigned to participate in a search mission. The flight took off at 0912, 6 December 1943 and proceeded to the vicinity of Shaw Lake in formation. Aircraft involved was the last ship to "peel off" from the formation, and was then just North of Huntington Lake. Immediately after peeling off, No. two prop governor went out and the engine had to be throttled back. Immediately afterward the aircraft began to lose altitude rapidly, the reason for which is undetermined. The pilot ordered the crew to bail out. The Co-Pilot, Lt. Culer M. Settle and the radio operator, Sgt. George J. Barulic, parachuted to safety. No other members of the crew were able to get out, due to the fact that the airplane was by then too close to the ground. The engineer was seen returning to the flight deck by the radio operator. The crash occurred about 0950, 6 December 1943.

(b) In spite of the fact that the co-pilot parachuted to safety no cause for the accident has been determined. He states that he can remember no cause for the performance of the airplane.

(c) The airplane disappeared from view of the men who bailed out and apparently crashed on Huntington Lake, sinking immediately. Six men remained on board. The plane has not definitely been located, but floating debris leads to the conclusion that it is in the lake at a point where the water is one hundred and fifty feet deep. No bodies have been recovered.

(d) The pilot, Captain Darden, was Squadron Commander. He was an experienced pilot with an excellent record. The co-pilot is first pilot of a heavy bombardment crew, nearing the end of third phase training. Both are known by the undersigned to have been in good physical condition, and under no mental strain prior to the flight. The aircraft was in good working order prior to take-off. Standard safety devices were installed in the aircraft, and were in good working order.

2. Results to flying personnel are as follows:

Pilot	Captain William H. Darden	0-389288	Missing
Co-Pilot	2nd Lt. Culer M. Settle	0-806149	Uninjured
Navigator	2nd Lt. Samuel J. Schlessor	0-191409	Missing
Engineer	Sgt. Franklin C. Nyswenger	16009396	Missing
Radio Operator	Sgt. George J. Barulic	32565335	Uninjured
Ass. Engineer	Sgt. Dick E. Mayo	35448517	Missing
Gunner	Sgt. Richard L. Spangle	19103003	Missing
Gunner	Sgt. Donald Van de Plasch	36279044	Missing

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Alexander E. Sproul
ALEXANDER E. SPROUL

Capt. M.C., AME, Squadron Surgeon