

Certified Statement by 1st Lt. Ray C. Gordon, Air Corps, who decided not to go on the flight.

We departed Wiesbaden on 30 October 1946, landing at Capodichino Air Base, Naples, Italy. Intending to take off for Bovington, we all proceeded to Capodichino Airfield on the night of 31 October 1946. Colonel Upham and Colonel Fair and Major Cobb went into Operations and Weather while the rest of the crew deposited baggage aboard the B-17. The rest of the crew stood around the airplane talking. Presently I went into the Operations Building. Briefing had been accomplished by this time to the best of my knowledge. Anyway there was some discussion about bad weather, especially over the Island of Corsica, supposed to be bad fronts reaching quite high. Although the weather over the coast of France was not so bad, there were IFR conditions and storm front was extending over the Mediterranean and over the Island of Corsica.

The briefing, as I understood it, was from Naples, Istres, up the Rhone Valley to London. I talked to Major Cobb concerning weather on the way out to the aircraft. Upon reaching the aircraft I took my B-4 bag out of the B-17, which was parked in front of Operations Building, and deposited the bag on walk leading to the building, at which time Colonel Upham asked if I was going with them. I said no. He wanted to know why. I said I was flying back the next day by the airlines.

After this, Colonel Upham helped Colonel Fair to crawl on top of the aircraft's wing. Colonel Fair walked the complete length of the left wing, inspecting from wing tip to fuselage. He got on the ground and ground check was made of landing gear, engines, etc. It was a very thorough check. After this check was made, and as they were inspecting the tail of the aircraft, a jeep driver who was going to the EATS Officers Club in Naples asked if I wanted to return with him. I said yes. After bidding the crew goodbye, I proceeded to Naples in the jeep.

Signed, Ray C. Gordon

1st Lt, Air Corps,

O-38285

See over for Investigation Board queries and answers to the above statement:

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Interrogation of 1st Lt Ray C. Gordon, Air Corps, by Capt. Parker and Lt. Brunke, Members of the Accident Investigation Board

Captain Parker: Were you present in Operations when any of the briefing was going on?

Lt. Gordon: No.

Captain Parker: Did you hear any weather briefing yourself from the Weather Officer?

Lt. Gordon: No. Only what was told to me by Major Cobb.

Captain Parker: Did you see the cross-section forecast for the flight?

Lt. Gordon: No.

Captain Parker: Did you see the form 23 file for the intended route of the flight?

Lt. Gordon: No.

Captain Parker: Do you know the names of any Operations or Weather personnel who participated in the weather briefing?

Lt. Gordon: No.

Captain Parker: For what particular reason did you decide not to go on the flight?

Lt. Gordon: No particular reason. Just a hunch.

Captain Parker: In other words, you believed that the flight was not entirely safe?

Lt. Gordon: Yes, that is right.

Lt. Brunke: Did you think Colonel Upham and Colonel Fair were a bit skiddish about the flight inasmuch as they examined the ship so closely. Was there such a thorough check before leaving Wiesbaden?

Lt. Gordon: No. Just an ordinary check.

Lt. Brunke: Did Major Cobb say anything that would indicate to you that he was worried about the weather?

Lt. Gordon: Major Cobb mentioned the weather was very bad over Corsica.

Captain Parker: On previous flight from Wiesbaden to Naples, did the navigator recommend any attitude of flight to the pilot that the pilot did (not?) comply with, to your knowledge?

Lt. Gordon: No.

Captain Parker: Was there any unusual incident on the flight from Wiesbaden to Naples?

Lt. Gordon: Yes. Quite a bit of small disagreement between the pilot and the navigator as to altitudes of mountains. As an example, Mount Vesuvius (sic). If I remember right, Colonel Upham asked the navigator upon approaching the coast of Naples how high Mt. Vesuvius is. The navigator replied about 3500 feet. There was a discussion over that.

Captain Parker: When approaching Naples, was the pilot flying on instruments?

Lt. Gordon: It was night and in clouds and on instruments. We let down through clouds three to four thousand feet thick. Cumulus and building up. The night was very dark.