

AG 704 -

(26 Oct 44)

CASUALTY BRANCH

STATUS REVIEW AND DETERMINATION SECTION

REVIEW AND DETERMINATION  
UNDER SECTION 5, PUBLIC  
LAW 490, 7 MARCH 1942,  
AS AMENDED

STATUS

OF

THREE CREW MEMBERS OF A B-26  
AIRPLANE MISSING IN ACTION IN  
THE NORTH AFRICAN AREA SINCE  
25 OCTOBER 1943

S. R. & D. No. 1483

4. The crew of this plane was reported in flying pay status by classified messages from USSOS, London, No. WN-296, dated 13 January 1944, and No. WN-421, dated 18 January 1944, Casualty Branch Message Nos. 014030 and 019043.

5. A memorandum for the Chief, Casualty Branch, was prepared by the Special Determination Sub-section, Status Review and Determination Section, on 4 January 1944, concerning flight Officer Robert J. Peale, T187572, Staff Sergeant J. L. Graves, 18,180,624, and Staff Sergeant James W. Wheeler, 35,563,995. On the basis of the memorandum, casualty reports were initiated, showing that this officer and the two enlisted men were killed in action near Peniche, Portugal, on 25 October 1944. The following paragraphs are quoted from the memorandum:

"2. Letter dated 9 December 1943 from Seymour G. Pond, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Assistant Military Attache for Air, American Legation, Lisbon, Portugal, Subject: Fatal Crash of B-26 off coast of Portugal 25 October 1943, addressed to Chief, Military Intelligence Service, (For Commanding General, Army Air Forces, G-2) included the following information:

'Staff Sergeant George L. Graves, A.C., ASN: 180624 was buried November 9, 1943, at the Municipal Cemetery of Peniche, (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 1, Square 4, Row 13.

'Staff Sergeant James Willis Wheeler, A.C., 35573995, was buried October 30, 1943, in the Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 212.

'An "unidentified airman" was buried Nov. 3 1943, in the Cemetery of Vierra de Lieria, (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 214.

'It is believed this may be the body of Lieutenant R. E. Pitre, A.C.

'However, the corpse when washed ashore had no head, hands, nor feet, all having been decomposed or eaten away by the fish.

'A flying helmet washed ashore, and a blouse are stated to have contained the name of Lieutenant R. E. Pitre.

'The body of Flight Officer Robert James Peale, A.C., T-187572, was buried in the cemetery of Fieiria de Leiria, (Province of Extremadura) on November 12, 1943, in Grave No. 218.

'The body of George L. Graves, as stated by the examining physician, indicated this airman died from a piece of shell fragment embedded in the corpse.

'Natives in Peniche said there was heard machine gun firing in the clouds first, then what appeared to be firing from a surface vessel, perhaps a U-boat (which are said to be refueling here) and later there was heard a violent crash when the aircraft struck the water.'

6. On the basis of a memorandum prepared by Special Determination Sub-section, dated 25 January 1944, the Chief, Casualty Branch, directed that a casualty report be initiated showing that Second Lieutenant Everett R. McCulloch, 0672371, was killed in action near Peniche, Portugal, on 25 October 1943. Several paragraphs are quoted from this memorandum:

"4. A letter dated 28 December 1943 from Lieutenant Colonel Seymour G. Pond, Air Corps, Assistant Military Attache for Air, American Legation, Lisbon, Portugal, Subject: Detach of E. R. McCulloch, O-672371, A.C., addressed to Chief, Military Intelligence Service (For Commanding General Army Air Forces G-2) included the following pertinent information:

'It was reported to this office, morning of this day, that the body of an American airman was washed ashore on Christmas Day on the Portuguese Coast. The body was discovered about dawn between Nazare and Leiria, at a little fishing village called Foca. This information was given to us by the captain of the port of Nazare.

'It was stated by the captain of the port of Nazare that an identification tag was on each wrist. The duplicate tags contain the following data:

C. R. McCulloch  
O-672371  
T-43A. c.a. Ng. McCulloch  
Route No. 1, Box 7,  
Von Orny, Texas.

There was no head, nor feet remaining on the body when it was found."

7. In the AG 201 file of Lieutenant Pitre is a letter, dated 20 January 1944, from his parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Pitre, to Congressman Martin Dies, which reads, in part, as follows:

"\* \* \* We have reasons to believe that our son is in Portugal and if you could contact our Ambassador Hayes in Portugal we feel sure you could secure definite information about our son. \* \* \*"

This letter was forwarded to The Adjutant General, who, in a reply dated 3 February 1944, advised the Congressman that no information to the effect that Lieutenant Pitre was in Portugal had reached the War Department and that an investigation, as suggested by the officer's parents, would not be practicable under the circumstances.

8. A thorough examination of the AG 201 files and the Casualty files of the subject personnel revealed no information of value to this review except as set forth herein. The Service Record of the enlisted man is not on file in the War Department.

9. In response to a request from this office for any information in their files bearing on the status of these missing persons, the Memorial Division, OQMG, and the Prisoner of War Division, PMGO, reported that they had no record of them, and in the cases of the officers, the Officers' Branch, AGO, stated that they were being carried as missing.

10. These officers and this enlisted man have not been reported prisoners of war, internees or returned to duty.

## II. - CONCLUSIONS

1. This case concerns three crew members of a B-26 plane who were reported missing on 25 October 1943, while on a ferrying mission from the British Isles to Morocco and following a course on the 12th meridian. Later reports indicated that the plane was lost off the coast of Portugal, which agrees with the course of flight. Natives of Penich, Portugal, reported that they heard machine gun fire in the clouds and surface fire, then a crash as an aircraft struck the water. Four bodies, positively identified as crew members of this plane, and one unidentified body, were washed ashore in the vicinity of Peniche, Portugal. A blouse and flying helmet bearing the name of Lieutenant Pitre were also washed ashore. The fact that a shell fragment was found in the body of Staff Sergeant Graves substantiates the report that the plane was shot down by hostile craft.

2. Although these officers and this enlisted man were originally reported as missing, it appears that their status should be missing in action, inasmuch as there is evidence of enemy action and the death reports issued in the cases of the other members of the crew show that they were killed in action.

3. For a period of twelve months these officers and this enlisted man have not been seen or heard from by anyone. In view of the foregoing facts and circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Lieutenant Siegel and Pitre and Staff Sergeant Crawford and the fact that the bodies of four crew members have been positively identified, leaving only these three crew members unaccounted for, it is concluded that they may not reasonably be presumed to be living.

## III. - RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that findings of death be made under the provisions of Section 5, Public Law 490, 7 March 1942, as amended, in the

cases of these officers and this enlisted man named in paragraph 1, Part I, hereof, and that such findings show the presumed date of death as 26 October 1944.

MARIE B. HOLDEN  
Investigator,  
Status Review and  
Determination Section

CONCURRED IN:

DAVID P. RICHARDSON  
Captain, A. G. D.,  
Status Review and  
Determination Section.

DANIEL P. POTEET  
Colonel, A. G. D.,  
Officer in Charge,  
Status Review and  
Determination Section.

APPROVED:

GEORGE F. HERBERT  
Colonel, A. G. D.,  
Chief, Casualty Branch.

First Lieutenant Bernard Siegel,  
0792504, et al.

(26 Oct 44)

REFERENCES

Air Transport Command Report of Casualties No. 144, dated 29 October 1943, Casualty Branch No. 319028, File: AG 704 (29 Oct 44). (Classified Secret)

Missing Air Crew Report (AAF No. 1107), dated 28 October 1943. (Classified Secret)

Message from USSOS, London to AGWAR, No. WN\* 296, dated 13 January 1944, CM-IN-9826, Casualty Branch No. 014030, File: AG 704 (13 Jan 44). (Classified Confidential)

Message from USSOS, London to WAR, No. WN-421, dated 18 January 1944, CM-IB-14254, Casualty Branch No. 019043, File: AG 704 (18 Jan 44). (Classified Confidential)

Memorandum for Chief, Casualty Branch, from Special Determination Sub-section, Status Review and Determination Section, dated 4 January 1944, Casualty Branch No. 007100, File: AG 704 Dead (4 Jan 44). (Classified Confidential)

Memorandum for Chief, Casualty Branch, from Special Determination Sub-section, Status Review and Determination Section, dated 25 January 1944, Casualty Branch No. 026050, File: AG 704 Dead (26 Jan 44). (Classified Confidential)

2nd Lt. Everett R. McCulloch  
(Killed in action)

Mrs. Cecilia A. McCulloch, (wife)  
Route One, Box 7,  
Von Ormy, Texas.

F/O Robert J. Peale  
(Killed in action)

Mrs. Norma P. Peale, (wife)  
1047 Windemire Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana.

1st Lt. Bernard Siegel  
(Missing in action)

Mrs. Helen R. Siegel, (wife)  
4120 14th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

2nd Lt. Ray E. Pitre  
(Missing in action)

Mrs. Ida R. Pitre, (mother)  
Box 30,  
Raywood, Texas.

S/Sgt. James W. Wheeler  
(Killed in action)

Mrs. Thelma Wheeler, (wife)  
508 East South A,  
Gas City, Indiana.

S/Sgt. J. L. Graves  
(Killed in action)

Mrs. Letha A. Graves, (mother)  
Route Number Three,  
Waxahachie, Texas.

S/Sgt. William M. Crawford, Jr.  
(Missing in action)

Mr. William M. Crawford, (father)  
2015 Foster Avenue,  
Brooklyn, New York.



2nd Lt. Everett S. McCulloch  
(Killed in action)

P/O Robert J. Peale  
(Killed in action)

1st Lt. Bernard Siegel  
(Missing in action)

2nd Lt. Ray E. Pitre  
(Missing in action)

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(Killed in action)

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4120 14th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

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Raywood, Texas.

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Mrs. Letha A. Graves, (mother)  
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2015 Foster Avenue,  
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(Missing)

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(Killed)

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S/Sgt. J. L. Graves  
(Killed)

Mrs. Letha A. Graves, (mother)  
Route Number Three,  
Waxahachie, Texas.

S/Sgt. William M. Crawford, Jr.  
(Missing)

Mr. William M. Crawford, (father)  
2015 Foster Avenue,  
Brooklyn, New York.

~~SECRET~~

1107

HEADQUARTERS  
STA #4, EW ATC

D-3/es

APO 641  
20 Nov 43

SUBJECT: Missing Air Crew Report.

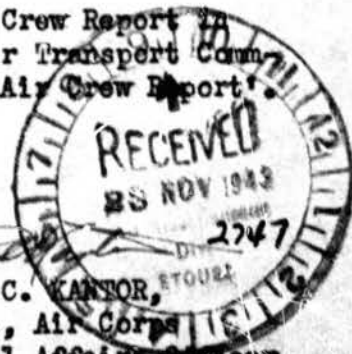
TO: Commanding General, Headquarters, European Theater Of Operations,  
ETCUSA, APO 887, U.S.Army.  
ATTN: Personal Affairs Officer.

1. Transmitted herewith two copies of Missing Air Crew Report in compliance with letter Army Air Forces, Headquarters, Air Transport Command, and, Washington, dated 27 August 1943, subject 'Missing Air Crew Report'.

For the Commanding Officer:

1 Incls  
Incl 1 - 2 Missing Air Crew Reports.

*Nathan C. Kantor*  
NATHAN C. KANTOR,  
1st Lt., Air Corps  
Personal Affairs Officer.



80 22704  
HQ ETOUSA APO 887

AG 360.33-M

1st Ind

Hq ETOUSA - 25 November 1943

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.



EPT/ehh

For the Commanding General:

*Richard P. Fisk*  
RICHARD P. FISK,  
Lt. Colonel, A. G. D.,  
Assistant Adjutant General.

1 Incl:  
n/c (one copy w/drawn)

DEC 7 1943

DEC 1 1943

26 NOV 1943



RECEIVED  
Air A.G.

~~SECRET~~

81816

(20 Nov 43)

~~SECRET~~

GENERAL SUMMARY OF SOUTHERN ROUTES WEATHER FROM 0000 TO 0700 GMT 25th October 1943.

No frontal activity enroute. Cloudiness variable, 3/10 to 8/10, but generally broken. Cloud type. Cloud type was strato-cumulus and cumulus. Base of clouds 1500 to 3500 feet with top of clouds variable, 4000 to 7000 feet, but occasionally 7-10,000 feet in widely scattered rain showers in zone 03 and 04. Visibility 6 to 15 miles, lowering at surface in showers to 2 to 6 miles. Approximately 10 knots overall tail winds.

Casablanca Terminal: Reported clear skies with visibility 12 miles at 0400 GMT. No further reports were received. Weather should have remained the same at Casablanca.

~~SECRET~~

MACR. 1107

25 - Oct '57

|                       |                     |                             |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Graves, J. L. (10)    | S-Sgt.              | 18180624 - KIA              |
| McCulloch, Everett R. | 2 <sup>d</sup> Lt.  | 0672371 - KIA               |
| Peale, Robert J.      | F/O                 | 7-187572 - KIA              |
| Pitae, Ray E.         | 2 <sup>d</sup> Lt.  | 0-678564 - Died             |
| Singil, Bernard (NMI) | 1 <sup>st</sup> Lt. | 0-792504 - Exci<br>35563995 |
| Wheeler, James H.     | S-Sgt.              | <del>01172571</del> - KIA   |

Please recheck ↑

CASUALTY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Gp Commander \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Sqn CO \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
(full name) (full name)
3. What year \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ did you go down?
4. What was the mission, \_\_\_\_\_, target, \_\_\_\_\_, target  
time, \_\_\_\_\_, altitude, \_\_\_\_\_ route scheduled, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, route flown \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were you when you left formation? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did you bail out? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did other members of crew bail out? \_\_\_\_\_
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? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What members of your crew were in the aircraft when it struck the ground? (Should cross check with 8 above and individual questionnaires) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Where were they in aircraft? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What was their condition? \_\_\_\_\_
13. When, where, and in what condition did you last see any members not already described above? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Please give any similar information on personnel of any other crew of which you have knowledge. Indicate source of information. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Any additional information may be written on the back)

~~SECRET~~

To be filed   
Not to be filed

WAR DEPARTMENT  
SERVICES OF SUPPLY

OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

File No. \_\_\_\_\_

3 December, 1943

URGENT

INFORMAL ACTION SHEET

Subject: Transmittal of Missing Air Crew Report

From: Casualty Branch, A.G.O. 4601 Munitions 78856  
(Branch or division) (Room number) (Building) (Telephone number)

To: Air Adjutant General 41294 Pentagon Capt. Bradunas  
(Branch or division) (Room number) (Building) (Attention)

Remarks or indorsements:

1. Missing Air Crew Report dated 28 October concerning B-26, Serial Number 41-32014, Second Lieutenant Everett R. McCulloch, Pilot, transmitted herewith.
2. Above report was forwarded to this office in error by Hq. ETOUSA.

DANIEL P. POTERY  
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,  
Officer in Charge  
Status Review and  
Determination Section.

~~SECRET~~

URGENT

PROMPT ATTENTION REQUESTED

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**HEADQUARTERS EUROPEAN WING**  
**AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND**  
**ETOUSA**

Classification changed  
to **RESTRICTED**  
by E. A. BRADUNAS, Lt. Col., AO  
by F. M. MUECH, Capt., AO  
Date MAR 1 1943

**MISSING AIR CREW REPORT**

1. ORGANIZATION: Location \_\_\_\_\_; Command or Air Force 12 A.F.;  
Group \_\_\_\_\_; Squadron \_\_\_\_\_; Detachment \_\_\_\_\_;
2. SPECIFY: Point of Departure St. Mawgan; Course 12th Meridian;  
Intended Destination Casablanca, Morocco; Type of Mission Ferrying
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED \_\_\_\_\_
4. GIVE: (a) Date 25 Oct 43; Time \_\_\_\_\_; and Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
OF LAST KNOWN WHEREABOUTS OF MISSING AIRCRAFT.  
(b) Specify whether ( ) Last Sighted; ( ) Last contacted by Radio;  
( ) Forced Down; ( ) Seen to Crash; or ( ) Information not available.
5. AIRCRAFT WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS A RESULT OF: (Check  
only one) ( ) Enemy Aircraft; ( ) Enemy Anti-aircraft; ( ) Other Circumstances  
as Follows \_\_\_\_\_
6. AIRCRAFT: Type, Model & Series B-36 MA; A.A.F. Serial Number 41-32014
7. ENGINES: Type, Model & Series \_\_\_\_\_; A.A.F. Serial Number (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_ (d) \_\_\_\_\_
8. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type & Serial Number)  
(a) \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_ (d) \_\_\_\_\_  
(e) \_\_\_\_\_ (f) \_\_\_\_\_ (g) \_\_\_\_\_ (h) \_\_\_\_\_
9. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW ARE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty  
or (b) Non-Battle Casualty
10. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew \_\_\_\_\_; Passengers \_\_\_\_\_; Total \_\_\_\_\_  
(Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars: If more than  
10 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on separate  
sheet and attach original to this form).

| Crew Position  | Name in Full<br>(Last Name First) | Rank   | Serial<br>Number |     |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------|------------------|-----|
| 1. Pilot       | McCulloch, Everett R              | 2nd Lt | 0672371          | KIA |
| 2. Co-Pilot    | Peala, Robert J                   | E/O    | T-187572         | KIA |
| 3. Navigator   | Siegel, Bernard (NMT)             | 1st Lt | 0-792504         | KIA |
| 4. Bombardier  | Pitrs, Ray E.                     | 2nd Lt | 0-678564         | KIA |
| 5. Eng. Gunner | Whellan, James W.                 | S/Sgt  | 35563993         | KIA |
| 6. Gunner      | Craves, J. L. (in)                | S/Sgt  | 18180624         | KIA |
| 7.             | Gawford, William M. J.            | S/Sgt  | 3192324          | KIA |
| 8.             |                                   |        |                  |     |
| 9.             |                                   |        |                  |     |
| 10.            |                                   |        |                  |     |

11. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF  
AIRCRAFT, AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE FOR SAME:
- | Name in Full<br>(Last Name First) | Rank | Serial<br>Number | Contacted<br>by Radio | Check Only One Col: |              |                       |
|-----------------------------------|------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
|                                   |      |                  |                       | Last<br>Sighted     | Saw<br>Crash | Saw Forced<br>Landing |
| 1.                                |      |                  |                       |                     |              |                       |
| 2.                                |      |                  |                       |                     |              |                       |
| 3.                                |      |                  |                       |                     |              |                       |
12. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OF THE  
FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used \_\_\_\_\_; (b) Persons were seen  
walking away from scene of crash \_\_\_\_\_; or (c) Ant other reason (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION  
WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN.
  14. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES  
PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.
  15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND  
SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Report 28 October 1943  
s/Edward N. Coats  
EDWARD N. COATS  
(Signature of Preparing Officer)  
Major, Air Corps  
Station Operations Officer.

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY;  
NATHAN C. KANTOR,  
Lt., Air Corps,  
Personnel Affairs Officer.



293 FILE

## DATA ON REMAINS NOT YET RECOVERED OR IDENTIFIED

|                                    |                |  |   |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--|---|
| NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) |                | GRADE                                    | PRESENT SERIAL NUMBER                   |
| ORGANIZATION                       | RACE           | CREED                                    | FORMER SERIAL NUMBER<br>(If Applicable) |
| DATE OF DEATH/MIA                  | CAUSE OF DEATH | PLACE OF DEATH OR PLACE LAST SEEN IF MIA |   |
| DATE OF FOD                        |                |  |   |
| HEIGHT                             | WEIGHT         | COLOR EYES                               | COLOR HAIR                              |
|                                    |                |  | SHOE SIZE                               |

## DENTAL CHART

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| UPPER RIGHT   | UPPER LEFT               |
| 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8          |
| LOWER RIGHT   | LOWER LEFT               |
| 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9  | 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16   |
| <i>X = Extracted</i> <i>O = Cavious</i> <i>I = Cavious Non-Restorable</i> |                          |
| FRACTURES AND/OR BREAKS   | TATTOOS AND/OR BIRTHMARK |

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

M A C R 1107

Mission from St Mawgan, England to Casa Blanca, Morocco

Date - 23 Oct. 43 (B-26) Crew - 7

|          |                      |            |     |               |
|----------|----------------------|------------|-----|---------------|
| Pilot    | McCulloch, Everett R | 0-672,371  | KIA | <i>Buried</i> |
| Co-Pilot | Peale, Robert J.     | T-187,572  | KIA | "             |
| Nav      | Siegel, Bernard      | 0-792,504  | KIA |               |
| Bomb     | Pitre, Ray E         | 0-678,564  | KIA |               |
| Gunner   | Wheeler, James W     | 35,563,995 | KIA | "             |
|          | Graves, J. L.        | 18,180,624 | KIA | "             |
|          | Crawford, William M  | 31,192,394 | KIA | "             |

*ETD*

CORRECTED LIST OF CREW REPORT - NAMES & SERIAL NUMBERS

|                         |            |            |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| McCulloch, Everett R    | 0 672 371  | 2d Lt KIA  |
| Peale, Robert J.        | F 187 572  | F/O KIA    |
| Stiegel, Bernard        | 0 792 504  | 1st Lt MIA |
| Pitre, Ray E.           | 0 678 564  | 2d Lt MIA  |
| Wheeler, James W.       | 35 563 995 | S/Sgt KIA  |
| Graves, J. L.           | 18 180 624 | S/Sgt KIA  |
| Crawford, William M. Jr | 31 192 594 | S/Sgt MIA  |

Case 1107

*Copy obtained from AOC (Personnel Affairs) 24 Nov 63*

*Background items are according to records for the accounts*

*in order that get hand reviewed in Postage Office*

*Have been shown before items were returned.*

C  
O  
P  
Y

/who

REVIEW  
AND  
DETERMINATION OF STATUS  
OF  
FLIGHT OFFICER ROBERT J. PEALE, T-187,572,  
STAFF SERGEANT JAMES W. WHEELER, 35,563,995  
AND  
STAFF SERGEANT J. L. GRAVES, 18,180,624.

STATUS REVIEW AND DETERMINATION SECTION

CASUALTY BRANCH

AG 704 DEAD (4 Jan 44)

5 January 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO: Officer in Charge, Mail and Message Section,  
Casualty Branch.

SUBJECT: Casualty Report.

1. In accordance with the memorandum approved by the Chief, Casualty Branch, a casualty report will be initiated stating that the following named personnel were killed in action, near Peniche, Portugal, on 25 October 1943:

|                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Flight Officer Robert J. Peale,  | T-187572   |
| Staff Sergeant J. L. Graves,     | 18,180,624 |
| Staff Sergeant James W. Wheeler, | 35,563,995 |

2. Evidence considered sufficient to conclusively establish the fact of death was received by the Secretary of War on 30 December 1943.

3. Action directed is based on the approved memorandum of Status Review and Determination Section dated 4 January 1943, attached hereto.

DANIEL P. POTEET,  
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,  
Officer in Charge  
Status Review and  
Determination Section.

AG 704 DEAD (4 Jan 44)

4 January 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO: Chief, Casualty Branch, A.G.O.

SUBJECT: Review and Determination of Status of Flight Officer Robert J. Peale, T-187572, Staff Sergeant James W. Wheeler, 35,563,995, and Staff Sergeant J. L. Graves, 18,180,624.

1. Air Transport Command Report of Casualties No. 144, dated 29 October 1943, (Casualty message No. 319028) reported the following personnel as missing since 25 October 1943 while enroute from St. Mangan to Casa Blanca in a B-26 type aircraft No. 41-32014:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Second Lieutenant Everett R. McCulloch,  | 0-672371   |
| Flight Officer Robert J. Peale,          | T-187572   |
| Second Lieutenant Ray E. Pitre,          | 0-678564   |
| First Lieutenant Benard Siegel,          | 0-792504   |
| Staff Sergeant James W. Wheeler,         | 35,563,995 |
| Staff Sergeant William M. Crawford, Jr., | 31,192,594 |
| Staff Sergeant J. L. Graves,             | 18,180,624 |

(1)

2. Letter dated 9 December 1943 from Seymour G. Pond, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Assistant Military Attache for Air, American Legation Lisbon, Portugal, Subject: Fatal Crash of B-26 off coast of Portugal 25 October 1943, addressed to Chief, Military Intelligence Service, (For Commanding General, Army Air Forces, G-2) included the following information:

\*Staff Sergeant George L. Graves, A.C., ASN: 180624 was buried November 9, 1943, at the Municipal Cemetery of Peniche, (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 1, Square 4, Row 13.

Staff Sergeant James Willis Wheeler, A.C., 35573995, was buried October 30, 1943, in the Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 212.

An 'unidentified airman' was buried Nov. 3 1943, in the Cemetery of Vierra de Leiria, (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 214.

It is believed this may be the body of Lieutenant R. E. Pitre, A.C.

However, the corpse when washed ashore had no head, hands, nor feet, all having been decomposed or eaten away by fish.

A flying helmet washed ashore, and a blouse are stated to have contained the name of Lieutenant R. E. Pitre.

The body of Flight Officer Robert James Peale, A.C., T-187572, was buried in the cemetery of Vieira de Leiria, (Province of Extremadura) on November 12, 1943, in Grave No. 218.

The body of George L. Graves, as stated by the examining physician, indicated this airman died from a piece of shell fragment embedded in the corpse.

Natives in Peniche said there was heard machine gun firing in the clouds first, then what appeared to be firing from a surface vessel, perhaps a U-boat (which are said to be refueling here) and later there was heard a violent crash when the aircraft struck the water." (2)

3. There is no doubt that the Staff Sergeant George L. Graves, A.C. ASN: 180624 and Staff Sergeant James Willis Wheeler, A.C., 35573995 are in reality Staff Sergeants J.L. Graves, 18,180,624 and James W. Wheeler, 35,563,995. The similarity of names and army serial numbers, plus the other substantiating information furnished, i.e., type of aircraft, date of crash, cause, and place, eliminates any doubt as to the true identity of these deceased airmen. The listing of these names with those of Flight Officer Robert J. Peale, T-187,572 and Lieutenant R. E. Pitre, who were also members of this crew, contributes to the positive identification of these men.

4. The identity of the airman buried in Grave No. 214, Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria, must remain unknown for the present. While articles washed ashore contained the name of "Lieutenant R.E. Pitre" there is no indication that they belonged to the person whose remains are buried at Vieira de Leiria. There were seven crew members aboard the ill fated aircraft. The bodies of three, properly identified, have been recovered and buried. The unidentified body recovered and buried may be that of any of the four members still unaccounted for or someone who has been in the water for a longer period of time. There is no report as to the possible length of time the deceased had been in the water. This corpse, minus head, hands and feet was recovered and buried within ten days of the crash of this aircraft. There is no report or description of any clothing being found on this corpse, giving reason for suspicion that it may be the remains of someone who died prior to the destruction of this aircraft. Lieutenant Pitre was aboard this airplane and the fact that his blouse and helmet were washed ashore is not conclusive evidence that the unidentified corpse is the body of Lieutenant Pitre. The

AG 704 DEAD (4 Jan 44)

presence of surface craft, even though hostile, in the vicinity of the crash creates hope that the other members of this crew may have survived the crash and been taken aboard and that they are now unreported prisoners of war. In the absence of any other report concerning these crew members it is recommended that no action be taken towards a change in the present missing status of the following personnel:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| First Lieutenant Bernard Siegal,         | 0-792504   |
| Second Lieutenant Everett R. McCulloch,  | 0-672371   |
| Second Lieutenant Ray E. Pitre,          | 0-678564   |
| Staff Sergeant William M. Crawford, Jr., | 31,192,594 |

5. It is further recommended that a casualty report be initiated stating that the following personnel were killed in action, near Peniche, Portugal on 25 October 1943:

|                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Flight Officer Robert J. Peale,  | T-187,572  |
| Staff Sergeant J. L. Graves,     | 18,180,624 |
| Staff Sergeant James W. Wheeler, | 35,563,995 |

6. Evidence considered sufficient to conclusively establish the fact of death was received by the Secretary of War 30 December 1943.

JOSEPH F. HENNESSEY  
1st Lt., A. G. D.,  
Special Determination Sub-Section.

CONCURRED IN

JOHN T. BURNS,  
Major, A.G.D.,  
Status Review and  
Determination Section

DANIEL P. POTERT,  
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,  
Officer in Charge,  
Status Review and  
Determination Section.

APPROVED:

Pursuant to the authority conferred by paragraph 1a (1) of letter AG 240 (3-20-43) dated 17 April 1943, subject: "Procedure under Public Law 490 in case of death", an official report of death will be made showing date of death as 25 October 1943 and date of receipt of evidence of death by the Secretary of War as 30 December 1943.

By order of the Secretary of War:

GEORGE F. HERBERT,  
Colonel, A.G.D.,  
Chief, Casualty Branch, A.G.O.



AG 704 DEAD (4 Jan 44)

LIST OF SOURCE MATERIAL

1. Air Transport Command Report of Casualties No. 144, dated 29 October 1943. (Casualty message No. 319028)
2. Letter dated 9 December 1943, from Seymour G. Pnd, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Assistant Military Attache for Air, American Legation, Lisbon, Portugal, subject: Fatal Crash of B-26 off Coast of Portugal, 25 October 1943, addressed to Chief, Military Intelligence Service, (For Commanding General, Army Air Forces G-2).

NO  
SOCIAL SECURITY  
NYC 100

9 December 1943

SUBJECT: Report of Burials.

TO: The Quartermaster General, Washington, D. C.  
(Through Chief, MIS).

In compliance with paragraph 1, AR 30-1815, April 15, 1942, the following report of burials is submitted:

a. (1) Decedent's name, serial number, grade and organization: George L. Graves, 18180624, Staff Sergeant., AC  
(2) Place, cause, and date of death: In sea 9 kilometers north of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal; killed when plane (B-26) crashed into sea at 0600, GMT, October 25, 1943.  
(3) Date and hour of burial: Buried on November 9, 1943.

(4) Name of cemetery where buried: Municipal cemetery of Peniche, Peniche, Portugal, Square 4, Row #13, Grave #1; Catholic service.

(5) Disposition of identification tags: None found..

(6) Description of corroborating means of identification: Wallet with identifying papers found on body.

(7) Emergency address given by decedent: Mrs. Letha A. Grave, 5100 Belknap, Fort Worth, Texas.

(8) Itemized list of all personal effects removed from body and disposition of same: List attached; effects shipped to Effects QM, KC, Mo. (through Chief, MIS, W/D, Washington).

b. (1) Decedent's name, serial number, grade and organization: Robert James Peale, T-187572, Flight Officer, AC

(2) Place, cause, and date of death: In sea 9 kilometers north of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal; killed when plane (B-26) crashed into sea at 0600, GMT, October 25, 1943.

(3) Date and hour of burial: Nov. 12, 1943.

(4) Name of cemetery where buried: Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria, Grave No. 218. Cemetery does not have row or plot numbers.

(5) Disposition of identification tags: None found.

(6) Description of corroborating means of identification: AGO Identification card found on body together with other papers.

(7) Emergency address given by decedent: None found.

(8) Itemized list of all personal effects removed from body and disposed of same: List attached; effects shipped to Effects QM, KC, Mo. (through Chief, MIS, W/D, Washington).

c. (1) Decedent's name, serial number, grade, and organization: James Willis Wheeler, 35573995, Staff Sgt, AC  
(2) Place, cause, and date of death: In sea 9 kilometers north of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal; killed when plane (B-26) crashed into sea at 0600, GMT, October 25, 1943.  
(3) Date and hour of burial: Oct. 30, 1943, at 5:00 p.m.  
(4) Name of cemetery where buried: Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 212. As this is a small cemetery no row or plot numbers are allotted.  
(5) Disposition of identification tags: None found.  
(6) Description of corroborating means of identification: Soldier's Individual Pay Record.  
(7) Emergency address given by decedent: Mrs. Thelma Wheeler (wife), 508 E. South "A" Street, Gas City, Indiana.  
(8) Itemized list of all personal effects removed from body and disposition of same: Personal effects are en route here from place of burial. They will be forwarded to Effects QM, KC, Mo.

d. (1) Decedent's name, serial number, grade and organization: Unknown but believed to be Lieutenant R.E. Pitre, AC, whose flying helmet and blouse with his name were washed ashore. The corpse when washed ashore had no head, hands, feet, which had either decomposed or been eaten by fish. Finger prints therefore were not possible.  
(2) Place, cause, and date of death: In sea 9 kilometers north of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal; killed when plane (B-26) crashed into sea at 0600, GMT, October 25, 1943.  
(3) Date and hour of burial: Nov. 3, 1943, as "unidentified airman."  
(4) Name of cemetery where buried: Cemetery of Vieira de Leiria (Province of Estremadura) in Grave No. 214.  
(5) Disposition of identification tags: None found.  
(6) Description of corroborating means of identification: None except as mentioned in (1) above.  
(7) Emergency address given by decedent: None found.  
(8) Personal effects: None found.

STEPHEN O. FUQUA  
Lt Col, GSN  
Acting Military Attache

2 Incls.  
List of effects & effects Sgt Graves  
List of effects Flying  
Officer Peale.

Effects of Robert James Peale, T-187572, Flying Officer, AC

1. One AGO pass with photo, which has been washed off, attached.
2. One AAF Pilot and Crew Member Physical Record Card.
3. Two Pay Data Cards.
4. Three personal papers and two photographs.
5. One leather wallet.
6. US currency as follows:
  - a. One fifty dollar note.
  - b. Fourteen Twenty dollar notes
  - c. Three ten dollar notes
  - d. Three one dollar bills
  - e. One "Short Snorter" signed one dollar bill.
7. Foreign currency as follows:
  - One 100 franc note (Afrique)
  - One 50 franc note (Maroc)
  - One 1 £ note (Scotland)
  - One 10 Shilling note (England)
  - One 5 Kronur note (Landsbank Islands)
  - One 5 franc note (Maroc)
8. The following personal items:
  - 1 fountain pen
  - 1 key
  - 1 automatic pencil, broken

Effects of George L. Graves, 18180624, Staff Sgt., AC:

1. Money:
  - 1 Short Snorter bill (one dollar).
  - 12 coins (various countries)
2. 11 photos
3. 11 stamps (6 ¢, air mail - USA)
4. 1 mechanical pencil
5. 1 cigarette case
6. 1 wallet
7. papers:
  - a. A scrap with a pencil note on it
  - b. Book - Soldier's Individual Pay Record - bottom half torn off
  - c. Texas driver's license - Fort Worth, Tex.
  - d. Identity cards, 1 in celluloid case, & 2 others
  - e. Post pass, issued by 1st Lt. D.W. Bennett, AC
  - f. Immunization Register
  - g. Mimeographed form, subject, "Physical Examination Prior to Transfer to Foreign Service," signed by R.T. LeSage, Lt, MC

AG 704 DEAD (25 Jun 47)

AOB/mnh/5E781/518

25 June 1947

MEMORANDUM TO; Officer in Charge, Casualty Section.  
Personnel Actions Branch, AGO

SUBJECT: Reports of Death

1. The following-named Air Corps personnel were reported missing since 25 October 1943, enroute from St. Mawgan, England, to Casablanca, Morocco. Upon a review by SR&D Section, Casualty Branch, 26 October 1944, that there was evidence of enemy action their status was changed from "Missing" to "Missing in Action". They were presumed dead as of 26 October 1944 under the provisions of Section 5, Missing Persons Act:

|        |                          |          |
|--------|--------------------------|----------|
| 1st Lt | Bernard Siegel           | 0792504  |
| 2d Lt  | Ray E. Pitre             | 0678564  |
| S Sgt  | William M. Crawford, Jr. | 31192594 |

2. Missing Air Crew Report #1107, submitted by the 12th Air Force, dated 28 October 1943, reveals that the above-named personnel were members of a seven-man crew of a B-36 MA (B-26) aircraft, serial number 41-32014 which departed from St. Mawgan, England, to Casablanca, Morocco, 25 October 1943, on a ferrying mission. Attached to the Missing Air Crew Report is a general summary of southern routes weather from 0000 to 0700 GMT 25th October 1943.

"No frontal activity enroute. Cloudiness variable, 3/10 to 8/10, but generally broken. Cloud type was strato-cumulus and cumulus. Base of clouds 1500 to 3500 feet with top oc clouds variable, 4000 to 7000 feet, but occasionally 7-10-000 feet in widely scattered rain showers in zone 03 and 04. Visibility 6 to 15 miles, lowering at surface in showers to 2 to 6 miles. Approximately 10 knots overall tail winds.

"Casablanca Terminal: Reported clear skies with visibility 12 miles at 0400 GMT. No further reports were received. Weather should have remained the same at Casablanca."

3. The status of the remaining Air Corps personnel, not considered in this review is as follows:

|                              |         |                         |
|------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| 2d Lt. Everett R. McCulloch  | 0672371 | Place of Death-         |
| At Sea, near Ponta Do Forte, |         | Nazare, Portugal. Cause |
| of death - Decapitation.     |         |                         |

AG 704 DEAD(25 Jun 47)

they heard machine gun fire in the clouds first then what appeared to be firing from a surface vessel, then a crash as an aircraft struck the water. Four bodies, positively identified as the remaining crew members of this plane, and one unidentified body, were washed ashore in the vicinity of Peniche, Portugal. A blouse and flying helmet bearing the name of Lt. Pitre were also washed ashore. The fact that a shell fragment was found in the body of Staff Sergeant Graves substantiates the report that the plane was shot down by hostile craft. Taking into consideration all facts of the case it is logical to believe that subject personnel, listed in paragraph 1, either perished when the plane crashed or died from drowning or exposure a short time after landing in the sea. In either case, their bodies may have been washed out into the sea or may have been washed ashore in later months and were too decomposed to be identified.

6. It is recommended, therefore, that pursuant to the provisions of Section 9, Missing Persons Act, the foregoing information be accepted as an official report of death and that casualty reports be initiated stating that the personnel listed in paragraph 1, were killed in action, 25 October 1943, when their plane crashed into the sea off the coast of Portugal, while in flying pay status. The systems will be processed in accordance with paragraph 2b, Operations Bulletin 35, 1945. The casualty reports and official reports of death will include the following statement:

Finding of Death has been issued previously under Section 5, Missing Persons Act, showing the presumed date of death as 26 October 1944. This "Report of Death", based on information received since that date, is issued in accordance with Section 9 of said Act and its effects on prior payments and settlements is as provided in Section 9.

A. L. O'BRIEN  
Investigator

APPROVED: Recommendation will be taken.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

E. E. EWING  
Lt. Colonel, AGD  
OIC, Casualty Section  
Personnel Actions Branch, AGO

AG 704 - DEAD (25 Jun 47)

F/O Robert J. Peale T=187572 Place of Death -  
In sea, 9 km N. of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal. Cause  
of Death - Plane crash in sea.  
S Sgt James W. Wheeler 35563995 Place of Death ..  
Off Shore, Vieira, Portugal. Cause of Death - Plane  
Crash.  
S/Sgt J. L. Graves 18180624 Place of Death-  
In sea, 9 km N. of Sao Pedro de Muel, Portugal. Cause  
of Death - Plane crash.

4. Letter dated 9 December 1943 from Seymour G. Pond, Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps, Assistant Military attache for Air, American Legation, Lisbon, Portugal, SUBJECT: Fatal Crash of B-26 off coast of Portugal 25 October 1943, addressed to Chief, Military Intelligence Service, (For CG, Army Air Forces, G-2) give information relative to the burial places of three of the deceased airmen, and reads in part as follows:

"An 'unidentified airman' was buried Nov. 3, 1943, in the cemetery of Vieira de Leiria, (Province of Extremadura) in Grave No. 214. It is believed this may be the body of Lieut. R. E. Pitre, A.C. However, the corpse when washed and examined had no head, hands, nor feet, all having been decomposed or eaten away by fish. A flying helmet washed ashore, and a blouse are stated to have contained the name of Lieut. R. E. Pitre.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The body of George L. Graves, as stated by the examining physician, indicated this airman died from a piece of shell fragment embedded in the corpse. Natives in Peniche said there was heard machine gun firing in the clouds first, then what appeared to be firing from a surface vessel, perhaps a U-boat (which are said to be re-fueling here), and later there was heard a violent crash when the aircraft struck the water. The undersigned visited the people of the coastal region where the aircraft crashed, on Sunday, Nov. 21, 1943, interviewed a number of individuals involved in the case, and visited the cemetery where the airmen are buried."

5. The aircraft in which subject personnel were crew members of a B-26 plane which departed from St. Mawgan, England, to Casablanca, Morocco, 25 October 1943, on a ferrying mission, following a course on the 12th meridian. Later reports indicated that the plane was lost off the coast of Portugal, which agrees with the course of flight. Natives of Peniche, Portugal, reported that



AMERICAN LEGATION  
OFFICE OF THE MILITARY AND AIR ATTACHE  
LISBON

SGP/rif

28 December 1943

SUBJECT: Death of E. R. McCulloch, O-672371, A.C.

TO: Chief, MIS (For Commanding General Army Air Forces, A-2)

1. It was reported to this office, morning of this day, that the body of an American Airman was washed ashore on Christmas Day on the Portuguese coast. The body was discovered about dawn between Nazare and Leiria, at a little fishing village called Foca. This information was given to us by the captain of the port of Nazare.

2. It was stated by the captain of the port of Nazare that an identification tag was on each wrist. The duplicate tags contain the following data:

C. R. McCulloch  
O-672371  
T-43A, c.a. Ng. McCulloch  
Route No. 1, Box 7,  
Wom Orny, Texas.

There was no head, nor feet remaining on the body when it was found.

3. This office has requested one tag be returned to this office and one tag be buried with the body. As soon as the tag is received it will be forwarded.

4. In connection with the above material, reference is made to our secret cablegram 991, dated October 29, 1943, and our letters 2669 (373) November 3, 1943; 2770 (373.) November 11, 1943; 2781 (373.) November 30, 1943; and 2819 (373.) December 9, 1943.

/s/ SEYMOUR G. POND  
Lt. Colonel, Air Corps  
Asst. Mil Attache for Air.

col 3,

1107

Second Lt. Everett R. McCulloch

Mrs. Cecelia A. McCulloch (Wife)  
Route One, Box 7,  
Von Ormy, Texas.

Flight Officer Robert J. Peale

Mrs. Norma F. Peale (Wife)  
1947 Windermire Street,  
Indianapolis, Indiana.

**FILE**

First Lt. Bernard Siegel

Mrs. Helen R. Siegel (Wife)  
4120 - 14th Street N. W.,  
Washington, D. C.

Second Lt. Ray H. Pitre

Mrs. Ida R. Pitre (Mother)  
Box 30,  
Raywood, Texas.

Staff Sgt. James W. Wheeler

Mrs. Thelma Wheeler (Wife)  
508 East South A,  
Gas City, Indiana.

Staff Sgt. J. L. Graves

Mrs. Letha A. Graves (Mother)  
Route Number Three,  
Washachis, Texas.

Staff Sgt. William M. Crawford, Jr.

Mr. William M. Crawford (Father)  
2015 Foster Avenue,  
Brooklyn, New York.