

13122

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~RESTRICTED~~

Classification changed  
to RESTRICTED  
by E. A. Brandunas, Lt. Col., AC  
by F. M. Muench, Capt., AC  
Date OCT 15 1945

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

13122

- 1. ORGANIZATION: Location Pantanelle Air Base, Italy Command or Air Force 15th AF  
Group 464th Bomb Group (H) Squadron 779th Bomb Sq (H)
- 2. SPECIFY: Place of departure Pantanelle Air Base, Italy Course Vienna Austria  
Target Heiligenstadt M/Y Type of mission Bombing
- 3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED:  
2 to 3 tenths low cumulus tops 1,000 ft. Vis 15 miles.
- 4. GIVE: [a] Date 22 Mar 45 Time 1245 Last known position Austria (48°20'N 16°20'E)  
[b] Specify whether: [] Last sighted, [] Forced down, [] Seen to crash, [] Last contacted by radio, [] No information.
- 5. AIRCRAFT [LOST] [BELIEVED LOST] AS A RESULT OF: [Check one only] by E. A. BRAJUNAK, Col., AC  
[ ] Enemy aircraft, [] Enemy anti-aircraft, [ ] Other by F. M. MUNCH, Capt., AC
- 6. AIRCRAFT: Type, model & series B-24 M AAF Serial Number 44-50332
- 7. NICKNAME OF AIRCRAFT No nickname. Call name "Black Item".
- 8. ENGINES: Type, model & series R-1830-43 AAF Serial Number [a] CP-321788  
[b] CP-322005 [c] CP-322623 [d] CP-321790
- 9. INSTALLED WEAPONS: [Make, type and serial number] Browning 50 Cal M2  
[a] 1727019 [c] 1727990 [i] 1724763  
[b] 1727218 [f] 1728049 [j] 1725214 ✓  
[e] 1727241 [g] 1728366 [k] \_\_\_\_\_  
[d] 1727090 [h] 1728375 ✓ [l] \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. PERSONNEL LISTED BELOW REPORTED AS: [] Battle Casualty, [ ] Non Battle Casualty.
- 11. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 9; Passengers 0; Total 9  
[If more than 12 persons aboard aircraft, use separate sheet]

**RESTRICTED**  
 by E. A. BRAJUNAK, Col., AC  
 by F. M. MUNCH, Capt., AC  
 MAR 19 1945

CREW POSITION	FULL NAME [Last, first, initial] RANK, SERIAL NUMBER	CURRENT NEXT OF KIN, RELATIONSHIP STATUS AND ADDRESS
1) Pilot	<u>Toscano, Theodore D.</u>	<u>2d Lt 082860C MIA Wife Mrs Dewese Toscano, 42 Franklin Ave, Lynbrook, L. I., N. Y.</u>
2) Co-Pilot	<u>Hoskinson, Donald F.</u>	<u>2d Lt 02061707 MIA Wife Mrs Esther E. Hoskinson, RR #1, West Des Moines, Iowa.</u>
B) Bomb	<u>Ehlers, Theodore D.</u>	<u>2d Lt 0717764 MIA Mother Mrs Anna C. Ehlers, 13 Virginia Terrace, Jersey City, N. J.</u>
4) Eng Gnr	<u>Sulich, George (nm)</u>	<u>S/Sgt 15082938 MIA Wife Mrs Sophie M. Sulich, 1604 Delaware St, Gary, Ind.</u>
6) RO Gnr	<u>Snyder, Dudley C.</u>	<u>T/Sgt 16028890 MIA Father Mr Otto G. Snyder, 308 S. Franklin, Winamac, Ind.</u>
4) Arm Gnr	<u>Robbins, Thomas V.</u>	<u>Cpl 36904144 MIA Wife Mrs. Ruth R. Robbins, 312 Water St, Normal, Ill.</u>
2) Arm Gnr	<u>Frazier, George R. Jr.</u>	<u>Cpl 37725657 MIA Mother Mrs Anna M. Frazier, 1100 New Jersey, Lawrence, Kansas.</u>
7) Arm Gnr	<u>Sopczynski, Dominic J.</u>	<u>Cpl 15080446 MIA Mother Mrs Mary Sopczynski, 445 S. Jackson St, South Bend, Ind.</u>
5) Arm Gnr	<u>Smith, Everett E.</u>	<u>Cpl 35246986 MIA Father Mr John L. Smith, New Harmony, Ind. (F.M.C.)</u>
(10)		
(11)		
(12)		

- 12. IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT AND CHECK APPROPRIATE [one only] Indicate basis for same: SAW CONTACTED LAST BY RADIO SIGHTED CRASH FORCED LANDING
- NAME IN FULL SERIAL No.
- [1] Chester A. Visech S/Sgt 9002792 X
- [2] Vernon F. Bruder Cpl 5903232 X
- [3] \_\_\_\_\_
- 13. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM THE SCENE OF THE CRASH, CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:  
[ ] Parachutes were used. [ ] Persons were seen moving away from the scene of the crash.  
[ ] Other reasons [specify] One parachute was seen to leave the aircraft.
- 14. ATTACH PHOTOGRAPH, MAP OR SKETCH SHOWING LAST KNOWN LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT.
- 15. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTIONS OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.
- 16. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SEARCH HERE. No search was made.

3 Inclosures.  
 Incl 1 - Statement of 1st Lt V. E. ...  
 Incl 2 - Statement of Cpl Bruder (septup)  
 Incl 3 - Map of area where plane went down (septup)

Vernon F. Bruder  
 Capt., Air Corps, Adjutant

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

779TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)  
APO 520 U. S. ARMY

23 March 1945

On the 22 March 1945 we bombed a target in Austria. I was flying the ball when someone called that "Black Item", flown by Lt. Toscano, was hit by flak. I turned the ball and saw the aircraft in a slow spin going downward with a fire from one wing tip to another. I watched for chutes and saw one chute blossom about a minute before the aircraft blew up. I am not quite sure whether the aircraft exploded in the air or upon impact with the ground.

*Chester A. Viseth*  
CHESTER A. VISETH,  
S/Sgt, 19003793,  
779th Bomb Sq (H)  
464th Bomb Gp (H)

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

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779TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)  
APO 520 U. S. ARMY

23 March 1945

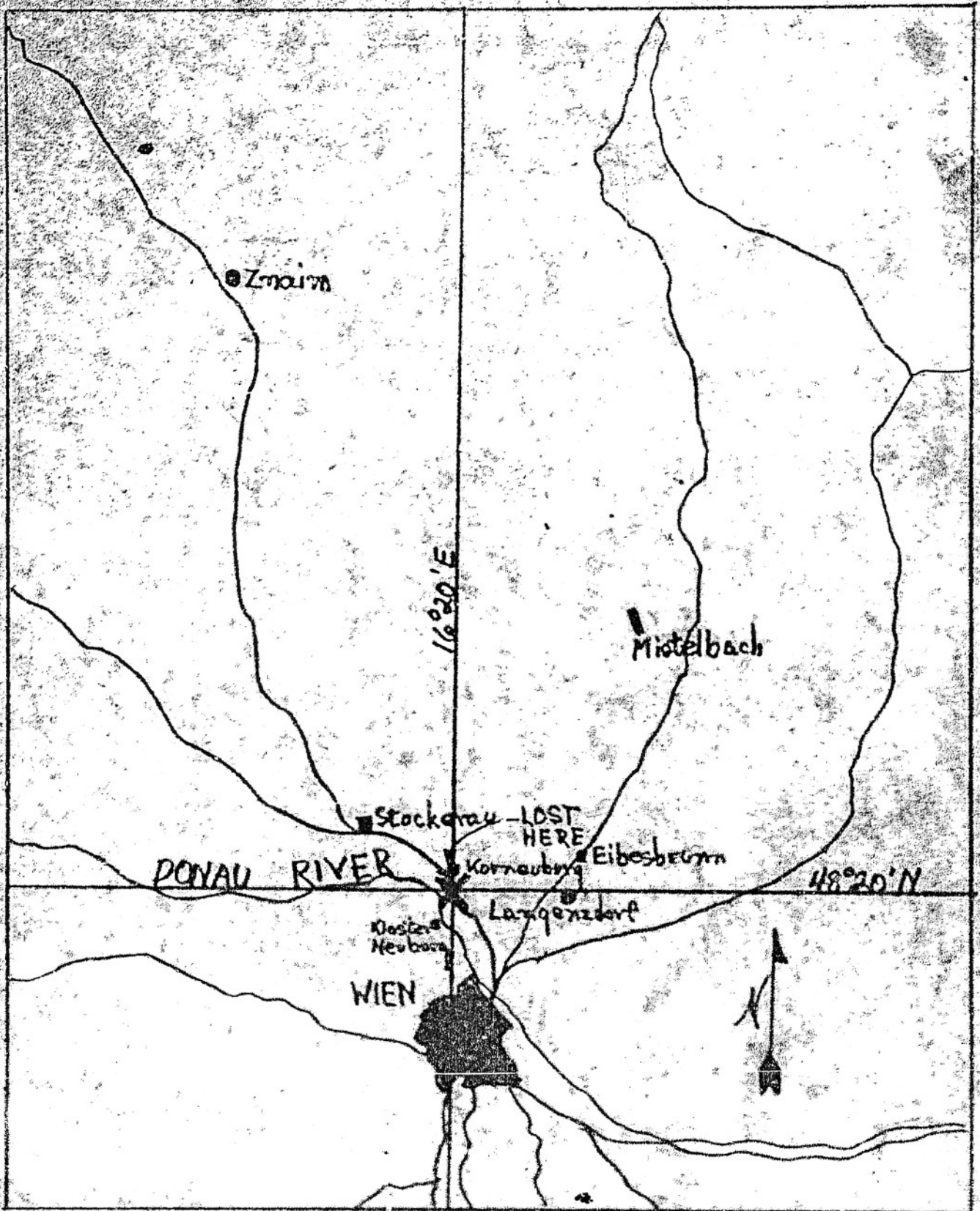
On the 22 March 1945 we bombed a target in Austria. "Black Item", flown by Lt. Toscano, was flying on our left in #13 position and as soon as we entered the flak area it received a direct hit in the bomb bay and burst into flames. The aircraft then peeled off and went to the right of us and flew approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  minutes on a level course and then went into a spin. It spun for about 5,000 feet and blew up.

I saw one chute blossom from the aircraft. However others in the crew may have made a delayed jump and been unnoticed by me.

*Vernon F. Bruder*  
VERNON F. BRUDER,  
Cpl, 35903232,  
779th Bomb Sq (H)  
464th Bomb Gp (H)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

And 521



Bombing of Heiligenstadt: - 22 MAR 45  
Grid # 31

Coordinates:  
48°20'N - 16°20'E

**Snd Lt. Theodore D. Tessano**

**Mrs. Doreen Tessano (wife)**  
48 Franklin Avenue  
Lynbrook, Long Island, New York

**Snd Lt. Ronald E. Hodginson**

**Mr. Howard E. Hodginson (father)**  
1100 Ashcroft Road  
West Des Moines, Iowa

**Snd Lt. Theodore D. Falero**

**Mrs. Anna C. Eilers (mother)**  
15 Virginia Terrace  
Jersey City, New Jersey

**S. Sgt. George Salich**

**Mrs. Sophie H. Salich (wife)**  
1004 Belmont Street  
Gary, Indiana

**S/Sgt. Dudley G. Sawyer**

**Mr. Otto G. Sawyer (father)**  
328 South Franklin Street  
Winnona, Indiana

**Cpl. Eugene V. Robbins**

**Mrs. Ruth E. Robbins (wife)**  
313 Water Street  
Normal, Illinois

**Cpl. George H. Frasier, Jr.**

**Mrs. Anna M. Frasier (mother)**  
New Jersey  
Larchmont, Indiana

**Cpl. Dominic J. Szegynski**

**Mrs. Mary Szegynski (mother)**  
415 South Jackson Street  
South Bend, Indiana

**Cpl. Everett H. Smith**

**Mr. John H. Smith (father)**  
New Harmony, Indiana

inter-vention request

Toscana, Theodora E. and H., USA, 100 100 100 100

Letter writ on by Sil. Toscana 30 July 1946

8 REMAINS RECOVERED  
FROM ISOLATED BURIAL  
IN VIENNA

Major N. W. Reed

Chief, Notification Branch  
Personal Affairs Division  
Asst. Chief of Air Staff-1

Dear Sir:

I have received your letter requesting me to forward any information I am cognizant of regarding the status of Second Lieutenant Theodore D. Toccano or any other crew members of the aircraft, B-24M, Serial Number 44-50332 which disappeared on March 22, 1945 over Vienna, Austria. I was ball turret gunner on this aircraft.

Our aircraft was hit by flak shortly after the order "bomb bay doors open." Flames immediately swept back through the rear of the aircraft from the bomb bay. While trying to get out of the ship, I became unconscious evidently from lack of oxygen. I do not know how long I was unconscious. When I regained consciousness, I opened the rear escape hatch, and before jumping out I saw Col Thomas V. Robbins on the floor under the left waist window, apparently unconscious. Col Everett E. Smith, tail gunner, was, I believe, still in the tail turret.

The radio operator was flying with us for the first time since our regular radio operator was forced down in Russia while flying as A. C. M. operator with another crew. I believe the new radio operator's name was Gen. Murphy, and I last saw him on the floor by the tail to get ammunition boxes. He also appeared to be unconscious. The flames sweeping back through the hys made it impossible for me to see anyone, since it was difficult to breathe and see. My hair was on fire and I couldn't tell what altitude we were at so I bailed out immediately.

As soon as I cleared the aircraft, I opened my parachute and hit the ground in what seemed like only a few seconds. When my chute first opened, I heard an explosion that impressed me at the time as being our aircraft crashing.

Since the aircraft was evidently at low altitude when I bailed out, I regret to say that it seems improbable that Gen. Everett E. Smith, Gen. Thomas V. Robbins, or Gen. Murphy could have bailed out after I did, assuming that they were conscious. They were probably hit by fear since I also received fear wounds. They were all wearing flak suits and flak helmets however and I cannot be certain of my judgment under the conditions.

I do not know what happened in the forward part of the aircraft since the bomb bays separate the waist from the nose. Crewmen in the forward part of the aircraft were:

- Second Lieutenant J. D. Torcano pilot
- " " Donald Hoekinson co-pilot
- " " Ehlers bombardier-navigator
- Sgt. George Dulich engineer
- Cpl. Domino Szejczynski nose gunner

During the time I was a P.W. in a Viennese hospital, other wounded airmen who were shot down and captured were brought there; but unfortunately I didn't see any of our crewmen. I could not obtain information from anyone about them.

I regret that I haven't more definite information for you.

Cpl. George R. Frazer Jr.  
 A.S.N. 37725657  
 W<sup>m</sup> Beaumont General Hosp.  
 El Paso, Texas.