

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

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INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 1

Statement by Patrick "Troy" Riggs

The following pages are from the Navy's investigation into the disappearance/death of James E Riggs.

The documents had to be re-typed as the original photo copies were to nearly unreadable due to fading over 83 years. I tried my best to recreate the pages, but could not capture the original signatures nor the official seals. I tried to format the pages to as close to the original copies as I could.

If nothing else this will give everyone reading, a sense of what transpired. In some ways the investigation was thorough, but in others, some obvious questions were left out. Remember there was still a war going on and some of the investigators seem to have made up their minds without all of the facts...I my opinion.

One of the facts that is never mentioned in the investigation is that James was a short guy. My Dad, John Riggs had mentioned that to me at some point during the years, and I again confirmed this with George Riggs via phone conversation on June 1, 2017. This would probably account for the reason the rear seat was in the up position, having been extended to its full height, and quite possibly why the parachute was folded over in the seat.; so that he could sit on it and see better. Even so there is no reason for the safety harness to have been unfastened.

Patrick "Troy" Riggs

March 2017

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 2

Body of Investigation

5th Endorsement

Pers 651 MB

5 May 1945

From: The Chief of Naval Personnel.

To: The Secretary of the Navy

Subj: Bd. of Inves. and Bd. of Inves. in Rev. - Missing
status of James E. Riggs, AO 1c, USN; conv. by CO,
CASU 24, (SOP), 28 Dec 1944.

1. Returned, recommending approval, subject to the
remarks of the Judge Advocate General contained in the third
Endorsement.

By direction

W. H SNYDER

Lieutenant, U.S.N.R.

Discipline Section,

Enlisted Performance Division.

MEMORANDUM TO ALL BUREAUS CONCERNED

When remarks are made concerning the attached record in the endorsement by any bureau through which the record is forwarded, it is requested that 3 copies of this endorsement be attached thereto so that this office may forward a copy to the convening and reviewing authorities or reporting and forwarding officers.

By direction of the Judge Advocate General:

H. A. Sailor

Captain, U.S.N.

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL
WASHINGTON D.C.

Pers-53224-mmh

15 February 1945

End--2

To: Secretary of the Navy (Office of the Judge
Advocate General).

Subj: Record of Proceedings of a Board of Investigation
convened at the Naval Air Station, Wildwood,
New Jersey - to inquire into the circumstances
attending the disappearance of James Ernest RIGGS,
Aviation Ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

1. Forwarded.

2. RIGGS, James Ernest. AOM1c, 316 92 64, USN,
was reported to be "missing" as of 21 December 1944.

3. A full review of all of the evidence pertaining to this
matter was made on 15 February 1945 by the Director of the
Dependants Welfare Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel
under the provisions of Public Law 408, 78th Congress, and
it was determined that the subject named enlisted man be
continued in the status of "missing" (not enemy action).

By Direction of the Chief of Naval Personnel.

H. B. ATKINSON
Commander, U.S.N.R.
Officer in Charge
Casualty Notification
and Processing Section

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL
WASHINGTON D.C.

JAG:I:RKY:bjs
MM-Riggs, James E./A17-25

31 JAN 1945
End-1

To: BuPers

Subj: Bd. of Inves. - missing status of James E. Riggs, AOM1c'
USN; conv. by CO, CASU 24, 28 Dec 1944.

1. Forwarded for appropriate action.

By direction of the Judge Advocate General:

R. O. SANDERSON
Colonel, U.S.M.C. (Ret)

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
FLEET AIR, QUONSET POINT

FF13-17/
A17-25

SERIAL:

U.S Naval Air Station,

Quonset Point, R. I.

The proceeding and the findings, in revision, of the Board of Investigation of the attached case are approved.

The opinions in revision are approved with the exception of numbers 4, 7, and 12.

The recommendation in revision of the Board are approved with the exception of recommendation 4.

The opinions and recommendation enumerated above are disapproved for the reasons set forth in the action of the reviewing authority dated February 19, 1945, in which the proceedings were returned to the Board for revision.

Gordon Rowe
Commodore, U. S. Navy
Commander Fleet Air, Quonset Point.

U. S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TWENTY FOUR,
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
22 MARCH 1945

The proceedings in revision of the Board of Investigation in the attached case are approved.

The additional findings of fact by the Board of Investigation of its former finding of fact number 18 is approved. The adherence by the board of investigation to the remainder of the former findings of fact is approved.

The action of the board of investigation in adhering to its former opinions number 1, 5, and 8 is disapproved in accordance with the provisions of the action of Commander Fleet Air, Quonset Point, and of Section 736(b), Naval Courts and Boards. Opinions number 4, 7, and 12 as modified by the proceedings in revision are disapproved for the reason that they are not supported by the evidence. The action of the board of investigation in revoking its former opinions number 9, 11, and 14 is approved. The remaining former opinions, numbers 2, 3, 6, 10, 13, and 15, which were adhered to by the board of investigation, are approved.

The recommendation substituted by the board of investigation for its former recommendation number 1 is approved. Recommendation number 2, which was adhered to by the board of investigation, is approved. The action of the board of investigation in adhering to its former recommendation number 4, is disapproved in conformity with the action previously taken by the reviewing authority.

J. DONOVAN
Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve,
Commanding,
U.S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TWENTY- FOUR
and SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT.

U. S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TWENTY FOUR,
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
17 MARCH 1945

The board convened at 10:00am, pursuant to an order hereto prefixed marked "A", which was read by the junior member, acting as recorder.

Present:

Lieutenant Commander George C. Simmons, junior, U.S. Navy, senior member;
Lieutenant Edward A. Swan,(A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, member; and
Lieutenant Heiskell Weatherford, junior, Class V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve, reporter.

After a full and mature deliberation, the board decided as follows:

- (a) To find the following additional fact: "That the safety belt in the rear cockpit of said plane was not broken and was arranged in orderly fashion.
- (b) To revoke its former finding of fact number 18.
- (c) To modify the former opinion on number 4 by deleting therefrom the words "unfastened his safety belt and".
- (d) To modify its former opinion number 7 by deleting therefrom words "voluntarily and knowingly".
- (e) To revoke its former opinion number 9.
- (f) To revoke its former opinion number 11.
- (g) To modify its former opinion number 12 by deleting from lines 3 and 6 thereof the words "safety belt and".
- (h) To revoke its former opinion number 14.
- (i) To revoke its former recommendation number 1, and to substitute therefor the following recommendation: "It is the recommendation of the board that James Ernest Riggs should be carried in a status of missing."
- (j) To revoke its former recommendation number 3.

The board decided respectfully to adhere to the remainder of its former finding of fact, opinions and recommendations.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy, Senior Member.

EDWARD A. SWAN,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U.S. Naval Reserve, Member.

HIESKELL WEATHERFORD JR.,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U.S. Naval Reserve, Member.

The board then, at 10:30 a.m., adjourned to await the action of the convening authority.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy, Senior Member.

HIESKELL WEATHERFORD JR.,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U.S. Naval Reserve, Recorder

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
AIR FORCE
CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TEWNTY-FOUR

CASU-24/A17-25

c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, New York
8 March 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: Lieutenant Commander George C. Simmons, junior, U. S. Navy.
Subject: Board of Investigation to inquire into and report upon the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.
Reference: (a) ComFAirquonset action as reviewing authorityFF13-17/A17-25, serial693, dated February 19, 1945.
Enclosure: (1) Record of proceedings of board of investigation subject investigation.

1. The record of proceedings of the board of investigation of which you are senior member, in subject investigation, is herewith returned to the board, in accordance with the recommendation contained in reference (a).
2. The attention of the board is directed to reference (a).
3. The board will reconvene for the purpose of reconsidering its findings of fact, opinions and recommendations. At the conclusion of the proceedings in revision, the record will be returned to the convening authority.

J. DONOVAN
Commander, U. S. Naval Reserve,
Commanding,
U.S. CARRIER SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR
and SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT.

Serial: 693

U. S. Naval Air Station,
Quonset Point, R. I.,
February 19, 1945.

From: The Commander Fleet Air, Quonset Point.
To: The Commanding Officer, Carrier Aircraft Services Unit
TWENTY-FOUR.

Subject: Board of Investigation - To inquire into the circumstances
attending the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation
ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

Enclosure: 1.

1. The record of proceedings in the subject board of investiga-
tion, of which you are the convening authority, is herewith returned.

2. The reviewing authority disapproves of the findings, opinions
and recommendations hereinafter referred to for the reasons stated:

- (a) Finding number 18 - no evidence to support same.
- (b) Opinion number 1 insofar as it states the Ensign Watkins was
guilty of negligence in failing to establish communication with
his passenger prior to take-off. While it is customary for a
pilot to establish communication with a passenger prior to take-
off, failure to do so does not constitute negligence.
- (c) Opinions number 4 and 9 - no evidence to
support same.
- (d) Opinions number 5, 7, 8, and 11 - insufficient evidence to
support same.
- (e) Opinions 12 and 14 - insufficient evidence to support same.
There is no evidence as to when any of the acts referred to
were performed or that Riggs' safety belt was never fastened.
The only evidence is that Riggs' unfastened his parachute harness
at some time after he got into the aircraft and that his cock-
pit was open at the time of take-off, at 1330, and at time of landing.
Furthermore, the concurrence of all the circumstances, even if
done knowingly by Riggs, is not inconsistent with every conclusion
which might reasonably be drawn therefrom, other than that he
voluntarily left the aircraft in flight.

FF13-17/
A17-25

UNITED STATES ATLANTIC FLEET
FLEET AIR, QUONSET POINT

Serial : 693

Subject: Board of Investigation - To inquire into the circumstances attending the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U.S, Navy.

- (f) Recommendation number 1 insofar as it recommends that, if Riggs should be declared dead, his death should be held to have occurred not in the line of duty and as a result of his own misconduct - insufficient evidence to support said portion of recommendation.
 - (g) Recommendation number 3 and 4, because they do not come within the purview of the precept. The reviewing authority expresses no opinion on the soundness of said recommendation.
3. The reviewing authority recommends that the board of investigation\be reconvened to reconsider its findings, opinions and recommendations, and that the action of the convening authority be revised in accordance with the provision of this letter.
4. At the conclusion of the proceedings in revision, the record will be returned to the reviewing authority.

Gordon Rowe,
Commodore, U. S. Navy,
Commander Fleet Air, Quonset Point.

After full and mature deliberation the board finds as follows:

FINDING OF FACTS

1. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, is attached to bombing squadron NINETY-SEVEN and was on the flight schedule of said squadron dated 21 December 1944 for an SB2C familiarization flight during the period of 1300 to 1445 on said date, said flight to be begun and ended at the Naval Air Station Wildwood, New Jersey.
2. That said Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve was assigned SB2C-1C bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, for this flight.
3. That said aircraft assignment was publicized by writing the aforesaid squadron number nineteen beside the name of "Watkins" as said name appeared on the aforesaid flight schedule, duly posted on the bulletin board of said squadron, and Ensign Watkins was thereby advised of the plane assigned to him for the scheduled flight.
4. That on 21 December 1944, the names of passengers, if any, were not printed or typewritten on flight schedules of said squadron at the time said schedule s were initially posted on the bulletin board of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
5. That passengers names, if any, are listed for flights in aircraft assigned to Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN by being written on the typewritten or printed flight schedule of said squadron opposite the name of the pilot whom each passenger is permitted to accompany by the Flight Officer, the Squadron Duty Officer, the Line Duty Officer, or the Engineering Duty Officer of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
6. That the squadron policy of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN requires permission for flights in aircraft of said squadron to be obtained from the Flight Officer of said squadron but said policy is not expressed in any written order or other written communication of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
7. That the name of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordanaceman first class, U.S. Navy, was written on the flight schedule of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN, dated 21 December 1944, beside the name "Watkins" for the aforesaid familiarization flight scheduled for Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, prior to the time of said flight and was seen by Watkins and noted upon by him as authority for permitting said Riggs to board, as passenger, the plane to be piloted by said Watkins.
8. That the name of Riggs was so written on the flight schedule of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN by Ensign V. X. Johnson, U.S. Naval Reserve, then attached to Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN and on 21 December 1944 assigned to duty as Squadron Duty Officer of said squadron.
9. That Ensign Johnson made entry upon the belief that James Ernest Riggs had duly obtained authority and permission to make said flight as a passenger.
10. That James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordanaceman first class, U.S. Navy obtained a parachute, helmet and life jacket prior to 1300, 21 December 1944.

11. That James Ernest Riggs boarded aforementioned aircraft, SB2C-1C, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, and that at that time had put or properly fastened the parachute, helmet and life jacket which he had previously procured.
12. That James Ernest Riggs was reluctant to give his name to the plane captain for entry on the Daily Flight Inspection Form, normally known as "yellow sheet" and did not give his name to said plane captain until after the aforementioned plane had proceeded from the parking apron to the wing-lock inspection station at the entrance to the taxi-strip.
13. That James Ernest Riggs was seen to be in the aforesaid aircraft, piloted by Ensign Milton S. Watkins, for a distance of three hundred yards from the aforesaid wing-lock examination station and was not seen thereafter nor seen to disembark from said aircraft prior to the take-off of said aircraft on the scheduled flight.
14. That James Ernest Riggs was, on 21 December 1944, under orders duly issued by Carrier Aircraft Services Unit TWENTY-FOUR authorizing him to participate in aircraft flights.
15. That James Ernest Riggs was conversant with the operation and use of safety gear and appliances used in conjunction with said flight.
16. That the aircraft piloted by Ensign Watkins took off from the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, on the scheduled flight at or about 1320, 21 December 1944 and did not again land until about 1440, 21 December, 1944, when it returned to the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.
17. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins was not in communication with his passenger, James Ernest Riggs, after they boarded the aircraft.
18. That James Ernest Riggs made no effort to get into communication with his pilot, Ensign Watkins.
19. That James Ernest Riggs did not report any malfunction of the intercommunication system to the plane captain, Shute, or to the pilot, Ensign Watkins, either prior to leaving the parking area, or at the wing-lock examination station.
20. That about 1400 on 21 December 1944, an object, estimated to be of the size of a man's body, was seen to fall from an aircraft, over the Atlantic Ocean.
21. That James Ernest Riggs was not seen to disembark from said aircraft after it landed at Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, at the conclusion of said flight.
22. That James Ernest Riggs was not seen in said aircraft when it returned to its parking space on the parking apron of Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.
23. That the aircraft was inspected after its return to its parking space, that the parachute which had been issued to said Riggs was found to be in the seat of the rear cockpit of said aircraft with the harness and back of said parachute folded forward and down onto said parachute; that a woolen mitten

was found on the floor board of said aircraft; that the interior of said rear cockpit gave no evidence, of an accident, or of airsickness; that the exterior of said aircraft gave no evidence of any airsickness on the part of an occupant of said plane; that the external surfaces of said aircraft gave no evidence of having been struck by any falling body.

24. That James Ernest Riggs has not been seen or located since the aforementioned flight of 21 December 1944.

25. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins did not engage in any violent or acrobatic maneuvers of his SB2C-1S aircraft which he was piloting during the period from 1300 to 1445 on 21 December 1944.

OPINIONS

1. It is the opinion of the board that Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, was guilty of negligence in failing to establish communication with the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, prior to departing from the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, but that said negligence did not proximately cause or contribute to the disappearance of said passenger.

2. It is further the opinion of the board that Ensign Milton S. Watkins was guilty of no other negligence or act which contributed to the disappearance of said James Ernest Riggs.

3. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs boarded SB2C-1C aircraft, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, at or about 1300, 21 December 1944, and was aboard said aircraft when became airborne at or about 1320, 21 December, 1944.

4. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs unfastened his safety belt and removed his parachute harness after said aircraft became airborne and that James Ernest Riggs thereby knowingly exhibited a reckless and wanton disregard for the safety of his own life.

5. It is further the opinion of the board that the hatch of the rear cockpit of said plane was closed during flight after the aircraft became airborne and was opened during the flight and prior to the return of said aircraft to the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.

6. It is further the opinion of the board that the SB2C-1C, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, was not maneuvered by the pilot, Ensign Watkins, in a manner sufficiently violent to have accidentally thrown the passenger therefrom, nor was the condition of the atmosphere such to have caused the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, to be thrown from the aircraft.

7. It is further the opinion of the board that the passenger, James Ernst Riggs, voluntarily and knowingly left said aircraft without his parachute, while said aircraft was airborne and in flight, in the area between the towns of Wildwood, New Jersey and Ocean City, New Jersey.

8. It is further the opinion of the board that, while an object was seen to fall from an unidentified aircraft, such object, by virtue of the location in which it was seen to fall, was not the body of James Ernest Riggs.

9. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs made no attempt to establish communication with the pilot, Ensign Milton S. Watkins, after they had boarded the aircraft.

10. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs was, on 21 December 1944, and at the time of the flight in which he participated as passenger, sane and mentally normal.

11. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs had an adequate motive for taking his own life, in that he had experienced, prior to 21 December 1944, a severance of relations previously maintained with one Virginia Kenyon, which severance he bitterly resented.

12. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs, as a passenger with flight orders authorizing him to participate in aircraft flights and with previous flight experience, would not remove his safety belt and parachute harness while in flight with the hatch to his cockpit open, unless such removal was done willingly, knowingly, and intentionally, and that such a passenger, had he removed his safety belt and parachute harness with the hatch to his cockpit closed, would not thereafter open such hatch unless such opening was knowingly and voluntarily done.

13. It is further the opinion of the board that due to the fact that this flight occurred in winter weather with low temperatures prevalent, said flight would normally have occurred with the hatch to said passengers cockpit closed throughout the period the plane was aloft.

14. It is further the opinion of the board that the only manner in which Riggs could have left the aircraft was by the occurrence of the above stated conditions, namely, the removal of the safety belt and parachute harness and the opening of the rear hatch of the aircraft, all of which are believed to have taken place during flight through the willful, voluntary and intentional act of the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, which occurrence is inconsistent with any conclusion other than that Riggs voluntarily left said aircraft in flight.

15. It is further the opinion of the board that it is remotely possible that James Ernest Riggs may have disembarked from the aircraft prior to its becoming airborne, at or about 1320 on 21 December 1944 or immediately after the return of said aircraft to the parking area on the apron of said Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs should be carried in a status of missing and if it be determined, either through the passage of time or otherwise, that said James Ernest Riggs should be declared dead, said death should be held to have occurred not in the line of duty and as a result of his own misconduct.

2. It is further the opinion of the board that, in view of the remote possibility expressed in the forgoing opinion that James Ernest Riggs may have left the aircraft at a time other than when said aircraft was airborne, a further search for said Riggs should be conducted by proper authorities. It is suggested that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and/or the

civil authorities would be appropriate agencies to conduct such search and that such search should include, among other places and persons, the following cities and persons:

Lincoln, Nebraska: Mr. Lewis Carrol Riggs, 2303 South 10th street.
Virginia Kenyon, 3835 South 16th Street.
Memphis, Tennessee: June Bacigalupo, 1370 Poplar Avenue.
Chicago, Illinois; 3314 West Harrison Street,

3. It is further the recommendation of the board that the commanding officer of each aircraft unit should require each pilot attached to his unit to establish intercommunication with any passenger, other than his regularly assigned aircrewman, who may be assigned to participate in a flight with such pilot prior to the beginning of said flight and that in the event of inability or failure to establish such intercommunication, the passenger shall not be permitted to participate in the flight. Such intercommunication should be periodically checked during flight and in the event of a failure of said intercommunication during flight; the aircraft concerned should be immediately returned to its base and notification of said failure and the time thereof given to the commanding officer of the squadron to which the plane is assigned and the commanding officer of the unit to which the passenger is attached.

4. It is further the recommendation of the board that responsible personnel should assigned in conjunction with the duty of observing aircraft taking off from Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, the positive duty of observing and logging the presence or absence of a passenger from each plane departing, as it becomes airborne.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.,
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy, Senior Member.

EDWARD A. SHAW,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Member

HEISKELE WEATHERFORD JR.
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Member

The record of proceedings of the first and second days of the investigation was read and approved, the board being cleared during the reading thereof, and the board having finished the investigation, then, at 12:30 p.m. adjourned to await the action of the convening authority.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.,
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy, Senior Member.

HEISKELE WEATHERFORD JR.
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Member

U.S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
9 FEBURARY 1945.

The proceedings and findings of fact of the board of investigation in the attached case are approved.

The opinions of the board of investigation in the attached case are approved with the following exceptions; The convening authority disapproves of opinion number 4 for the reason that there is insufficient proof for such an opinion. The convening authority further disapproves of opinion number 7 for the reason that there is no evidence in the record to prove conclusively whether the absence from the aircraft was voluntary or not. The convening authority further disapproves of opinion number 11 for the reason that the evidence of motive for RIGGS' taking his own life is inadequate, the only proof thereof in the record being an unauthenticated letter, the text of which is susceptible of interpretation other than that given by the board of investigation. It is noted that the said letter was written on a date subsequent to the date on which RIGGS disappeared. It is the opinion of the convening authority that the record in the attached investigation does not disclose any reasonable motive for RIGGS' taking his own life. The convening authority further disapproves of opinion number 12 for the reason that said opinion is not supported by the testimony. The remaining opinions, numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 15 are approved.

The convening authority disapproves of recommendation number 1 for the reason that it is the opinion of the convening authority that RIGGS should be declared missing and presumed dead and that the questions of misconduct and line of duty cannot be determined in the absence of more conclusive evidence. The remaining recommendations, numbers 2, 3, and 4, are approved, particular attention being directed to recommendation number 3.

James Ernest RIGGS is declared to be missing and the disbursing office has this day been notified thereof.

J. DONOVAN
Commander, U. S. Naval Reserve,
Commanding,
U. S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR
and SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

OF A

BOARD OF INVESTIGATION

CONVENED AT THE

NAVAL AIR STATION, WILDWOOD, NEW JERSEY

BY ORDER OF

THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR

and SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT

To inquire into the circumstances attending the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

The Board of Investigation convened at the U. S. Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, to inquire into the circumstances attending the disappearance of

JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

aviation ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

29 December 1944

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TESTIMONY

Name of Witness	: Board	: Cross	: Corrected
Milton S. Watkins, Ens., USNR	: 1	:	: 5
Thomas L Rector, Lt., USNR	: 9	:	:
Thomas F. Delaney, civilian	: 11	:	:
Robert L. Gay, sea2c, USNR	: 13	:	:
Donald F. Shute, amm3c, USN	: 15	:	:
Arthur Pavac, acmm, USN	: 19	:	: 21
William A. Miller, Lt., USNR	: 22	:	:
Peter J. Jenjins, sea2c, USNR	: 23	:	:
Forrest M. Ervin, amm2c, USNR	: 24	: ;	:
Rpbert E. Wagner, aom(b)2c, USNR	: 25	:	:
William A. Andrews, acom, USNR	: 26, 29	: 29	:
Robert A. Seaman, aom1c, USNR	: 29	:	:
Santonio P. Gianetti, Lt.(j.g.)), USNR	: 33	:	:
Harold A. Camp, arm1c, USN	: 34	:	:
Fay Teichman, sp(Y)3c, USNR	: 36	:	:
Grant P. Rogers, Lt.com., USN	:	:	:

EXHIBITS

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CASU-24/A17-25/hgm

U.S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR.
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
28 December 1944.

From: The Commanding Officer
To: Lieutenant Commander George C. Simmons, Junior, U. S. Navy.
Subject: Board of Investigation to inquire into and report upon the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

1. A Board of Investigation consisting of yourself as senior member and of Lieutenant Edward A. Swan, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve and Lieutenant Heiskell Weatherford, junior, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve as members, will convene on board the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, on Friday, 29 December 1944, or as soon thereafter as practicable, for the purpose of inquiring into and reporting upon the disappearance of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U. S. Navy.

2. It is directed that the board notify Ensign Milton S. Watkins, A-V(N), U. S. Naval Reserve, of the time and place of the meeting of the board and that he will be accorded the privileges of an interested party in accordance with the provisions of Naval Courts and Boards.

3. The board will thoroughly inquire into the matter hereby submitted to it and will include in it's findings a full statement of the facts it may deem to be established. The board will further give its opinion and recommend further proceedings as provided in section 735, Naval Courts and Boards.

4. The attention of the board is particularly invited to section 734, Naval Courts and Boards.

ALEXANDER BEACH
Lieutenant Commander, U. S, Naval Reserve,
Commanding,
U. S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICES UNIT TWENTY-FOUR
and SENIOR OFFICER PRESENT.

FIRST DAY

U. S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TWENTY-FOUR,
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
29 December 1944.

The board met at 9:10 a.m.

Present;

Lieutenant Commander George S. Simmons, Junior, U. S. Navy, senior member;
Lieutenant Edward A. Swan, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Heiskell Weatherford, Junior, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, members.

Harold G. Marvel, yeoman second class, Class V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve, was introduced as reporter.

The convening order, hereto prefixed, was read, and the board determined upon its procedure and decided to sit with closed doors.

Ensign Milton S. Watkins, A-V(N), U. S. Naval Reserve, entered as an interested party and stated that he did not desire counsel.

The convening order was read.

The interested party was informed of his rights.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the investigation were present.

Ensign Milton S. Watkins, A-V(N), U. S. Naval Reserve, an interested party, was at his own request called by the board as a witness, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. Milton S. Watkins, ensign, A-V(N), U. S. Naval Reserve, attached to VB-97.

2. Q. Mr. Watkins, did you on Thursday, the twenty-first of December 1944, have a scheduled familiarization flight?

A. Yes, sir.

3. Q. What time was that scheduled?

A. For 1300.

4. Q. Does your squadron have a flight board to designate the planes and pilots?

A. The flight schedule is posted on the bulletin board just before each hop, giving the number of planes and the names of any passengers are written in on this schedule.

5. Q. I have here a sheet which is marked "Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN Flight Schedule". I ask you if this is the flight schedule which you refer to?

A. Yes, sir, it is.

The flight schedule was submitted to the interested party and to the board and offered in evidence. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended marked "Exhibit 1".

6. Q. Is it on a paper of that character that the plane numbers and passengers are listed when they become known?
A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. There is an entry that shows "1300-1445 SB2C familiarization", then the names "Overall, Zundell, Watkins, Wiengartner". Is that the scheduled flight to which was referenced?
A. Yes, sir.

8. Q. Is this flight schedule posted on the board or written on the blackboard in chalk?
A. Posted on the board.

9. Q. Was it on this schedule (Exhibit 1) which was posted on the blackboard that you saw your plane number posted?
A. Yes, sir.

10. Q. About what time did you find your plane number?
A. About 1225.

11. Q. At that time was there a passenger listed beside your name?
A. Yes, sir.

12. Q. What was that name?
A. Riggs.

13. Q. Was there passengers for other planes in the flight?
A. No, sir.

14. Q. Did you have any part in making the arraignments for Riggs to be your passenger?
A. No, sir.

15. Q. Did you know Riggs personally?
A. No, sir, not before the hop.

16. Q. Riggs is not attached to VB-97?
A. No, sir. I am pretty sure he is not.

17. Q. Had you been contacted by Riggs at any time during the morning of 21 December, 1944 prior to this flight?
A. Yes, sir, just about 10 minutes prior to my flight. I was in the ready room and I overheard an enlisted man speak to Ensign Overall and ask him if he knew Mr. Watkins. I asked him what he wanted and told him I was Mr. Watkins. He told me that he was going to fly with me and asked if I had any objections.

18. Q. Now, Mr. Watkins, after you found out which plane you were to fly and your passenger's name, did you go to the line to get into your plane?
A. I went down to check out a parachute. Riggs and Ensign Overall checked out parachutes with me. The three of us then walked out to the line.

19. Q. Did Riggs indicate to you what reason he had for making the flight?

A. No, sir, he did not.

20. Q. Now, will you describe to us what took place after you checked out your parachute and walked down to the line?

A. I was putting on my parachute and Riggs helped me with one of my straps. I got up on the wing and climbed into the front cockpit and he climbed into the rear cockpit.

21. Q. Did Riggs appear to be familiar with what he was doing as passenger as far as you could see?

A. Yes, sir as far as I could see. He certainly knew something about the parachute harness.

22. Q. Had Riggs ever made a flight to your knowledge?

A. Yes, sir. He told me he had flown with Ensign Watson. Ensign Watson was on leave. He got the names of Ensign Watkins and Watson mixed up and thought when he learned my name that he would be flying with the other man.

23. Q. Will you go ahead and relate to us what happened after you were in your plane?

A. The plane captain assisted me with my harness and then turned his attention to the passenger and I went ahead with preparation to start and when the plane captain gave me the "all clear" to start, I started the engine and while I was warming up I checked to see if I could get the passenger on I.C.S. I couldn't get him so I checked with the tower.

24. Q. At any time during the flight did you get contact with the passenger?

A. No, sir.

25. Q. Did you get "side tone" when you tried to check your phones. What I mean is when you were on I.C.S. could you hear yourself in your earphones?

A. Yes.

26. Q. Which was the number of your plane?

A. It is number 19. I think it was 9B19 but I am not sure.

27. Q. What model was it?

A. SB2C-1C.

28. Q. Is this the "yellow sheet" that you signed that day?

A. Yes, sir, that's my signature.

The yellow sheet (Daily Flight Inspection Form) was submitted to the interested party and to the board in evidence. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended marked "Exhibit 2".

29. Q. Can you tell us whether, at the time you signed the inspection form (Exhibit 2), the passenger's name appeared on it?

A. He didn't write his name on the yellow sheet. It wasn't on there when I signed it.

30. Q. You were aware that it wasn't on there when you signed it?

A. Yes, sir.

31. Q. What Happened after that?

A. The plane captain gave me the signal of "all clear" to taxi out. I taxied from the line to tower to unfold my wings and have the wing locks inspected.

A plan of the runways of the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, was submitted to the interested party and to the board and offered in evidence as a plan of said runways. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended marked as "Exhibit 3".

32. Q. Will you mark on Exhibit 3 the location where the wing-lock inspection took place?

A. Yes, sir.

The witness marked Exhibit 3 with an "X" at a point on an indicated taxi-way near the control tower.

33. Q. Now, what happened at the wing-lock position?

A. When my wings were fully spread a man checked each side but he didn't give me the signal to taxi on for a minute because the plane captain, just as soon as my wings spread, hopped on my wing.

34. Q. Did you see the plane captain?

A. Yes, sir.

35. Q. Now after you left the wing-lock position, you then proceeded to the take-off position?

A. Yes, sir.

36. Q. Will you indicate to us on "Exhibit 3" the path you followed in taxiing to your take-off position?

A. Yes.

The witness indicated on "Exhibit 3" the path he followed in going to his take-off position, marking the take-off position with a "Y".

37. Q. You have indicated on "exhibit 3" that you proceeded along the taxi-way from the wing-lock position to the point of the intersection of that taxi-way and runway number 28?

A. Yes, sir.

38. Q. That runway was in use?

A. Yes, the east-west runway.

39. Q. Did you have to stop after you left the wing-lock position and before you got to the take-off point?

A. Yes, sir. I think three planes landed before I took off.

40. Q. Were there any planes taking off ahead of you after those three planes landed?

A. I think there was.

41. Q. How many planes took off ahead of you after those three planes landed?

A. About two.

42. Q. How many planes were behind you?

A. One -- the Howard instrument plane.

43. Q. Had you any contact with the tower by radio?

A. I could hear the tower.

44. Q. Your radio was alright but your I.C.S was not. Is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

45. Q. After you took off, will you describe to us what type of flight you took, where you went and how you went?

A. I proceeded to the coast and circled Cape May. I then headed north along the coast for about one-eighth or one-quarter hour as far as Ocean City. Just the other side of Ocean City I turned inward and flew over the bays and marshes and circled southward around the area of Wildwood. I flew around the inland lakes and marshes just north of Wildwood.

46. Q. Now, in your flight did you at any time go to the south or south-eastward of Wildwood?

A. The only time I was around that area was on my way down, returning to the field.

47. Q. Mr. Watkins, I have here what purports to section of a chart on which a flight track has been made. Did you make that track?

A. Yes, sir.

The chart was submitted to the interested party and to the board and offered in evidence as the track of the flight made by Ensign Watkins. There being no objection, it was so received and is appended marked "Exhibit 4".

48. Q. Will you indicate on "Exhibit 4" the direction of the lines by marking arrows on them?

The interested party indicated the direction of his flight by marking arrows on the exhibit.

A. That's my path going to Ocean City and my path to Wildwood, coming in above North Wildwood, back to the field. That is the exact path as near as I can trace it.

49. Q. You have indicated on the chart a rectangular area and as I understand it, it is in that area you accomplished most of your flight?

A. Yes, sir.

50. Q. How many hours do you have in the SB2C?

A. Roughly between 10 and 15 hours.

51. Q. Have you ever flown with a passenger before.

A. Yes, sir.

52. Q. Will you explain the characteristics of the different feel of the SB2C when the rear hood is open and when the rear hood is closed?

A. When the front hood is closed, and the rear hood is open you can feel a drag.

53. Q. Are you familiar with the difference in feel of the stick with the front hood closed and the rear hood open?

A. No, sir.

54. Q. Have you ever noticed in flying the SB2C the vibration of the stick?
A. Yes, sir.
55. Q. Did you notice the vibration of the stick on this particular flight?
A. Yes, sir, I did.
56. Q. During this flight did you notice at any time the vibration cease and the stick smooth out?
A. It wasn't vibrating the whole flight.
57. Q. Can you recall a definite difference during this flight when the stick vibrated and when it was smoothed out?
A. Yes, sir.
58. Q. And you felt it during the flight?
A. Yes, sir.
59. Q. Can you give an estimate of the time when you noticed this difference between this vibration and the smoothing out?
A. No, sir, I can't.
60. Q. Shortly after you took off at the first part of the flight, was the plane smooth in handling?
A. Yes, sir.
61. Q. How far did you go with its remaining smooth in flight?
A. I had gone northward to Ocean City and circled back over the inland lakes and the area north of Wildwood.
62. Q. Was this fairly close to Wildwood?
A. Yes, sir.
63. Q. Did you then notice the stick beginning to vibrate?
A. Yes, sir.
64. Q. Did your flying again smooth out after the vibration?
A. I didn't notice.
65. Q. Do you know whether or not the rear hatch was open at the time you took off?
A. No, sir, I don't.
66. Q. Did you land at any place other than the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey?
A. No, sir.
67. Q. Did you land at any place or at any time prior to the conclusion of this scheduled familiarization flight?
A. No, sir.
68. Q. Can you tell us approximately what time you landed at the end of this scheduled flight?
A. Yes, sir. It was about 1440.
69. Q. Did you have occasion to stop on the field after landing before you returned to the line?
A. No, sir.

70. Q. In other words, you landed and taxied directly on into the line without stopping?

A. Yes, sir.

71. Q. At what altitude were you flying during most of the flight?

A. Going down the coast my highest altitude was about 2500. At one time I was flying at 200ft. That was the lowest. My altitude over the area of North Wildwood was between 1000 and 2500 feet.

72. Q. What were the flying conditions at the time of the flight?

A. The air was comparatively smooth.

73. Q. During the flight did you meet up with one or more other planes?

A. Yes, sir. I saw Ensign Overall.

74. Q. That was a single plane?

A. Yes, sir.

75. Q. Did you see any other planes in your flight besides the one you mentioned?

A. Yes, sir. I saw a tow-plane with a sleeve.

76. Q. Did you have occasion to simulate a pass at the sleeve?

A. No, sir.

77. Q. Will you describe the circumstances or the manner in which your plane and the plane of Ensign Overall's met in the flight?

A. When I saw him he was in the area of North Wildwood. I just kept watching him. He came up just ahead of me but at the time didn't join up on him. I got close enough to see his number and tell who it was from that number.

78. Q. After you did find out who it was or identified the plane, what did you do?

A. I just broke off at about 45-degree turn away from him.

79. Q. When you made this 45-degree turn in breaking away, will you tell us what attitude your plane assumed?

A. It was about a 30-degree bank.

80. Q. Was that the steepest bank you made during the flight?

A. No, sir

81. Q. About how steep was the steepest bank you made?

A. Approximately 45 degrees.

82. Q. When you refer to these degrees you refer to the number of degrees from the horizontal?

A. Yes, sir.

83. Q. Did you engage in any aerobatic or acrobatic maneuvers?

A. No, sir.

94. Q. Will you describe to us what you observed when you got out of your plane after you had brought your plane back to the line?

A. The head lineman hopped up on the wing and asked if it was a cross country hop and I told him no. He asked me who sent the plane up with the

rear hood open and if I had a passenger. I said that I had a passenger in the rear seat. About that time the plane captain looked in the rear cockpit and said there was no one back there. I got out and observed for myself and found the parachute in the seat and one glove lying on the floorboard.

85. Q. Did the parachute seem to be in disorder or was it fairly well arranged in the seat?

A. It was not in disorder. It looked to me as if a fellow had unbuckled his parachute and just slipped his arms out of it and got out and his parachute just flopped over the seat.

86. Q. I notice on "Exhibit 2" you have written "radio on blink". When making a squawk after returning to the line after a flight, what is the procedure?

A. I usually try to indicate what is wrong and have it fixed.

87. Q. Did you notify anyone of the fact that the radio was on the "blink"?

A. Yes, sir, the head lineman out there.

88. Q. Do you know what his name is?

A. No, sir.

89. Q. Did you turn in a written statement to CASU concerning the trouble?

A. No, sir.

90. Q. Did you tell anyone in the planning office?

A. No, sir.

91. Q. Did you know whether your passenger had earphones and was connected or whether the equipment itself was inoperative?

A. No, sir. I know he had a regular helmet but I don't know if it was connected properly or not. I didn't even notice if he had a cord.

92. Q. Did you ever find out what was wrong with the radio equipment?

A. No, sir. I intended to go back out to the plane and get the radioman to check on the parts of the plane for anything he could find but Mr. Rogers said he was going to get someone to take me up in a flight over the area to see what I could find.

93. Did you have a previous flight that day?

A. No, sir.

94. Q. Had you a watch the night before?

A. No, sir.

95. Q. About what time did you get to bed the night before?

A. I don't remember exactly but I think it was very close to midnight.

96. Q. Did you make another flight that afternoon?

A. I went up as a passenger in an SNJ and showed the pilot the area I went over.

None of the parties to the investigation desired to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was excused and resumed his seat as interested party.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name and present station.

A. Thomas L. Rector, Lieutenant, attached to VB-97.

2. Q. What are your duties with VB-97?

A. Flight Officer.

3. Q. Will you state, for the benefit of the board, the squadron's policy relative to authorization of passengers on flights?

A. The policy is that no one can ride in the rear seat of our planes without a statement from his commanding officer. It has to go through me before it's approved.

4. Q. Will you tell us what duty officers you have in your squadron daily?

A. We have a floating population of pilots and every day we post the names of the duty officers and every ensign in the squadron stands a watch.

5. Q. What are their titles?

A. Squadron Duty Officer, Line Duty Officer, and Engineering Duty Officer.

6. Q. What are the functions of the Engineering Duty Officer?

A.. To see that all the planes are kept up and in service.

7. Q. Of the Line Duty Officer?

A. His job is to assign planes to the pilots whose names are on the schedule and to see that the planes get out on time and get back on time.

8. Q. Of the Squadron Duty Officer?

A. He has an office and stays at his desk most of the time and answers the phone. In other words he runs the squadron in general.

9. Q. I understand it is the custom of the squadron to post the copy of the flight schedule, such as "Exhibit 1", on the bulletin board in order to publicize what flights are scheduled and what pilots are scheduled?

A. Right.

10. Q. I also understand that the assignment of plane numbers for a particular flight is made on the face of this flight schedule or a similar schedule. Is that correct?

A. That is true.

11. Q. And in the event of a passenger, he is designated on the face of the this flight schedule?

A. That is true; just before the flight.

12. Q. That information is written in immediately before the flight?

A. Right.

13. Q. Who has the function of ordinarily posting the plane numbers and passenger names?

A. The Squadron Duty Officer. The Line Duty Officer brings the numbers and he can either put the numbers beside the names of the Squadron Duty Officer does. The numbers are what we are really interested in.

14. Q. Both the Line Duty Officer and the Engineering Duty Officer would be the ones having the first-hand information on what planes were available for flight?

A. That is right.

15. Q. Then the pilots are entitled to rely on the schedule appearing on the bulletin board for the information as to plane numbers and passengers?

A. That is right.

16. Q. We are interested in the twenty-first of December and the disappearance of Riggs. Can you tell us whether or not you authorized Riggs to make a flight in one of the squadron planes?

A. He was not authorized by me.

17. Q. Did he ask for your permission?

A. No, sir.

18. Q. Did you see Riggs at any time?

A. I didn't see him at any time.

19. Q. Would it be permissible for any one of the squadron duty officers to permit a passenger to take a flight?

A. The Flight Officer is the only one who can authorize a flight.

20. Q. If you were absent could one of the duty officers authorize it?

A. In that case the commanding officer would authorize it.

21. Q. Would any of the duty officers become the acting flight officer in your absence?

A. In this case, no, but in a regular squadron there is always an Assistant Flight Officer who would have that power.

22. Q. Is there a written order to that effect?

A. In this squadron, no.

23. Q. What time did you find out Riggs was a passenger in Watkins' plane?

A. After the flight was on the ground there was a discussion in my office and at that time I knew Riggs was missing.

24. Q. In other words, you did not know Riggs was a passenger until the flight landed?

A. I did not know.

25. Q. Had you authorized any passenger for that flight or on the preceding flight?

A. No.

26. Q. It is not possible for you to have authorized him and not remember it?

A. No. It is not possible.

None of the parties to the investigation desired to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your full name and address.

A. Thomas F. Delaney, 112 East Poplar Avenue, Wildwood, New Jersey.

2. Q. What is your business?

A. Plastering contractor.

3. Q. You have come out here to testify pursuant to a subpoena?

A. That is right.

4. Mr. Delaney, on the twenty-first of December, about one o'clock in the afternoon, will you tell us where you were?

A. On Pine Avenue, about 200 feet west of Atlantic Avenue, approximately 1000 feet west of the boardwalk.

5. Q. In what direction does Pine Avenue run?

A. East and West.

6. Q. Were you working there?

A. Yes.

7. Q. On which side of the street?

A. North side.

8. Q. Did you notice anything unusual on this date in regard to aircraft?

A. This day I happened to see them up there and I only saw three altogether. I heard this plane coming down and then I looked up and saw him making an attack. The lower plane was going south and this other plane came down from above. I didn't hear him fire any shots. After he apparently made his attack he veered off to the left and then I saw something come off the bottom like an object coming away from the plane. Then I took my eyes off him to see if a parachute opened, thinking it was a man, and then I lost him. I was looking over the housetops when he disappeared.

9. Q. Did this object appear to be a human body?

A. That was my impression. It was pretty high up. It was some dark object.

10. Q. Are you more or less familiar with the planes that fly around in this neighborhood?

A. I watch them a lot. Yes.

11. Q. Have you been out here at the Naval Air Station and seen the planes?

A. No. I have never been here.

12. Q. Can you identify the plane that you saw from which the object fell by its type?

A. I don't know anything about the type of planes other than the two attacking were of a different type than the lower plane. The lower one was a dark colored plane. It was too far away for me to determine.

13. Q. Did the plane being attacked have any object behind it?

A. No. I didn't see it carrying any target.

14. Q. Could you identify the color of the plane from which you saw the object fall?

A. I think it was light colored.

15. Q. Mr. Delaney, have you worked in the neighborhood of the air station?

A. Yes. I do a lot of work at Wildwood Villas.

16. Q. Have you observed the general appearance of the planes flying around?

A. Mostly of the type that were skimming the tree tops around the villas.

17. Q. Did the plane from which you saw the object fall appear to one of the same type which you have seen flying over the villas?

A. To me, it did.

18. Q. If you saw one of those planes close-up, would you recognize it as the same?

A. They were so very high I don't want to say for sure.

19. Q. In a general way you could, couldn't you?

A. In a general way I guess I could.

20. Q. Do you think if you saw a plane of the same type on the ground you would be able to recognize it?

A. I believe so.

The board announced that it would adjourn to the hangar of the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, for the purpose of permitting the witness to inspect various types of planes on the ground in an attempt to identify the type of plane to which he has referred in his testimony.

All the members, the interested party, the reporter and the witness assembled in the hangar of the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, and proceeded with the examination of the witness.

21. Q. Do you observe in this hangar a plane which you believe to be of the type as that from which you saw the object fall?

A. There are a lot of planes around here that have the blue and silver and it looks to me that is the type of plane I saw.

(The witness indicated a plane which was an SB2C with the blue top surface and white underside).

On the completion of this portion of the examination all the members of the board, the interested party, the reporter and the witness returned to the regular place of meeting where the board was reassembled.

No witnesses not otherwise connected with the investigation were present.

22. Q. Your best impression is that the plane from which the object fell was like the type of plane we showed you out in the hangar?

A. Yes.

23. Q. We have here a section of a chart marked "Exhibit 4". I will ask you to make a mark on it indicating the approximate position of the planes which you observed.

The witness marked the exhibit in red showing a southeasterly direction, representing his line of vision to those planes.

A. They were in the southeast direction from me, just about four or five miles off the Cape May rock pile.

24. Q. Will you tell us about what time it was that you observed these planes?

A. I think it was shortly after I came back from lunch, between two and three o'clock I think. It was in the early afternoon, just in the neighborhood of two or three o'clock.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness was called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Robert L. Gay, seaman second class, Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, Operations Department.

2. Q. What are your duties?

A. With the crash crew.

3. Q. What was your duty on the twenty-first of December?

A. I was flagman.

4. Q. As flagman what are your functions?

A. It is my job to see that the planes land with their flaps and wheels down and if they come in with their wheels up, I flag them off and see that they don't land.

5. Q. Is there a truck near the take-off position?

A. Yes, sir; the radio car.

6. Q. Do you work near that car?

A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. Do you have occasion to observe planes taking off as well as those that are landing?

A. Yes, sir; every one.

8. Q. Will you state the condition of the hatches of planes in general in which there is a passenger?

A. If the hatch is open there is someone in it. If there is a gunner in it the hatch is open.

9. Q. If this, "Exhibit 3", with the pencil mark of the take-off position is correct, what would have been your approximate position relative to the take-off position?

A. I was outside holding another flag, signaling the pilots not to go over a range around where there was bombing.

10. Q. On the date in question, the twenty-first of December, did you observe any planes taking off with the rear hatch open and the rear seat empty?

A. No, sir.

11. Q. You are positive of that?

A. Yes, sir.

12. Q. Were you on duty at 1300?

A. Yes, sir.

13. Q. Did you observe any passenger get out of any plane out there prior to take-off?

A. No, sir; not if he came down the strip.

14. Q. If the plane taxied along the taxi strip directly to the take-off position as indicated on "Exhibit 3", would you have had full opportunity to see a passenger that might have gotten out?

A. Yes, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relative to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness was called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Donald E. Shute, aviation machinist's mate third class, attached to Carrier Aircraft Services Unit TWENTY-FOUR Operations Department.

2. Q. Were you, on the twenty-first of December, acting as plane captain on the Operational Line?

A. I was assigned as plane captain on the Operational Line.

3. Q. To what plane were you assigned?

A. 97B19.

4. Q. Were you regularly assigned to that plane or just for that day?

A. Regularly assigned.

5. Q. Was that plane scheduled for a hop about 1300 the twenty-first of December?

A. The plane was scheduled for a 1330 familiarization flight.

6. Q. Is this yellow sheet, entitled "Daily Flight Inspection Form" and marked "Exhibit 2", the yellow sheet that pertained to that particular plane on that particular day?

A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. Is that your signature on "Exhibit 2"?

a. Yes, sir.

8. Q. Was there a passenger for that flight?

A. As far as I know, there was no one scheduled.

9. Q. Did one show up for the flight?

A. Yes, sir.

10. Q. Did you assist the pilot into the cockpit?

A. Yes, sir.

11. Q. Did you assist the passenger in getting in?

A. No, sir. I just opened the hatch for him.

12. Q. Did you assist the pilot with his parachute harness?

A. I assisted him with the safety harness.

13. Q. Did you assist the pilot in any other way?

A. I opened the forward hatch.

14. Q. Will you go ahead and tell us in your own words what happened after the pilot and passenger got to the plane and before they got in?

A. I noticed two pilots coming down the line. One pilot went to number 17 and this other pilot, Mr. Watkins, and the gunner came down to my plane which was number 19. The passenger couldn't get the rear hatch to open so I had to open it for him. I had to open the emergency escape, climb in and open the hatch with a crank. I got out and he climbed into the rear seat. I offered to assist him and he said that he would take care of it. Then I went up forward to assist the pilot. After the pilot was squared away in the cockpit he signed the yellow sheet and I climbed down off the plane. I asked the passenger his name and he said that it was alright, that he had logged out with the O.O.D.

15. Q. Did you notice just before you stepped off the wing whether or not the passenger had his parachute on and was strapped in?

A. I do know he had his parachute on and fastened but I don't know if his safety belt was buckled.

16. Q. Did you notice whether or not he had earphones on or whether he had a cord?

A. He was wearing a helmet and phones but whether he had them attached or not I do not know.

17. Q. Do you know whether or not there was a cord in the plane before the flight went out?

A. I always carry a cord in my pocket and I don't give it to the rear seatman unless he asks for it, which he usually does if there is one missing.

18. Q. Was there a cord attached to the rear seat at that time?

A. I am not sure.

19. Q. Do you know whether or not the intercommunication system was functioning properly?

A. I had the plane for about three days and there was no squawks on it.

20. Q. The plane had been up the morning of the twenty-first prior to this particular flight; had it not?

A. Yes, sir.

21. Q. Had there been a passenger in the plane on the previous flight?

A. I am not sure.

22. Q. Can you examine the yellow sheet, "Exhibit 2", and tell us if there is a passenger listed?

A. There is no passenger listed for the previous flight.

23. Q. We have gotten as far as getting the people in the plane. Will you go ahead and tell us what happened from then on?

A. Well, after they were all squared away in the plane I went forward, gave the pilot the "thumbs up" signal to turn up and after the plane was turned up I stood by while the pilot warmed the plane up. After the signal to remove the chocks, I removed them and directed the plane to taxi to the east ramp, that is, to the wing-lock examination position.

24. Q. What happened then?

A. While I was directing the plane down to the wing-lock examination point something told me to get the passenger's name. I went back to the rear seat and asked the passenger his name. He told me it was alright, that he had logged out with the O.O.D.

25. Q. Did you hear him plainly make that statement to you?

A. Yes. I told him that I would have to have his name or I couldn't let him go up. He then told me his name was Riggs, and even spelled it out for me.

26. Q. So he was then in the plane at the wing-lock examination and the hatch was open?

A. Yes.

27. Q. Did you have occasion to observe the plane after it left the wing-lock examination?

A. Yes. I observed the plane approximately 300 yards as it taxied out.

28. Q. To your knowledge did the passenger get out of the plane after it left the wing-lock position and before it took off?

A. To my knowledge, no.

29. Q. Did you watch the actual take-off?

A. Yes, sir.

30. Q. Did you see the passenger in the plane during the take-off?

A. I wasn't paying any particular attention.

31. Q. Then you do not know whether the plane took off with a passenger or without a passenger?

A. I am not sure.

32. Q. How long was it in point of time from the time you last watched the plane until the actual take-off?

A. I quit watching the plane and I walked over to the Operations shack. I lit up a cigarette and stayed there about three or four minutes.

33. Q. On the take-off everything appeared to be normal although you couldn't definitely state whether or not there was a passenger in the rear cockpit?

A. Everything appeared normal but I couldn't say definitely that there was a passenger.

34. Q. Would it have appeared abnormal to you if the rear seat had been empty on take-off?

A. I am pretty sure it would have.

35. Q. Was the rear hatch open when the plane took off?

A. It was.

36. Q. When the plane returned to the field you stated that you observed that the rear seat was empty?

A. Yes, sir. When the plane was about 500 yards out on the taxi strip and right after he left the runway that I noticed that.

37. Q. Did the plane stop after landing before it reached the line?

A. The only place he stopped was when he got to the place on the line and folded his wings.

38. Q. Will you indicate on this chart of the station, marked "Exhibit 3", the spot where the plane first stopped after landing?

A. Yes, sir.

The witness marked with a circle "X" the position of the plane when he first noticed the plane on runway 23.

39. Q. Now, will you mark with a circled "A" the point where the plane stopped and folded its wings?

A. Yes, sir.

The witness marked with a circled "A" the point where the plane was stopped while the wings were folded.

40. Q. After the plane returned to the line did you examine the rear cockpit of the plane?
A. Yes, sir. I looked into the rear cockpit and all I saw was a parachute with a harness folded down and a glove on the left side on the deck.
41. Q. Was it a right-handed glove or left-handed glove?
A. I don't know.
42. Q. Did the glove have a name on it?
A. No, sir. It was an ordinary woolen mitten.
43. Q. Did the parachute which you observed in the rear cockpit appear to be disarranged or was it in a more or less orderly arrangement in the seat?
A. No. It was not disarranged at all.
44. Q. Did you know the passenger Riggs?
A. No, sir.
45. Q. Can you tell us whether or not he appeared in any way peculiar?
A. The only thing I noticed is that he seemed a little reluctant to give me his name.
46. Q. Did he appear excited?
A. No, sir.
47. Q. Did he appear familiar with the workings of the rear hatch of the plane?
A. Yes, sir, he did.
48. Q. Did he appear familiar with the safety straps and harness in the rear cockpit?
A. He appeared to know what he was doing and, in fact, tried to tell me how to open the hatch.
49. Q. Did he appear familiar with the parachute harness?
A. Well, he had his parachute on before he got out there.
50. Q. And buckled in position?
A. He buckled that as he got into the cockpit.
51. Q. When you examined the plane on its return, was there an earphone cord in the rear seat?
A. No, sir.
52. Q. Was there a microphone in the rear cockpit?
A. I am not sure.
53. Q. As you inspected the rear cockpit of the plane after it returned from the flight was the safety belt or harness broken?
A. No, sir.
54. Q. The safety belt was hanging down from the side and was not underneath the parachute?
A. That is right.
55. Q. Was the rear hatch functioning properly after the plane returned?
A. Yes, sir.

56. Q. Was the rear seat of the plane all the way up?

A. Yes, sir I made a thorough check of the rear seat to see if there was anything wrong.

57. Q. On the inspection you made of the plane after its return, did you notice any signs of whether or not the passenger became airsick?

A. No, sir. We could notice no signs either on the inside or outside of the plane.

58. Q. If a passenger becomes sick, are there normally traces of the sickness to be found?

A. Yes, sir. When he opens the hatch and sticks his head out there will be traces on the tail surface.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which and not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement: The next day I was walking to one of the fellows working in the dispatcher's office and who checks the planes in and out. He told me that at this particular time that I taxied the plane down there he noticed that I went back to the rear cockpit of the plane but he didn't understand why. He told me that he noticed that the passenger was sitting up high at the time the plane went out to the taxi strip. This person was F. H. Ervin, aviation machinists mate second class.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The board then, at 11:45 a.m., took a recess until 1:00p.m., at which time it reconvened.

Present: All the members, the reporter and the interested party.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present duty station.

A. Arthur Pavao, aviation chief machinist's mate, Line Chief, attached to CASU Operations Department.

2. Q. Were you notified of a missing plane passenger on the twenty-first of December?

A. Yes, sir, I was.

3. Q. Who brought it to your attention?

A. The plane captain of 9B19, Shute.

4. Q. Following that notification, what did you do?

A. I inquired to find out if the pilot knew about it. We went over there to talk to the pilot.

5. Q. Did you inspect the plane?

A. I put a watch on the airplane until I found the pilot by Lieutenant Commander Roger's orders.

6. Q. Did you make certain that the interior of the plane was not changed from the time it landed until you inspected it?

A. The plane captain told me that nothing was disturbed from the time he left it until the time I arrived.

7. Q. Now, will you describe for us what you found when you inspected the plane, including the condition of the rear cockpit, any objects which might have been in it, and its equipment that you noticed?

A. The parachute was in the seat. The back of the parachute was folded down. We pulled the parachute out, took the number of it and then inspected the safety belt by hooking it up, working the release and checking the attachment of the safety belt to the seat. We then inspected all connections, cotter keys, etc., to see if they were all there and they were all there. We checked the interior of the cockpit for scratches, marks, any kind of clothing or anything else but there was no evidence of anything. We then inspected the whole tail assembly, the top of the hood, underneath the fuselage, and aft of the cockpit for any dents, any parts of clothing, hair or blood. There was none present.

8. Q. Did you examine the exterior and interior of the plane for evidence of air sickness.

A. Yes, sir, we did and found nothing.

9. Q. You stated that you examined the safety belt. Will you state whether it was in good condition or not?

A. It was in good condition.

10. Q. Was the buckle on it in proper working order?

A. Yes, sir, it was.

11. Q. Did the safety belt give any evidence of having been broken?

A. No, sir. There was no evidence of anything being broken.

12. Q. You stated that you lifted the parachute from the seat in order to ascertain its number. Will you state whether or not the parachute was tight in the seat?

A. It was very easy to remove.

13. Q. Was the safety belt underneath the parachute or was it free as if it had been used?

A. When I got to the plane the safety belt was down alongside the seat.

14. Q. You stated that the back of the parachute was folded. You mean that the back of the harness was folded on the parachute?

A. It was.

15. Q. Now, you stated also that you inspected the plane for any dents, scratched, clothing, hair, or blood. Did you find any such evidence?

A. No, sir. We did not find any.

16. Q. You stated that you examined the interior and exterior of the plane for evidence of airsickness?

A. Yes, I did and did not find any.

17. Q. Did you, in your inspection, observe whether or not there was a radio connection in the rear seat?

A. No, sir, I didn't.

18. Q. Was there a microphone in the rear seat?

A. I didn't check for the microphone.

19. Q. Did you, in the inspection of the rear cockpit, observe the position of the seat?

A. Yes, sir. The seat was pretty high up.

20. Q. Was it all the way up or half?

A. More than three-quarters, which would put a man up pretty high on top of his parachute.

21. Q. Did you know this ordnanceman, Riggs?

A. No, sir, I didn't.

22. Q. You refer to this plane that you inspected as being 9B19. To which squadron was it assigned for use?

A. VB-97.

23. Q. When the plane came back the pilot signed the yellow sheet with a radio squawk on it. Was that ever fixed?

A. I do not know. The sheet was taken into custody by the Operations Officer and later turned over to Mr. Weatherford.

24. Q. Referring again to the particular plane which you inspected, that was an SB2C. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

25. Q. In your knowledge the plane was not struck by any object. I mean, if Riggs did not leave the plane in flight, he did not strike any part of it?

A. That's right. He did not strike any part of it.

26. Q. How is that particular plane, 9B19, painted? Was it one of the dark blue ones or one of the two-tones?

A. One of the two-tones--blue on top and white underneath.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement: Shute, the plane captain, kept telling me that it looked odd to see a man sitting so high in a seat. He kept trying to help this fellow out before he went out and the fellow didn't want any help. He told me this after he found out that the passenger was missing. I would also like to add that I checked around the engine, looking for excessive oil that usually comes from an engine which has been used very roughly and it was pretty normal. It was an exceptionally clean plane and there was no oil on the surface of the plane.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness was called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rank, and present station.

A. William A. Miller, lieutenant, attached to VB-97.

2. Q. Mr. Miller, did you on the twenty-first of December, 1944, at or about 1300, have a scheduled flight?

A. Yes, I did.

3. Q. What was the nature of the flight?

A. Instrument instruction flight.

4. Q. In what type of plane were you scheduled to make the flight?

A. NH-1.

5. Q. Can you give us approximately the time you left the parking area and proceeded to taxi out?

A. Approximately 1330.

6. Q. Were you following any other planes during the take-off?

A. I was following a group of SB2C's as far as I can remember.

7. Q. Will you tell us approximately how far behind the preceding plane your plane was at the wing-lock position?

A. About 100 feet from the SB2C, I would say off-hand.

8. Q. Can you tell us which runway was in use?

A. I was using the east-west runway.

9. Q. That is the one that is designated here as 28?

A. That is right.

10. Q. Did the plane ahead of you take off from runway 28 at the intersection on the end of the runway?

A. The plane ahead of me took off at the extreme end of the runway?

11. Q. As you proceeded from that point did you maintain your approximate same distance behind the SB2C that was preceding you?

A. I believe I did.

12. Q. Did you observe whether or not the plane immediately preceding you had a passenger in the rear cockpit or not?

A. I did not observe whether there was anyone in the cockpit or not.

13. Q. Did you observe the plane preceding you while it was at the end of the runway, turning up, ready for take-off?

A. I observed the airplane, yes.

14. Q. Did you notice whether the rear hatch was open or closed?

A. I do not remember.

15. Q. Did you see anyone get out of the rear cockpit of the plane preceding you after it left the wing-lock position until it took off?

A. No, I didn't.

16. Q. Did you see any person at the point of take-off other than in an airplane?

A. I saw no one except the signalman.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning .

The witness stated he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness was called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Peter J. Jenkins, seaman second class, Station Operations.

2. Q. As I understand it your duties are with the radio truck at the runway in use to give pilots taking off the clearance signal that they may take off. In that connection, do you observe every aircraft that takes off?

A. I observe them but not too closely.

3. Q. You were on duty at the end of runway 28 at 1300, 21 December 1944?

A. I am not sure if it was 28 or 32.

4. Q. Do you have any instructions regarding planes taking off with their rear hoods open and no passengers?

A. No, sir, I have no instructions.

5. Q. Did you notice at that time any plane in a position to take off and before taking off which had its hood open but no passengers?

A. I can't recall, sir. Some of these gunners have their hoods closed and some of them open.

6. Q. If a plane had taken off with its hood open and no passenger in it, would you have noticed it?

A. No.

7. Q. Did you at any time during your tour of duty on December 21, 1944, see anybody disembark from the rear seat of any plane?

A. No.

8. Q. If anyone had disembarked from any plane at or near the take-off position, would you have noticed that?

A. Yes, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Forrest M. Ervin, aviation machinist's mate second class, Carrier Aircraft Services Unit TWENTY-FOUR.

2. Q. What are your present duties?

A. Dispatcher in the CASU tower.

3. Q. The CASU tower is located on the northeast corner of the hangar. Is that correct?

A. Yes.

4. Q. Were you on duty there on 21 December 1944 at about 1300?

A. Yes, sir.

5. Q. Do you have occasion to note which squadron's planes are taxiing out toward the take-off position?

A. Yes, sir.

6. Q. Did you at or about 1300 on the twenty-first of December notice a flight of planes from VB-97 taxi out to take off?

A. At about the exact time I don't know, but I did notice 9B19 that day.

7. Q. What called your attention to that plane?

A. The fact that the plane captain, after directing the plane out to the warm-up ramp, dropped back and another man took over and the plane captain walked over to the man in the rear cockpit and apparently was talking with him.

8. Q. Is 9B19 assigned to VB-97?

A. I don't know.

9. Q. Was number 19 the last plane in that flight?

A. I don't remember.

10. Q. Was number 19 immediately followed by a Howard?

A. It could have been within a period of five minutes.

11. Q. You said your attention was called to this particular plane, number 19, because the plane captain went back to talk to the passenger?

A. Yes, sir.

12. Q. Where did that occur?

A. The plane was taxiing out to the East and it was where the warm-up ramp stops and the taxi-way begins.

13. Q. Did you observe plane number 19 after it left the wing-lock position?

A. No, sir.

14. Q. Did you observe the passenger in number 19?

A. All I know is that there was a man in there with a brown leather jacket on.

15. Q. Was there anything unusual about his position?

A. He was sitting rather high in his seat.

16. Q. Where did you observe that?

A. While they were checking the wing locks.

17. Q. Did you observe this plane when it took off?

A. Yes.

18. Q. Could you see whether or not the plane in question had a passenger in the rear seat?

A. No, sir.

19. Q. Would you have noticed if the plane had taken off with the rear hood open and no passenger in it?

A. No, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate, and present station.

A. Robert E. Wagner, aviation ordnanceman (B) second class, CASU Ordnance.

2. Q. What were your duties on Thursday, 21 December 1944?

A. After we loaded a rocket hop we sent a truck out to the field to stand by in case of any of the planes should come back with duds. We unload those duds out on the field so they won't come up on the line.

3. Q. Is that unloading truck placed near the upwind end of the runway in use?

A. As close as possible at a safe distance.

4. Q. Were you on duty on such a truck at or about 1400 on the twenty-first of December?

A. I don't know exactly. I believe I was out there most of the afternoon.

5. Q. When you are on duty, do you have occasion to observe all the SB2C's that land?

A. Yes.

6. Q. Did you observe any SB2C, having landed on the runway, have its passenger disembark from the rear seat on the field?

A. No.

7. Q. When you were on duty at the unloading truck would you have noticed any plane from which the passenger disembarked?

A. I would have if he had come clear to the end of the runway.

8. Q. Will you mark on "Exhibit 3" with a number "1", showing the position of the unloading truck when runway number 1 is in use?

The witness indicated on "Exhibit 3", by marking a number "1", the position of the unloading truck when runway number 1 is in use.

9. Q. Did you notice any plane landing about that time with its rear hood open and no passenger?

A. No, sir, I didn't.

10. Q. Did you notice a plane with the rear hood open and no passenger?

A. No.

None of the parties to the investigation desired to further examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. William A. Andrews, aviation chief ordnanceman, Carrier Aircraft Service Unit TWENTY-FOUR.

2. Q. You are attached to the ordnance Department of Carrier Aircraft Service Unit TWENTY-FOUR?

A. Yes, sir.

3. Q. Did you have James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, assigned to your department?

A. Yes, sir.

4. Q. Did you, on 21 December 1944, give Riggs permission to take a flight as a passenger in a plane?

A. I gave him permission to leave the area of the armory.

5. Q. He told you that he had a chance to go on a hop and you gave him permission to leave?
A. Yes, sir.
6. Q. What time was this?
A. About 1:15 or before that.
7. Q. Did Riggs appear excited or in any way peculiar when he asked permission to go on the hop?
A. He appeared absolutely normal.
8. Q. How long had Riggs been attached to Carrier Aircraft Service Unit TWENTY-FOUR?
A. Since November 20, 1944.
9. Q. To your knowledge had Riggs previously, prior to 21 December 1944, made flights in SB2C planes?
A. He made several. How many I don't know. I would say at least five or six---possibly more.
10. Q. Was he thoroughly qualified in the handling of the safety appliances of the SB2C plane?
A. That part I don't know.
11. Q. Had you served with Riggs prior to his coming to CASU-24?
A. Eighteen months or better.
12. Q. I believe you and he were together on the Yorktown and came to CASU-24 at the same time?
A. We had transferred off the Yorktown and I reported November 11 and he on November 20.
13. Q. Did Riggs, to your knowledge, have any family difficulties?
A. None whatsoever.
14. Q. Was he married?
A. No.
15. Q. Did he have any particular girlfriend?
A. He wrote to several but other than that I don't know. Nothing else was ever mentioned. He seemed to be fancy-free.
16. Q. What was his general nature?
A. He was generally happy-go-lucky, very quiet, never noisy, very clean and a willing worker.
17. Q. Did you see him take off on the flight or see him leave to take off on the flight on the twenty-first of December?
A. No.
18. Q. Were you a good friend and confidant of Riggs?
A. As far as I know, yes.
19. Q. Do you believe that if he had any bad news that he would have confided it to you?
A. I believe so because we read quite a few of each other's letters.

20. Q. To the best of your knowledge, he had received no bad news?

A. That's right.

21. Q. You inspected Riggs' locker after he was missing?

A. Approximately four o'clock on the twenty first.

22. Q. Did you find any items of correspondence in his locker?

A. There were several letters--about six or seven I would say.

23. Q. Did you examine these letters?

A. Yes.

24. Q. Did they disclose any bad news that might influence him?

A. Nothing that would indicate he had any trouble of any kind.

25. Q. Has there been any period of time, since you transferred to shore duty, that you have been away from Riggs?

A. I should say approximately three weeks.

26. Q. That was leave wasn't it?

A. Yes, sir.

27. Q. Did he ever make any mention of any occurrence during this leave which might have upset him or his mental attitude?

A. He never made any mention of anything at all.

28. Q. Was he going around with any girls in this locality?

A. No.

29. Q. Did he go on liberty frequently or did he stay on the station?

A. He stayed on the station quite a bit. He made only about one-third of the liberties.

30. Q. He had made plans to go on this Christmas liberty, had he not?

A. Yes, sir.

31. Q. His home is in Lincoln, Nebraska but he had planned to visit his aunt in Chicago?

A. Some relative in Chicago.

32. Q. Do you know why he had intended to go to Chicago instead of his home?

A. He didn't have enough time to go to his home and make it back.

33. Q. Do you know whether he planned to meet his family in Chicago or not?

A. No. He had no plans. He was to spend part of his time with his friend, R. A. Seaman.

34. Q. When did Riggs have this leave that he went to Lincoln, Nebraska?

A. It started the latter week in October, I believe, and ended approximately the twentieth of November. It was thirty days delayed orders.

35. Q. Did he go to Lincoln, Nebraska on that leave?

A. Yes.

36. Q. When he returned from leave and check into the station, did he appear interested in starting his tour of duty or did he appear reluctant?

A. He was willing to go back to work readily and no change in his attitude could be observed.

37. Q. Do you know anybody who was with him on his thirty-day leave?

A. He spent three days at Seaman's house.

Cross examined by the interested party:

38. Q. Was he the kind of person to get panicky?

A. He liked excitement. As far as that is concerned, he wanted to go back out to sea. He was intending to put in for it after he got this Christmas vacation.

Reexamined by the board:

39. Q. Was he in the habit of borrowing money or was he in any way indebted to anyone?

A. Not to my knowledge.

40. Q. Was he a gambler?

A. No, not to my knowledge.

41. Q. Was he a drinking man?

A. He might take two or three on a liberty but that was the extent of his drinking.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Robert A. Seaman, aviation ordnanceman first class, Carrier Aircraft Service Unit TWENTY-FOUR.

2. Q. You are assigned to the Ordnance Department, are you not?

A. Yes, sir.

3. Q. Were you a close friend of James Ernest Riggs?

A. Yes, sir.

4. Q. How long had you known him?

A. About eighteen months.

5. Q. You served with him on the Yorktown?

A. Yes, sir.

6. Q. Did you come here to CASU-24 at the same time?

A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. Before you came to CASU-24, both of you had thirty days of leave?

A. Yes, sir.

8. Q. Were you with Riggs during that leave?

A. About one day out of the whole thirty days.

9. Q. Was that near the beginning or near the end of the leave?

A. Near the end.

10. Q. Did you travel back to CASU together?

A. Yes, sir.

11. Q. Did he tell you where he had spent most of his leave?

A. Yes, sir.

12. Q. Where was that?

A. At his home in Lincoln, Nebraska.

13. Q. Did he mention any difficulties or troubles or anything of that nature that occurred at home while he was on leave?

A. No, sir.

14. Q. Were there any financial difficulties?

A. I don't think so.

15. Q. Do you think you were sufficiently close to him that you would have known if there had been?

A. Yes, sir.

16. Q. Do his parents live together?

A. Yes, sir.

17. Q. Not separated?

A. No, sir.

18. Q. Does he have any brothers or sisters?

A. Yes, sir.

19. Q. How many brothers?

A. I believe he has three. I am not positive.

20. Q. Are any of them in the service?

A. Yes, sir, two of them.

21. Q. Has anything happened to any of them?

A. No, sir.

22. Q. How many sisters does he have?

A. I'm just sure of one.

23. Q. He has at least one?
A. Yes, sir.
24. Q. Do you know whether or not she is married?
A. She is not.
25. Q. Does she live at home in Lincoln with her parents?
A. Yes, sir.
26. Q. Since you have been here at CASU-24 has anything occurred which you know about that might have changed Riggs?
A. No, sir.
27. Q. Were you planning to spend Christmas holiday weekend together?
A. Not exactly together. Part of it together.
28. Q. Where is your home?
A. Hammond, Indiana; just outside Chicago.
29. Q. He was planning on spending at least a part of that holiday with a relative in Chicago, wasn't he?
A. Yes, sir.
30. Q. Do you know what relation?
A. His uncle.
31. Q. Were you with Riggs on the twenty-first of December, the day he disappeared?
A. Yes, sir, I was.
32. Q. Were you with him shortly prior to the time he took off?
A. About 11 o'clock. I didn't eat chow with him that day.
33. Q. You didn't see him after he had gotten his flight gear and gotten into his plane?
A. I know I saw him with flight gear on but I don't know if it was previous to this hop or the one in the morning.
34. Q. Had he taken a flight that morning?
A. No. He was preparing but the plane was down.
35. Q. When you saw him about 11 o'clock you talked with him at that time?
A. Yes, sir.
36. Q. Did he tell you he was planning to take a hop after chow?
A. I am not sure.
37. Q. How did he seem to be when you talked to him at 11 o'clock?
A. Normal.
38. Q. You don't know exactly when he started making his plans to make the hop on the afternoon of the twenty-first?
A. No, sir, I don't.
39. Q. Approximately how many hours did he have in the air that you know of?
A. I would say about 20.

40. Q. Do you think he was entirely checked out in the rear seat of an SB2C?

A. Yes, sir. I checked him out, that is, the I.C.S. but not the technical gear.

41. Q. But he understood the use of the safety gear, the Mae West, the microphone and the I.C.S. equipment?

A. Yes, sir.

42. Q. When you saw Riggs last what type of safety equipment did he have on? Did he have a life jacket on?

A. Yes, sir. It had two dye markers on it.

43. Q. Where are these two brothers in the Navy?

A. One is in the Armed Guard service. He is a lieutenant (j.g.). The other is a third class radioman. He was waiting to be assigned to a ship in Norfolk.

44. Q. Was he with these brothers while on leave?

A. He was with one of the brothers.

45. Q. Did Riggs plan to stay in the Navy after the war?

A. No, sir.

46. Q. Would you say he was satisfied or dissatisfied?

A. I would say he was satisfied.

47. Q. Was he satisfied with his present duty?

A. No, sir.

48. Q. What were his objections?

A. I would say his duties at this station were too inactive.

49. Q. Had he made any attempt to be transferred to more active duty?

A. Yes, sir.

50. Q. What was he told?

A. I don't know the detail. He talked with Chief Abernathy.

51. Q. Had Riggs ever gotten airsick?

A. No, sir; not that I knew of.

52. Q. He never mentioned it?

A. No, sir.

53. Q. Do you think he would have mentioned it to you if he had?

A. Yes, sir.

54. Q. Would you have known it if he had?

A. Yes, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. Santonio P. Gianetti, lieutenant (j.g.), Carrier Aircraft Service Unit TWENTY-FOUR.

2. Q. To what duties are you assigned with CASU-24?

A. I am Flight Record Officer and have charge of the combat aircrewmen training.

3. Q. Did you, at my request, examine the flight records of this unit to ascertain whether or not James Ernest Riggs was under flight orders on and prior to 21 December 1944?

A. Yes, sir I did.

4. Q. What did you find?

A. I discovered two yellow sheets, both indicating the flights which were made by this ordnanceman, Riggs.

5. Q. I hand you a Daily Flight Inspection Form, dated 12-5-44 and ask you to examine it and state if it is one of the yellow sheets to which you are referring?

A. It is, sir.

6. Q. Does Riggs' name appear thereon as having made a flight as passenger?

A. It does.

the Daily Flight Inspection Form, date 12-5-44, was submitted to the witness and to the board and offered in evidence. There being no objection, it was so received and is marked as "Exhibit 5".

7. Q. I hand you here another Daily Flight Inspection Form bearing the date 12-2-44. I ask you to examine it and say if it is the other yellow sheet to which you referred?

A. It is, sir. Riggs' name appears on this also.

The Daily Flight Inspection Form, date 12-2-44, was submitted to the witness and to the board and offered in evidence. There being no objection, it was received and is appended marked "Exhibit 6".

8. Q. I hand you a sheet marked "Flight Record" bearing the name James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, 316-92-64, and ask you if you can identify it as the flight record of Riggs for the month of December?

A. It is, sir.

The Flight Record was submitted to the witness and to the board and offered in evidence. There being no objection it was so received and is appended marked as "Exhibit 7".

9. Q How do you determine in CASU-24 who will get flight orders?

A. The distribution of flight orders is determined by men who are in the department. In CASU-24 we have permanent flight order men, CAC's, and non-permanent flight order men who are awarded flight orders because their duties involve flying. Ten percent of the aviation rates are credited to the department on the point system which is set by the standards prescribed by the bureau.

10. Q. How did Riggs get his flight orders from CASU-24?

A. He is a member of the Ordnance Department and issuance of flight orders to Riggs was granted by his department head.

11. Q. When a man is issued flight orders when attached to CASU-24, is he required to get permission from his department head or any officer before he is given a flight?

A. He should procure permission from the head of the department.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

It was stated that Ensign V. I. Johnson and Ensign Vernon L. Overall had been detached from duty at Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, and were not available to testify as witnesses. Permission was requested of the board and of the interested party to read into the record signed statements of each of the above officers.

There being no objection, the statements were so read into the record. The statement of Ensign V. I. Johnson, U.S. Naval Reserve, is appended and marked "Exhibit 8" and the statement of Ensign Vernon L. Overall, U.S. Naval Reserve, is appended marked "Exhibit 9".

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Harold A. Camp, aviation radioman first class, U.S. Navy, Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.

2. Q. What are your duties?

A. I am in charge of the Operations control tower.

3. Q. Was that your duty on 21 December 1944?

A. Yes, sir.

4. Q. Were you on duty on 21 December 1944 at 1300?

A. Yes, sir.

5. Q. We have been advised that runway 28 was in use at that time. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir; that is correct, up until 1352.

6. Q. In your duty in the control tower do you have occasion to observe planes as they taxi out to the take-off position?

A. Yes, sir.

7. Q. Do you log out planes, except cross-country, as they leave the ground?

A. Yes, sir.

8. Q. How do you connect the planes as they pass the tower and as they take off?

A. We have a WAVE on the record board who checks the plane numbers as they leave the line. As the plane is airborne she puts down the time alongside the number of the plane on the board.

9. Q. Do you have the general duty of observing the field and the traffic pattern while you are on duty in the control tower?

A. Yes, sir.

10. Q. Did you observe, on 21 December 1944, any passengers disembark from the rear seat of an SB2C plane?

A. No, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The board then, at 4:20 p.m., adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

SECOND DAY
U.S. CARRIER AIRCRAFT SERVICE UNIT TWENTY-FOUR,
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
30 December 1944

The board met at 9:30 a.m.

Present:

Lieutenant Commander George S. Simmons, Junior, U. S. Navy, senior member;
Lieutenant Edward A. Swan, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, and
Lieutenant Heiskell Weatherford, Junior, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, members.
Harold G. Marvel, yeoman second class, Class V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve, reporter.
Ensign Milton S. Watkins, A-V(N), U.S. Naval Reserve, interested party.

There being no objection, the board decided to waive the reading of the record of proceedings of the first day of the investigation and proceeded with the investigation.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. State your name, rate and present station.

A. Fay Teichman, specialist (Y) third class, Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.

2. Q. What are your duties?

A. Control tower operator.

3. Q. On 21 December 1944, to what duties were you assigned in the control tower at 1300?

A. I was checking aircraft in and out. As soon as the plane would leave the line we would put a number down on the sheet and we would record the time each plane was airborne and the time each plane returned. We have, more or less, a definite record of each aircraft.

4. Q. Did you on or about 1300 on 21 December have occasion to record the take-off of an SB2C designated 97B19?

A. Yes,, I did.

5. Q. Do you recall from your own memory the time of the take-off?

A. I believe it was at 1320. I am not sure about this.

6. Q. Is it part of your duties to observe the planes as carefully as you can during the time that they are on the field until the time that they leave the field?

A. Yes, sir, it is.

7. Q. Did you, in your observation of 97B19 prior to its take-off from the field, observe a passenger to disembark from the rear seat?

A. No, I did not.

8. Q. If an SB2C is taxiing to the take-off position of runway 28 and has passed the wing-lock position by a distance of two or three hundred yards, would the disembarkation of a passenger from the rear seat call itself to your attention?

A. Yes, it would, if I saw it.

9. Q. In observing the planes from the tower, do you use binoculars or the naked eye?

A. From runway 28 we would use the naked eye.

10. Q. If, when observing an SB2C taking off you noticed the rear hood open, would it call itself to your attention?

A. Not particularly. The linemen are supposed to check that as the plane leaves the line.

11. Q. Did you, on the afternoon of 21 December 1944, observe any SB2C taking off with the rear hatch open and no passenger in the rear seat?

A. No, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness made the following statement: All I can say is if that fellow got out of the plane I think one of us would have seen it. The thing is there are two people in the radio car and three people in the tower and I think if something unusual like that had happened, someone would have seen it. Such a disembarkation would have been an unusual incident. A lot of times the gunner will get out of the back seat and then climb back in it. If he got out of the plane and walked away, it certainly would have looked odd.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

A witness called by the board, was informed of the subject matter of the investigation, and declared as follows:

Examined by the board:

1. Q. State your name, rank and present station.

A. Grant. P. Rogers, lieutenant commander, Commanding Officer of VB-97.

2. Q. On the twenty-first of December 1944, an SB2C assigned to your squadron returned from a duly authorized flight and landed with the rear seat empty, the passenger having disappeared from that seat sometime after the plane left the line and prior to its return. Did you learn of this incident and if you did, did you institute any search of the area over which the plane conducted its flight?

A. Yes. Upon information that the passenger was missing, I checked with the Flight Officer and the Duty Officer and the pilot of the plane. Lieutenant Clark Barrett of the Naval Air Station Operations was requested to take the pilot in an SNJ to retrace the flight path of Ensign Watkins. This was done at 200 feet with negative results.

3. Q. Was there any other search made by plane or otherwise to your knowledge?

A. There was no other search made for the man to my knowledge from the air.

4. Q. At any time on that date was the conditions of the air such that it would have been possible to bounce an object out of the airplane?

A. No, sir.

None of the parties to the investigation desired further to examine this witness.

The board informed the witness that he was privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation which he thought should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which had not been fully brought out by the previous questioning.

The witness stated that he had nothing further to say.

The witness was duly warned and withdrew.

The board desired to make a test as to whether a parachute, placed in the rear cockpit of an SB2C with the said cockpit open, would be disarranged by the effects of flight similar to that described in the foregoing testimony and in the absence of a passenger. The board called Lieutenant Herschel M. Browne, U.S. Navy and there being no objection from the interested party, directed Lieutenant Browne to make the aforesaid test. Lieutenant Browne was directed to obtain the parachute that had been checked out to James Ernest Riggs on the date of the incident under investigation and to place it, with the assistance of the plane captain, Donald L. Shute, and of Arthur Pavao, aviation chief machinist's mate, in the rear cockpit of SB2C-1C 97B19, the plane involved in the incident under investigation, in the position in which it was found after completion of the flight under investigation. Upon the completion of this test the board adjourned to the parking apron of the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, where it was assembled for the purpose of inspecting the results of the aforesaid test and the board desired that it appear of record that the said parachute was in no manner disarranged by the flight made in the aforesaid test.

The board was informed that a letter addressed to James Ernest Riggs had been received since the date of his disappearance. The letter was submitted to the interested party and to the board and offered in evidence as evidence of the suicidal motive on the part of James Ernest Riggs, and permission was requested of the board and of the interested party to read the letter into the record. There being no objection, the permission was granted and the letter read into the record. Said letter is appended marked "Exhibit 10".

Neither the board nor any party to the investigation desired to call more witnesses.

The investigation was finished, all parties thereto withdrawing.

After full and mature deliberation the board finds as follows:

FINDING OF FACTS

1. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, is attached to Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN and was named on the flight schedule of said squadron dated 21 December 1944 for an SB2C familiarization flight during the period from 1300 to 1445 on said date, said flight to be begun and ended at the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.
2. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve was assigned SB2C-1C bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, for this flight.
3. That said aircraft assignment was publicized by writing the aforesaid squadron number beside the name "Watkins" as said name appeared on the aforesaid flight schedule, duly posted on the bulletin board of said squadron, and Ensign Watkins was thereby advised of the plane assigned to him for the scheduled flight.
4. That on 21 December 1944, the names of passengers, if any, were not printed or typewritten on flight schedules of said squadron at the time of said schedules were initially posted on the bulletin board of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
5. That passengers names, if any, are listed for flights in aircraft assigned to Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN by being written on the typewritten or printed flight schedule of said squadron opposite the name of the pilot whom each passenger is permitted to accompany by the Flight Officer, the Squadron Duty Officer, the Line Duty Officer, or the Engineering Duty Officer of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
6. That the squadron policy of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN requires permission for flights in aircraft of said squadron to be obtained from the Flight Officer of said squadron but said policy is not expressed in any written order or other written communication of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN.
7. That the name of James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U.S. Navy, was written on the flight schedule of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN, dated 21 December 1944, beside the name "Watkins" for the aforesaid familiarization flight scheduled for Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, prior to the time of said flight and was seen by said Watkins and acted upon by him as authority for permitting said Riggs to board, as a passenger, the plane to be piloted by said Watkins.
8. That the name of Riggs was so written on the flight schedule of Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN by Ensign V.I. Johnson, U.S. Naval Reserves, then attached to Bombing Squadron NINETY-SEVEN and on 21 December 1944 assigned to duty as Squadron Duty Officer of said squadron.
9. That Ensign Johnson made this entry upon belief that James Ernest Riggs had duly obtained authority and permission to make said flight as a passenger.
10. That James Ernest Riggs, aviation ordnanceman first class, U.S. Navy obtained a parachute, helmet and life jacket prior to 1300, 21 December 1944.

11. That James Ernest Riggs boarded aforesaid aircraft, SB2C-1C, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, and that at that time had put on and properly fastened the parachute, helmet and life jacket which he had previously procured.
12. That James Ernest Riggs was reluctant to give his name to the plane captain for entry on the Daily Flight Inspection Form, normally known as "yellow sheet" and did not give his name to said plane captain until after the aforesaid plane had proceeded from the parking apron to the wing-lock inspection station at the entrance to the taxi-strip.
13. That James Ernest Riggs was seen to be in the aforesaid aircraft, piloted by Ensign Milton S. Watkins, for a distance of three hundred yards from the aforesaid wing-lock examination station and was not seen thereafter nor seen to disembark from said aircraft prior to take-off of said aircraft on the scheduled flight.
14. That James Ernest Riggs was, on 21 December 1944, under orders duly issued by Carrier Aircraft Services Unit TWENTY-FOUR authorizing him to participate in aircraft flight.
15. That James Ernest Riggs was conversant with the operation and use of safety gear and appliances used in conjunction with said flight.
16. That the aircraft piloted by Ensign Watkins took off from the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, on the scheduled flight at or about 1320, 21 December 1944, and did not again land until about 1440, 21 December 1944, when it returned to the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New, Jersey.
17. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins was not in communication with his passenger, James Ernest Riggs, after they boarded the aircraft.
18. That James Ernest Riggs made no effort to get into communication with his pilot, Ensign Watkins.
19. That James Ernest Riggs did not report any malfunction of the intercommunication system to the plane captain, Shute, or to the pilot, Ensign Watkins, either prior to leaving the parking area, or at the wing-lock examination station.
20. That about 1400 on 21 December 1944, an object, estimated to be of the size of a man's body, was seen to fall from an aircraft, over the Atlantic Ocean.
21. That James Ernest Riggs was not seen in said aircraft when it returned to its parking space on the parking apron of Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New, Jersey.
23. That the aircraft was inspected after its return to its parking space; that the parachute which had been issued to said Riggs was found to be in the seat of the rear cockpit of said aircraft with its harness and back of said parachute folded forward and down onto said parachute; that a woolen mitten

was found on the floor board of said aircraft; that the interior of said rear cockpit gave no evidence of disarrangements, of an accident, or of airsickness; that the exterior of said aircraft gave no evidence of any airsickness on the part of the occupant of said plane; that the external surface gave no evidence of any prior violent maneuvering; and that the external surfaces of said aircraft gave no evidence of having been struck by any falling body.

24. That James Ernest Riggs has not been seen or located since aforesaid flight of 21 December 1944.

25. That Ensign Milton S. Watkins did not engage in any violent or acrobatic maneuvers of the SB2C-1C aircraft which he was piloting during the period from 1300 to 1445 on 21 December 1944.

OPINIONS

1. It is the opinion of the board that Ensign Milton S. Watkins, U.S. Naval Reserve, was guilty of negligence in failing to establish communication with his passenger, James Ernest Riggs, prior to departing from the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, but that said negligence did not proximately cause nor contribute to the disappearance of said passenger.
2. It is further the opinion of the board that Ensign Milton S. Watkins was guilty of no other negligence or set which contributed to the disappearance of said James Ernest Riggs.
3. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs boarded SB2C-1C aircraft, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, at or about 1300, 21 December 1944, and was aboard said aircraft when it became airborne at or about 1320, 21 December 1944.
4. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs unfastened his safety belt and removed his parachute harness after said aircraft became airborne and that James Ernest Riggs thereby knowingly exhibited a reckless and wanton disregard for the safety of his own life.
5. It is further the opinion of the board that the hatch of the rear cockpit of said plane was closed during flight after the aircraft became airborne and was opened during flight and prior to return of said aircraft to the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.
6. It is further the opinion of the board that the SB2C-1C, bureau number 01038, squadron number nineteen, was not maneuvered by the pilot, Ensign Milton S. Watkins, in a manner sufficiently violent to have accidentally thrown the passenger therefrom, nor was the condition of the atmosphere such as to have caused the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, to be thrown from said aircraft.
7. It is further the opinion of the board that the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, voluntarily and knowingly left said aircraft without his parachute, while said aircraft was airborne and in flight, in the area between the towns of Wildwood, New Jersey and Ocean City, New Jersey.
8. It is further the opinion of the board that, while an object was seen to fall from an unidentified aircraft, such object, by virtue of the location in which it was seen to fall, was not the body of James Ernest Riggs.

9. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs made no attempt to establish communication with the pilot, Ensign Milton S. Watkins, after they had boarded the aircraft.

10. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs was, on 21 December 1944, and at the time of the flight in which he participated as a passenger, sane and mentally normal.

11. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs had an adequate motive for taking his own life, in that he had experienced, prior to 21 December 1944, a severance of relations previously maintained with one Virginia Kenyon, which severance he bitterly resented.

12. It is further the opinion of the board that James Ernest Riggs, as a passenger with flight orders authorizing him to participate in aircraft flights and with previous flight experience, would not remove his safety belt and parachute harness while in flight with the hatch to his cockpit open, unless such removal was done willingly, knowingly, and intentionally, and that such a passenger, had he removed his safety belt and parachute harness with the hatch to his cockpit closed, would not thereafter open such hatch unless such opening was knowingly and voluntarily done.

13. It is further the opinion of the board that due to the fact that this flight occurred in winter weather with low temperatures prevalent, said flight would normally have occurred with the hatch to said passenger's cockpit closed throughout the period the plane was aloft.

14. It is further the opinion of the board that the only manner in which Riggs could have left the aircraft was by the concurrence of the above stated conditions, namely, the removal of the safety belt and parachute harness and the opening of the rear hatch of the aircraft, all of which are believed to have taken place during flight through the willful, voluntary and intentional act of the passenger, James Ernest Riggs, which concurrence is inconsistent with any conclusion other than said Riggs voluntarily left said aircraft in flight.

15. It is further the opinion of the board that it is remotely possible that James Ernest Riggs may have disembarked from the aircraft prior to its becoming airborne, at or about 1320 on 21 December 1944, or immediately after the return of said aircraft to the Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, at or about 1440 on 21 December 1944, but prior to the return of said aircraft to the parking area on the apron of said Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is the recommendation of the board that James Ernest Riggs should be carried in a status of missing and if it is determined, either through the passage of time or otherwise, that said James Ernest Riggs should be declared dead, said death should be held have occurred not in the line of duty and as a result of his own misconduct.

2. It is further the recommendation of the board that in view of the remote possibility expressed in the foregoing opinion that James Ernest Riggs may have left the aircraft at a time other than when said aircraft was airborne, a further investigation for said Riggs should be conducted by proper authorities. It is suggested that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and/or the

civil authorities would be appropriate agencies to conduct such search and that such search include, among other places and persons, the following cities and persons:

Lincoln, Nebraska:	Mr. Louis Carrol Riggs, 2302 South 10th Street. Virginia Kenyon, 3835 South 16th Street.
Memphis, Tennessee:	June Bacigalupo, 1370 Poplar Avenue.
Chicago, Illinois:	3314 West Harrison Street.

3. It is further the recommendation of the board that the commanding officer of each aircraft unit should require each aircraft unit should require each pilot attached to his unit to establish intercommunication with any passenger, other than his regularly assigned aircrewman, who may be assigned to participate in a flight with such pilot prior to the beginning of said flight and that in the event of inability or failure to establish such intercommunication, the passenger shall not be permitted to participate in the flight. Such intercommunication should periodically be checked during flight and in the event of a failure of said intercommunication during flight, the aircraft concerned should be immediately returned to its base and notification of said failure and the time thereof given to the commanding officer of the squadron to which the plane is assigned and the commanding officer of the unit to which the passenger is attached.

4. It is further the recommendation of the board that responsible personnel should be assigned in conjunction with the duty of observing aircraft taking off from Naval Air Station, Wildwood, New Jersey, the positive duty of observing and logging the presence or absence of a passenger from each plane departing, as it becomes airborne.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.,
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy, Senior Member.

EDWARD A. SWAN,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Member.

HEISKELL, WEATHERFORD JR.,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Recorder.

The record of proceedings of the first and second days of the investigation was read and approved, the board being cleared during the reading thereof, and the board having finished the investigation, then, at 12:30 p.m. ,adjourned to await the action of the convening authority.

GEORGE C. SIMMONS JR.,
Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy, Senior Member.

EDWARD A. SWAN,
Lieutenant, (A)L, U. S. Naval Reserve, Recorder.

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 3

Exhibits

BOMBING SQUADRON NINETY SEVEN

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

21 December 1944.

S.D.O. - BROWN

L.D.O. - FELTON

E.D.O. - JOHNSON, V.I.

0815 - 0945 SB2C Tactics.

EMERSON
DETLAFF
GIBBONS

0815 - 0945 SB2C Familiarization

KAHLER

0815 - 0945 SNJ Familiarization

GRAY HAMILTON
HEATH HANKINS

1030 - 1200 SB2C Familiarization

DETLAFF GIBBONS FISHER, G.W.
BAHLER

1030 - 1200 SNJ Familiarization

HALE HAMILTON
HUISKIN HANKINS

1030 - 1200 Instrument - Sec Lt. Richey - First Deck

KAHLER FISHER, G.W. EMERSON

1300 - 1445 SB2C Familiarization

COVERALL WATKINS
ZUNDELL WEINGARTNER

1300 - 1445 SNJ Familiarization

POTT

1300 - 1445 Instrument - Sec Lt. Richey - First Deck

WEINBERG ST. MARTIN

1600 - 1730 SB2C Familiarization

COVERALL WATKINS
ZUNDELL WEINGARTNER

1600 - 1730 SNJ Familiarization

POTT

LINK TRAINER

0800 HALE 1000 GRAY 1300 RICHARDS, C.B.
0900 HUISKIN 1100 HEATH 1400 WILLARD

SECURITY WATCH FOR 21 December 1944.

BROWN FELTON JOHNSON, V.I.

DAILY FLIGHT INSPECTION FORM

(For all types excepting VP, VPB, VJR, and amphibian type planes)

INSTRUCTIONS

The following form will be filled out and signed each day before any flights of the aircraft are made. This form is applicable to service type airplanes excepting VP, VPB, VJR, and amphibian types. However, ADDITIONAL SHEETS may be attached hereto as required by individual operating units.

The plane captain or person properly detailed to make inspection will check each item if satisfactory and will note remarks if items are unsatisfactory.

Each pilot will satisfy himself that a proper inspection is made of the aircraft and will state his acceptance before flight. Upon completion of each flight the pilot will record the defects noted which he considers should be remedied before the succeeding flight.

When an aircraft is remaining idle the propeller shall be turned over by hand at least two complete revolutions daily. Propeller blades will be wiped down with oil after each day's flying.

PLANE (Model) 3-10 PLACE 101 DATE 1-1-49

- 1. Inspect BLADES and HUBS for pits, cracks, nicks, and proper oil film. _____
- 2. Inspect HUBS, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. _____
- 3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). _____

- 1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. _____
- 2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. _____
- 3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS; CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. _____
- 4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). _____
- 5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. _____
- 6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. _____
- 7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. _____
- 8. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. _____
- 9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. _____

- 1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. _____
- 2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. _____
- 3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. _____
- 4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. _____
- 5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. _____
- 6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. _____
- 7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. _____

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check AILERON HINGERS, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). _____
- 6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGERS, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

- 1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. _____
- 2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. _____

PROF.

1. Inspect BLADES and HUES for glaz, cracks, nicks, and proper oil film. _____
2. Inspect HUES, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. _____
3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). _____

ENGINE

1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. _____
2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. _____
3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS; CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. _____
4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). _____
5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. _____
6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. _____
7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. _____
8. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. _____
9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. _____

LANDING GEAR

1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. _____
2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. _____
3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. _____
4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. _____
5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. _____
6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. _____
7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. _____

WING

1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. _____
2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
4. Check AILERON HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). _____
6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

TAIL

1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. _____
2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. _____
7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. _____
8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

FUSELAGE

1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. _____
2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. _____
3. Inspect RUDDER PEDAL assembly and CONTROL SYSTEM as above. _____
4. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT mechanism for freedom of movement, returning it to neutral position. _____
5. Prior to carrier operation check operations of LANDING HOOK.—Inspect hook operating mechanism. _____
6. Test operation of NOSE SHUTTERS. _____
7. Inspect FLOTATION GEAR and FIRE EXTINGUISHER BOTTLE INDICATORS for fully charged condition. _____
8. Inspect all removable COWLING, FAIRING, and INSPECTION PLATES for security. _____
9. Check proper functioning of LIGHTING SYSTEM. _____
10. Inspect for security of SAFETY BELTS. _____
11. Check proper functioning of COCKPIT ENCLOSURES and ADJUSTABLE SEAT mechanism. _____
12. Check position of GENERATOR BATTERY-CHARGING SWITCH. _____
13. Check HYDRAULIC SYSTEM RESERVOIR for proper quantity of fluid. _____
14. Clean windshield and cockpit enclosures. _____
15. Clean instrument cover glasses, and check for rotation. _____

WARMING UP

1. See that CHOCKS are under WHEELS.
 2. Open ENGINE COWL FLAPS.
- Warm up engine in normal manner and make following checks:
3. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for proper functioning and last motion.
 4. FUEL PRESSURE. _____ 5. OIL PRESSURE. _____ 6. OIL TEMPERATURE. _____
 7. MANIFOLD PRESSURE. _____ 8. GENERATOR OUTPUT. _____
 9. R. P. M. drop at 70% rated R. P. M., R. H. MAGNETO. _____ L. H. MAGNETO. _____
 10. VACUUM GAGE reading. _____ 11. Check operation of SUPERCHARGER CLUTCH. _____
 12. Check ENGINE operation on each TANK. _____
 13. Check INSTRUMENTS for excessive oscillation. _____
 14. Check operation of PROPELLERS. _____
 15. Check OIL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL. _____
 16. Check for proper functioning, RADIO EQUIPMENT. _____ RADAR EQUIPMENT. _____

Flight No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gallons fuel.	15.2									
Gallons oil.	1.7									

Number of starter cartridges on board is _____

I certify that this airplane has this day been inspected under my supervision as above indicated and that the aircraft is (is not) ready for flight.

Date March 19 Bu. No. 1000

Plane Captain.

PILOT'S SIGNATURE

I accept this aircraft for flight:

1st Pilot. _____	6th Pilot. _____
2d Pilot. _____	7th Pilot. _____
3d Pilot. _____	8th Pilot. _____
4th Pilot. _____	9th Pilot. _____
5th Pilot. _____	10th Pilot. _____

REPORT AFTER FLIGHT

Flight No.	Time Out	Time In	Purpose	Average R. P. M.	Average Manifold Pressure	Fuel Pressure	Oil Pressure	Oil Temp.	Fuel Consumed (gallons)	Oil Consumed (quarts)	Pilot's Initials	Passenger's Name
1											1	
2											2	
3											1	
4											2	
5											1	
6											2	
7											1	
8											2	
9											1	
10											2	

During flight I have noticed the following defects in this plane which should be remedied before the next flight:

1st Pilot.

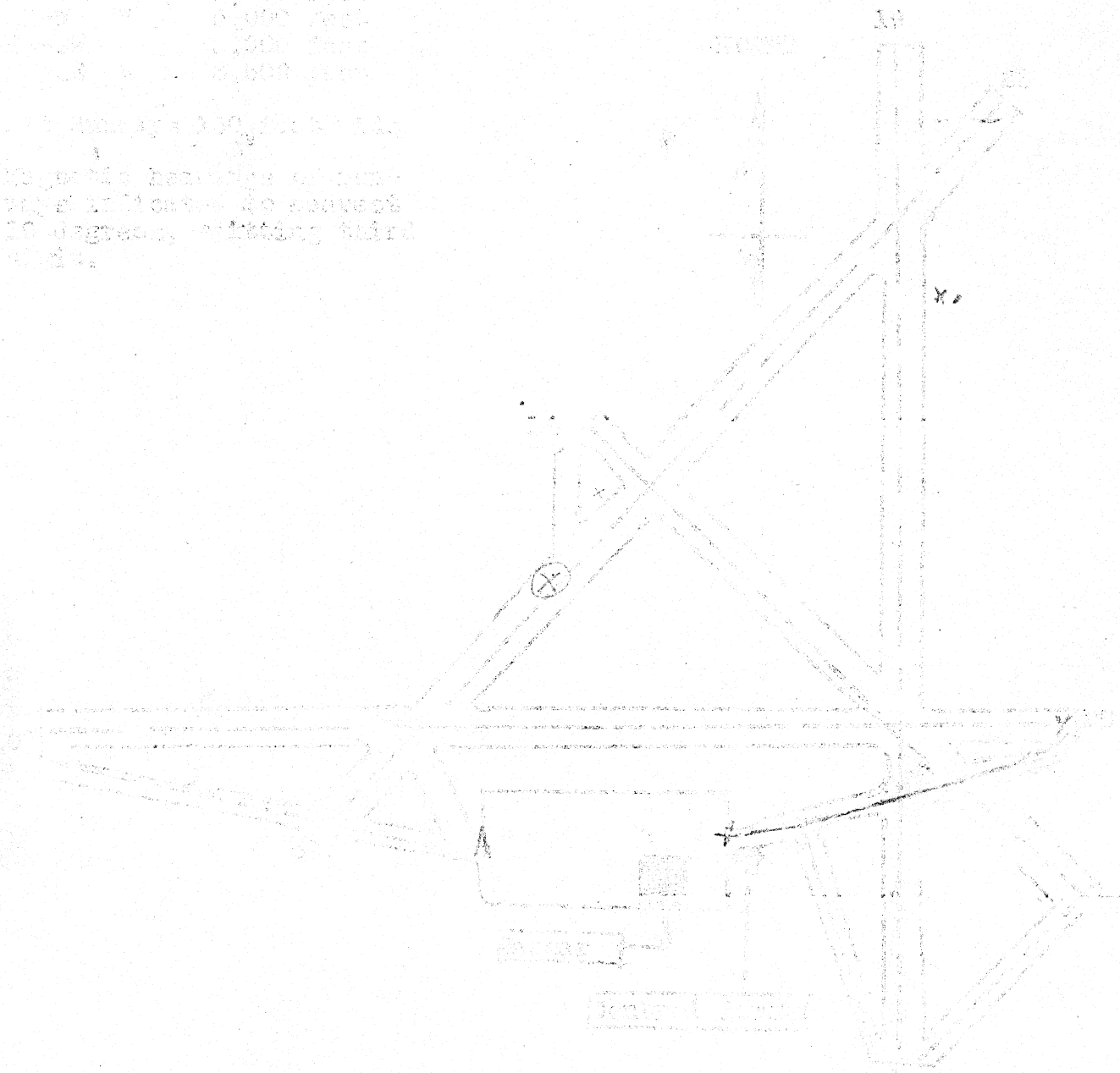
2d Pilot.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
 WATER RESOURCES DIVISION

Map of the
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...

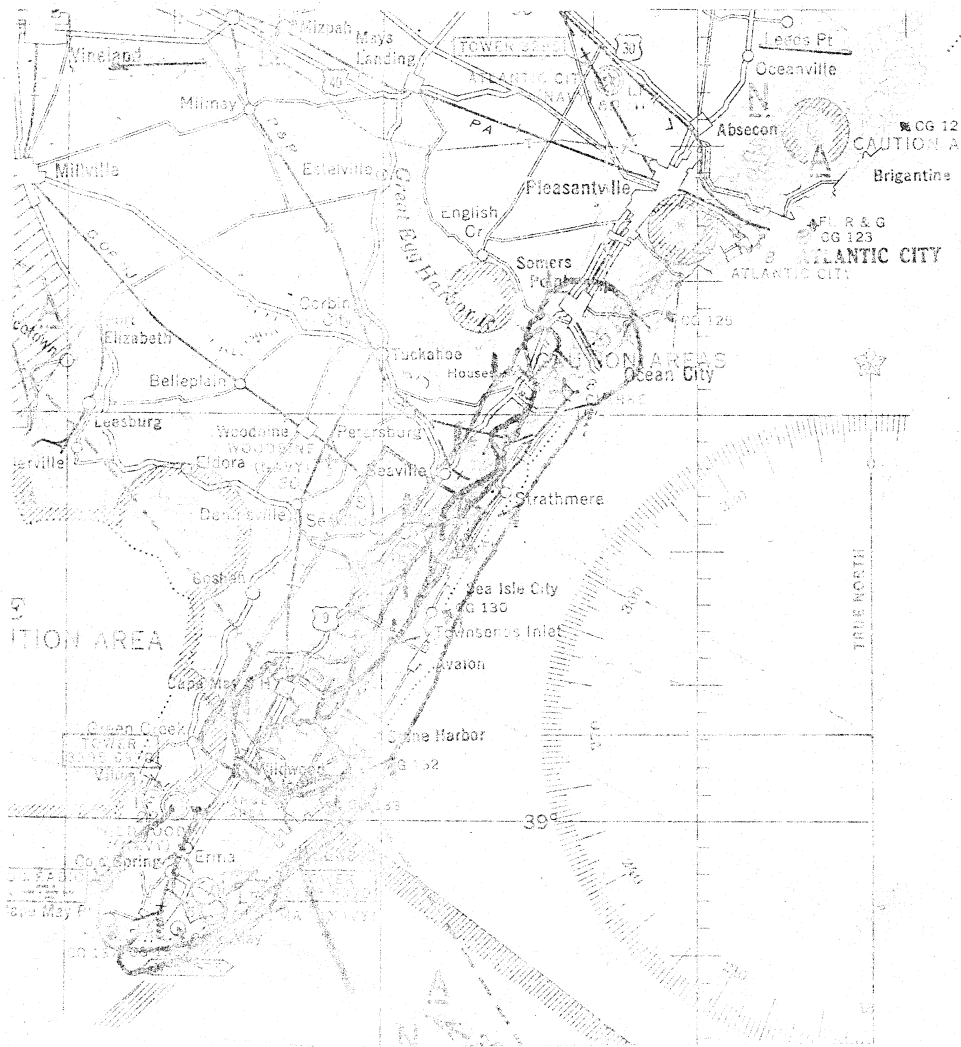
Scale 1:50,000

Contours are shown at 10-foot intervals
 except where indicated to nearest
 10 degrees, sitting third
 class.



Published Sept. 4, 1964
 Scale - 1" = 500 feet





INSTRUCTIONS

27818

The following form will be filled out and signed each day before any flights of the aircraft are made. This form is applicable to service type airplanes excepting VP, VPB, VJR, and amphibian types. However, ADDITIONAL SHEETS may be attached hereto as required by individual operating units.

The plane captain or person properly detailed to make inspection will check each item if satisfactory and will note remarks if items are unsatisfactory.

Each pilot will satisfy himself that a proper inspection is made of the aircraft and will state his acceptance before flight. Upon completion of each flight the pilot will record the defects noted which he considers should be remedied before the succeeding flight.

When an aircraft is remaining idle the propeller shall be turned over by hand at least two complete revolutions daily. Propeller blades will be wiped down with oil after each day's flying.

PLANE (Model) _____ PLACE NAS DATE 12-15-44

PROP.

- 1. Inspect BLADES and HUBS for pits, cracks, nicks, and proper oil film. Yes
- 2. Inspect HUBS, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. Yes
- 3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). Yes

ENGINE

- 1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. Yes
- 2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. Yes
- 3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS, CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. Yes
- 4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). Yes
- 5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. Yes
- 6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. Yes
- 7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. Yes

LANDING GEAR

- 8. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. Yes
- 9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. Yes
- 1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. Yes
- 2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. Yes
- 3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. Yes
- 4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. Yes
- 5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. Yes
- 6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. Yes
- 7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. Yes
- 8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. Yes

WINGS

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. Yes
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. Yes
- 3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. Yes
- 4. Check AILERON HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. Yes
- 5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). Yes
- 6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. Yes
- 7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. Yes
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. Yes

TAIL

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. Yes
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. Yes
- 3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. Yes
- 4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. Yes
- 5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. Yes
- 6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. Yes
- 7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. Yes
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. Yes

AGE

- 1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. Yes
- 2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. Yes
- 3. Inspect RUDDER PEDAL assembly and CONTROL SYSTEM as above. Yes
- 4. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT mechanism for freedom of movement, returning it to neutral position. Yes
- 5. Prior to carrier operation check operations of LANDING HOOK.—Inspect hook operating mechanism. Yes
- 6. Test operation of NOSE SHUTTERS. Yes
- 7. Inspect PROPELLER CAPS. Yes

PRO

- 2. Inspect HUBS, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. _____
- 3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). _____

ENGINE

- 1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. _____
- 2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. _____
- 3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS, CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. _____
- 4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). _____
- 5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. _____
- 6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. _____
- 7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. _____
- 8. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. _____
- 9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. _____

LANDING GEAR

- 1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. _____
- 2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. _____
- 3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. _____
- 4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. _____
- 5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. _____
- 6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. _____
- 7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. _____

WINGS

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check AILERON HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). _____
- 6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

TAIL

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

FUSELAGE

- 1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. _____
- 2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. _____
- 3. Inspect RUDDER PEDAL assembly and CONTROL SYSTEM as above. _____
- 4. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT mechanism for freedom of movement, returning it to neutral position. _____
- 5. Prior to carrier operation check operations of LANDING HOOK.—Inspect hook operating mechanism. _____
- 6. Test operation of NOSE SHUTTERS. _____
- 7. Inspect FLOTATION GEAR and FIRE EXTINGUISHER BOTTLE INDICATORS for fully charged condition. _____
- 8. Inspect all removable COWLING, FAIRING, and INSPECTION PLATES for security. _____
- 9. Check proper functioning of LIGHTING SYSTEM. _____
- 10. Inspect for security of SAFETY BELTS. _____
- 11. Check proper functioning of COCKPIT ENCLOSURES and ADJUSTABLE SEAT mechanism. _____
- 12. Check position of GENERATOR BATTERY-CHARGING SWITCH. _____
- 13. Check HYDRAULIC SYSTEM RESERVOIR for proper quantity of fluid. _____
- 14. Clean windshield and cockpit enclosures. _____
- 15. Clean instrument cover glasses and check for rotation. _____

Plan # 9

1. See that CHOCKS are under WHEELS.
2. Open ENGINE COWL FLAPS.
- Warm up engine in normal manner and make following checks:
3. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for proper functioning and last motion.
4. FUEL PRESSURE. 5. OIL PRESSURE. 6. OIL TEMPERATURE.
7. MANIFOLD PRESSURE. 8. GENERATOR OUTPUT.
9. R. P. M. drop at 70% rated R. P. M., R. H. MAGNETO. L. H. MAGNETO.
10. VACUUM GAGE reading. 11. Check operation of SUPERCHARGER CLUTCH.
12. Check ENGINE operation on each TANK.
13. Check INSTRUMENTS for excessive oscillation.
14. Check operation of PROPELLERS.
15. Check OIL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL.
16. Check for proper functioning, RADIO EQUIPMENT.

WARMING UP

Flight No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gallons fuel.										
Gallons oil.										

Number of starter cartridges on board is _____
 I certify that this airplane has this day been inspected under my supervision as above indicated and that the aircraft is (is not) ready for flight.

Date _____ Bu. No. _____

Plane Captain. _____

PILOT'S SIGNATURE

I accept this aircraft for flight:

- 1st Pilot _____
- 2d Pilot _____
- 3d Pilot _____
- 4th Pilot _____
- 5th Pilot _____
- 6th Pilot _____
- 7th Pilot _____
- 8th Pilot _____
- 9th Pilot _____
- 10th Pilot _____

REPORT AFTER FLIGHT

Flight No.	Time Out	Time In	Purpose	Average R. P. M.	Average Manifold Pressure	Fuel Pressure	Oil Pressure	Oil Temp.	Fuel Consumed (gallons)	Oil Consumed (quarts)	Pilot's Initials	Passenger's Name
1											1	
2											1	
3											1	
4											1	
5											1	
6											1	
7											1	
8											1	
9											1	
10											1	

During flight I have noticed the following defects in this plane which should be remedied before the next flight:

 _____, 1st Pilot.

DAILY FLIGHT INSPECTION FORM # 15

(For all types excepting VP, VPB, VJP, and amphibian type planes)

INSTRUCTIONS

The following form will be filled out and signed each day before any flights of the aircraft are made. This form is applicable to service type airplanes excepting VP, VPB, VJP, and amphibian types. However, ADDITIONAL SHEETS may be attached hereto as required by individual operating units.

The plane captain or person properly detailed to make inspection will check each item if satisfactory and will note remarks if items are unsatisfactory.

Each pilot will satisfy himself that a proper inspection is made of the aircraft and will state his acceptance before flight. Upon completion of each flight the pilot will record the defects noted which he considers should be remedied before the succeeding flight.

When an aircraft is remaining idle the propeller shall be turned over by hand at least two complete revolutions daily. Propeller blades will be wiped down with oil after each day's flying.

PLANE (Model) SR-20 PLACE W/... DATE 12/14/49

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| PROP. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect BLADES and HUBS for pits, cracks, nicks, and proper oil film. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect HUBS, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. <u>OK</u> 3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). <u>OK</u> |
| ENGINE | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. <u>OK</u> 3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS, CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. <u>OK</u> 4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). <u>OK</u> 5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. <u>OK</u> 6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. <u>OK</u> 7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. <u>OK</u> 8. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. <u>OK</u> 9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. <u>OK</u> |
| LANDING GEAR | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. <u>OK</u> 3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. <u>OK</u> 4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. <u>OK</u> 5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. <u>OK</u> 6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. <u>OK</u> 7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. <u>OK</u> 8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. <u>OK</u> |
| WINGS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. <u>OK</u> 3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. <u>OK</u> 4. Check AILERON HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. <u>OK</u> 5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). <u>OK</u> 6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. <u>OK</u> 7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. <u>OK</u> 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. <u>OK</u> |
| TAIL | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. <u>OK</u> 3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. <u>OK</u> 4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. <u>OK</u> 5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. <u>OK</u> 6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. <u>OK</u> 7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. <u>OK</u> 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. <u>OK</u> |
| TAIL | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. <u>OK</u> 2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. <u>OK</u> 3. Inspect RUDDER PEDAL assembly and CONTROL SYSTEM as shown. <u>OK</u> |

PROP.

- 1. Inspect BLADES and HUBS for pits, cracks, nicks, and proper oil film. _____
- 2. Inspect HUBS, BLADES, and ATTACHING PARTS for adequate tightness and proper safetying. _____
- 3. Check VARIABLE PITCH PROPELLERS for oil leaks (hub, barrel, governor base and head). _____

ENGINE

- 1. Inspect ENGINE COWLING, including RING COWL and FLAPS for cracks and security. _____
- 2. Inspect EXHAUST STACKS, COLLECTOR RING, and FLAME DAMPERS for cracks and security. _____
- 3. Inspect IGNITION HARNESS and SPARK PLUG TERMINALS for cleanliness, security of COUPLING NUTS, CONNECTIONS, and MOUNTINGS. _____
- 4. Drain and inspect small quantity of FUEL from FUEL LINE STRAINERS, and from LOWEST POINT IN FUEL SYSTEM, if STRAINER is not at lowest point (clean strainers if drainage shows presence of foreign matter). _____
- 5. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for ease and degree of movement, degree of slack and security. _____
- 6. Turn handle of disk type OIL STRAINER (if installed) at least one revolution to clean same. _____
- 7. Check FUEL and OIL SYSTEMS for leaks, security of tank caps, and ascertain that VENTS are not obstructed. _____

LANDING GEAR

- 2. Check accessible GENERATOR TERMINALS and WIRING for condition and security. _____
- 9. Check FUEL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL with aid of auxiliary fuel pump. _____
- 1. Inspect TIRES for defects and proper inflation. _____
- 2. Inspect WHEELS for cracks and distortion and HUB CAPS for security. _____
- 3. Inspect SHOCK ABSORBER UNITS and BRAKE LINKAGE GEAR. _____
- 4. Inspect STRUT RETAINING BOLTS and FITTINGS for security. _____
- 5. Inspect BRACE WIRES for tension and security. _____
- 6. Inspect RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR mechanism and lubricate as necessary. _____
- 7. Inspect MAIN FLOAT(S) or HULL for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Inspect BEACHING-GEAR tires, wheels, locking pins, and attachment fittings. _____

WINGS

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and end bows. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and FLYING WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check AILERON HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect and check operation of LANDING FLAPS or DIVING FLAPS (check for hydraulic leaks). _____
- 6. Inspect accessible CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check WING-TIP FLOATS for leaks, presence of water, and security of handhole covers. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

TAIL

- 1. Inspect COVERING for damage, buckled ribs, and bruised edges. _____
- 2. Inspect ATTACHMENT FITTINGS for security. _____
- 3. Check STRUTS and BRACE WIRES for security of terminal connections. _____
- 4. Check CONTROL SURFACE HINGES, PINS, HORNS, and TABS for security of attachments, proper lubrication, and position. _____
- 5. Inspect CONTROL CABLE, TUBES, and PULLEYS for security and proper lubrication. _____
- 6. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT assembly for cleanliness and proper lubrication. _____
- 7. Check TAIL SKID or WHEEL assembly for condition and lubrication, noting position of locking device. _____
- 8. Remove all SURFACE CONTROL LOCKS before flight. _____

FUSELAGE

- 1. Inspect all BAYS for loose articles. _____
- 2. Inspect CONTROL COLUMN assembly and accessible parts of control system for freedom of movement, lost motion, security of attachments, and proper lubrication. _____
- 3. Inspect RUDDER PEDAL assembly and CONTROL SYSTEM as above. _____
- 4. Check STABILIZER ADJUSTMENT mechanism for freedom of movement, returning it to neutral position. _____
- 5. Prior to carrier operation check operations of LANDING HOOK.—Inspect hook operating mechanism. _____
- 6. Test operation of NOSE SHUTTERS. _____
- 7. Inspect FLOTATION GEAR and FIRE EXTINGUISHER BOTTLE INDICATORS for fully charged condition. _____
- 8. Inspect all removable COWLING, PAIRING, and INSPECTION PLATES for security. _____
- 9. Check proper functioning of LIGHTING SYSTEM. _____
- 10. Inspect for security of SAFETY BELTS. _____
- 11. Check proper functioning of COCKPIT ENCLOSURES and ADJUSTABLE SEAT mechanism. _____
- 12. Check position of GENERATOR BATTERY-CHARGING SWITCH. _____
- 13. Check HYDRAULIC SYSTEM RESERVOIR for proper quantity of fluid. _____
- 14. Clean windshield and cockpit enclosures. _____
- 15. Clean instrument cover glasses and check for rotation. _____

WARMING UP

- 1. Check under WHEELS.
- 2. Open ENGINE COWL FLAPS.
- Warm up engine in normal manner and make following checks:
- 3. Check ENGINE CONTROLS for proper functioning and lost motion.
- 4. FUEL PRESSURE. 6 5. OIL PRESSURE. 90 6. OIL TEMPERATURE. 60
- 7. MANIFOLD PRESSURE. 14 8. GENERATOR OUTPUT. 27
- 9. R. P. M. drop at 70% rated R. P. M., R. H. MAGNETO. L. H. MAGNETO.
- 10. VACUUM GAGE reading.
- 11. Check operation of SUPERCHARGER CLUTCH.
- 12. Check ENGINE operation on each TANK.
- 13. Check INSTRUMENTS for excessive oscillation.
- 14. Check operation of PROPELLERS.
- 15. Check OIL PRESSURE WARNING SIGNAL.
- 16. Check for proper functioning, RADIO EQUIPMENT. RADAR EQUIPMENT.

Flight No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gallons fuel.	<u>24</u>									
Gallons oil.	<u>14</u>									

Number of starter cartridges on board is _____
 I certify that this airplane has this day been inspected under my supervision as above indicated and that the aircraft is (is not) ready for flight.
 Date 12/1/44 Bu. No. 71038

 Plane Captain.

PILOT'S SIGNATURE

I accept this aircraft for flight:

1st Pilot _____ 8th Pilot _____
 2d Pilot _____ 7th Pilot _____
 3d Pilot _____ 6th Pilot _____
 4th Pilot _____ 5th Pilot _____
 5th Pilot _____ 10th Pilot _____

REPORT AFTER FLIGHT

Flight No.	Time Out	Time In	Purpose	Average R. P. M.	Average Manifold Pressure	Fuel Pressure	Oil Pressure	Oil Temp.	Fuel Consumed (gallons)	Oil Consumed (quarts)	Pilot's Initials	Passenger's Name
1	<u>12:30</u>	<u>1:00</u>	<u>Training</u>	<u>2400</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	
2												
3	<u>12:30</u>	<u>1:00</u>	<u>Training</u>	<u>2400</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												

During flight I have noticed the following defects in this plane which should be remedied before the next flight:

FLIGHT RECORD

NAME [Handwritten] RATE [Handwritten] SERVICE NO. 98-64

BREAKDOWN OF TIME	TIME OUT	TIME IN	BUREAU NUMBER	PILOT'S SIGNATURE	DATE
<u>1 hr</u>	<u>1330</u>	<u>1430</u>	<u>01022</u>	<u>[Handwritten]</u>	<u>12/9/44</u>
<u>2 hr</u>	<u>1500</u>	<u>1550</u>	<u>01022</u>	<u>J.E. Roland</u>	<u>12/5/44</u>
TOTAL HOURS					

5 minutes	.1
10 "	.2
15 "	.3
20 "	.4
25 "	.4
30 "	.5
35 "	.6
40 "	.7
45 "	.8
50 "	.8
55 "	.9
60 "	1.0

INSTRUCTIONS

The flight is a breakdown of time chart for use in column one. This record must be turned in to the LOG OFFICE not later than the 20th day of the month, if you want to be paid the first pay. Make sure your name is on the yellow sheet.

CARRIER AIRCRAFT do not use this form in the LOG OFFICE FORMS into the LOG OFFICE.

PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS

STAFF SERGEANT RIGGS' RECORD OF SERVICE FOR 1944:

I was on duty on 8/2/44 and RIGGS came in to get permission to go on a hop. I told him to go in and get permission from the Flight Officer because I couldn't give him permission. Later and just before the hop I went in the ready room to put the plane numbers up for the hop. RIGGS came up to me and pointed out on the schedule which pilot he wanted to go up with. I asked him if he had gotten permission for the hop and he said he did. Therefore I put his name beside that pilot and that was all that was left.

V. J. Johnson
V. J. Johnson,
Lieut., U.S.A.F.

STATEMENT REGARDING RIGGS ON 21 DECEMBER 1944:

I was on duty as S.D.O. and Riggs came in to get permission to go on a hop. I told him to go in and get permission from the Flight Officer because I couldn't give him permission. Later and just before the hop I went in the ready room to put the plane numbers up for the hop. RIGGS came up to me and pointed out on the schedule which pilot he wanted to go up with. I asked him if he had gotten permission for the hop and he said he did. Therefore I put his name beside that pilot and that was all that was said.

V. I. Johnson
Ensign, U.S.N.R.

BOEING SQUADRON NINETY SEVEN
c/o First Post Office
New York, N.Y.

STATEMENT OF EMIGRE WITNESS, OVERALL, A-V(1), USNR:

On December 21, 1944, was on a scheduled SB2C Familiarization flight from 1300 until 1445. At about 1330 was flying over the craneland north of Willowood, N.J. when I sighted another SB2C at about the same altitude. Made a turn so as to approach this plane from the stern and came in at a slight angle. When I got closer to the plane, I could see the number 9819 on the side of the fuselage and knew it to be piloted by Malign M. S. WARKINS. Also could see that the hatch covering the cockpit was open but didn't notice whether or not there was a passenger. I maintained a position about 300 feet astern and slightly to the starboard of this plane for about 10 minutes while it flew over the badlands north and west of Willowood. Then I broke away and flew around the area until time to return to the field.

Vernon Loy Overall
Vernon Loy Overall
Ens. A-V(1), U.S.N.R.

BOBMING SQUADRON NINETY-SEVEN
c/O Fleet Post Office
New York, N.Y.

STATEMENT OF ENSIGN VERNON OVERALL, A-V(N), USNR:

On December 21, 1944 was on a scheduled SB2C Familiarization flight from 1300 until 1445. At about 1330 was flying over the swampland north of Wildwood, N.J. when I sighted another SB2C at about the same altitude. Made a turn so as to approach this plane from the stern and came in at a slight angle. When I got closer to the plane, I could see the number 9B19 on the side of the fuselage and I knew it was to be piloted by Ensign M. S. WATKINS. Also could see that the hatch covering on the rear cockpit was open but didn't notice whether or not there was a passenger. I maintained a position about 300 feet astern and slightly to the starboard of this plane for about 10 minutes while it flew over the badlands north and west of Wildwood. Then I broke away and flew around the area until time to return to the field.

Vernon Roy Overall
Ens. A-V(N), U.S.N.R.

December 26, 1944

Dear Jiggs,

It's been quite some time since I received your last letter but I haven't forgotten that I owed you an answer.

I hardly know where nor how to begin. Of course, in everyone's lifetime misunderstandings and disappointments arise. But James, no matter what happens, your ups and downs must be shouldered by yourself or by a complete show-down. Nowadays people are more independent than ever. No one gives a "hoot" whether your feelings have been trampled upon or not.

I suppose you're thinking that I'm a dumb-bunny and can't see any further than my nose, but I figure what is past should remain past. I'm sure you know exactly what I'm driving at.

This letter may be a little incoherent but that can't be helped. I'm not keeping a copy of this as I should but after the envelope is sealed, everything

Said will be forgotten.

Jiggs, I'm afraid you made a mistake by writing such a letter as you did. It just isn't according to Hoyle.

One of the reasons that I have been writing to you during the past year is because you and May are such good friends and we kids have known each other for so long. You no doubt realize that I'm too old for any other objective.

I don't suppose this letter is much of a morale builder. It isn't supposed to be.

I hope that you had a very merry Christmas and I hope that the new year will pan out much better.

Please write often. I answer everyone of your letters if you would like to receive them.

Sincerely,
Virginia

Letter from Virginia Kenyon to James

December 26, 1944

Dear James,

Its been quite some time since I received your last letter but I haven't forgotten that I owed you an answer.

I hardly know where nor how to begin. Of course in everyone's lifetime misunderstandings and disappointments arise. But James no matter what happens your ups and downs must be shouldered by yourself or by a complete showdown. Nowadays people are more independent than ever. No one gives a "hoot" whether your feelings have been trampled upon or not.

I suppose you're thinking that I'm a dumb bunny and I can't see any further than my nose, but I figure what is past should remain past. I'm sure you know exactly what I'm driving at.

This letter may be a little incoherent but that can't be helped. I'm not keeping a copy of this as I should but after the envelope is sealed, everything said will be forgotten.

Jiggs, I'm afraid you made a mistake by writing such a letter as you did. It just isn't according to Hoyle.

One of the reasons that I have been writing to you during the past year is because you and Max are such good friends and we kids have known each other for so long. You no doubt realize that I'm too old for any other objective.

I don't suppose this letter is much of a morale builder. It isn't supposed to be.

I hope that you had a very merry Christmas and I hope that the new year will pan out much better.

Please write often. I'll answer every one of your letters if you would like to receive them

Sincerely,

Virginia

Exhibit 10

pgs 77 & 78

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 4

Comments about investigation by Patrick "Troy" Riggs

After reading the investigation thoroughly, I am left with some questions:

1. The board, on numerous occasions, questions the position of the rear seat by observers before the aircraft was airborne. It was always stated that the observers noted how high the seat was. This brings up the obvious question of James's stature. Nowhere in the investigation is this addressed. My Dad, John P. Riggs, told me that James was a short guy, and this was also confirmed via a phone conversation with George Riggs (May 2017). George stated that James was the shortest person in the family. John felt that James may have taken off his parachute during flight to sit upon it to get a better view, and this is supported by the position the parachute was found. It does not explain the safety harness being disconnected. Unless the harness needed to be released to remove the parachute, then perhaps James forgot to hook it back up.
2. Question 34 on pg 51 of the investigation reveals that James was on another flight, scheduled for earlier that day. The flight was canceled for maintenance reasons. James's name does not appear on "Exhibit 1" for either flight. The board never follows up on this missed flight. The board should have questioned that pilot as to James' state of mind as well, and whether he was upset or not about the missed opportunity for a flight. If he were truly despondent over a breakup, he would have been upset about not making this flight because at the time he did not know if he would get another that day.
3. In reference to the "Missed" flight on the morning of 21 December 1944, the testimony of Lt. Thomas Rector (investigation pgs 29-30) does not address this earlier flight. In his testimony, it sounds more like he is covering his own ass more than anything. As the Flight Officer, he should have been aware of the earlier flight and that James was scheduled as a passenger. The board should have called this witness back to explain after the testimony provided by Robert Seaman (question 34 on pg 51).
4. There was an issue with the rear hatch on this aircraft. This is addressed on pg 35, question 14. The hatch did not open as it should have and an emergency procedure was done to get it open. The board questions the position of the hatch numerous times in the investigation, but mostly this was limited to whether anyone saw James get out of the aircraft before takeoff or on return. The hatch was definitely open when the aircraft took off (pg 36 question 26 and pg 37 question 35), and when it landed. I can only speculate that James, knowing there was an issue with it, left it that way so that it would not "jam" in the closed position. The maintenance issue of this is never addressed.
5. The board seemed to completely ignore the testimony of Thomas Delany (investigation pgs 31-33) and his eyewitness report. Opinion number 8 on investigation pg 61 cannot be explained at all. The board gives no reasoning as to why they came to the conclusion in opinion number 8. The evidence in the investigation is strikingly absent and contrary to this conclusion. They came to a determination that the man sized object couldn't have been James falling, but they offer no contrary testimony or evidence to contradict Mr. Delany. There is no investigation at all about the object. Certainly if I were a Commanding Officer and had something that large fall off of an aircraft I was responsible for, I would want to know exactly WHAT did fall, but the board never pursues it or asks any other squadrons if they were missing a man sized object from that day.
6. James was wearing a Mae West life preserver along with the parachute (Investigation pg 59). After the initial search, there was no follow up searches. No boats were sent to search the area the object fell to. No search was made for a body. James had to have been wearing the life preserver and his body would have floated for many days, and yet no one made the effort to find him.

7. Opinion number 5 greatly baffles me. It was unequivocally stated that the rear hatch was open the entire time the aircraft was on the ground after James got into it, and the aircraft was seen taking off with the hatch OPEN (investigation pg 36, Q26 and pg 37 Q35). The board must have had a severe case of cranial rectum-itis when they came to this opinion, which makes me wonder where else they dropped the ball.

8. Which brings me to the granddaddy of them all, Opinion number 11. Nowhere in this entire investigation and official record is there evidence of this, most especially the phrase "bitterly resented". Where is the evidence? The fact that this letter is written, not received but written, five days after James disappeared seems to be lost on this board. No evidence is presented to come to this conclusion. On the contrary, there are multiple witnesses who testify to James's mental state and presence of mind leading up to the time of this flight. The letter, "Exhibit 10" is there for everyone to read, and while she is clearly telling James off about some issue early in the letter, it certainly is no "Dear John" letter. Who ends a severance letter with the phrase "Please write often. I'll answer everyone of your letters if you would like to receive them"?

9. Thankfully Jim Walter's was able to contact the pilot, Milton S. Watkins many years after this happened (1 September 2003) and was able to ask him about this event. Two things Mr. Watkins said in the phone conversation never made it into the testimony and likely would have made a large impact on the boards conclusion had they been known. Number one was a conversation that James had with him, asking him to make the ride more exciting. This implies that perhaps he DID do some acrobatics during the flight. The other is that Mr. Watkins said that at most he did a 60 bank. In his testimony to the board he indicated one half of that amount and said he did a 30 degree bank.

My personal conclusion is this:

James was short and was an adventure seeker. This is why he had his seat so high up, and why he was most likely sitting on top of his parachute. I suspect he had to disengage the safety harness to remove his parachute so he could sit on it and he either forgot the reattach it or figured he was safe even without it hooked up. He wanted to be able to see out of the cockpit and have a good view of all that was going on because he was an adventure seeker.

At some point out over the ocean the pilot "made the flight more exciting" as asked, and that it was in fact his aircraft that Mr. Delany saw. I believe that because James was so high in the seat and unfastened he would easily have fallen out with a 60 degree bank that was unexpected. It is not a stretch of the imagination to even picture him whooping it up with his arms in the air enjoying the thrill ride (let's face it he was a RIGGS and we love thrill rides and rollercoaster's), until the aircraft banked and he fell out, which is exactly what Mr. Delaney saw.

I believe it was an accident that was the culmination of a chain of events and that it caught James totally off guard.

Patrick "Troy" Riggs
June 2017

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 5

Transcript of interview with Milton S. Watkins conducted by Jim Walter

Phone conversation with Milton S. Watkins on September 1, 2003 by Jim Walter

He wondered why no one in the family or the Navy had ever contacted him. He would have been happy to talk to them but does not know what he would have told them.

He said that he spoke briefly with James before take-off. James asked him to do a couple of things to make the ride more exciting. He did not do any loops or turn the plane upside down. At most he did a 60-degree bank. He repeated this part.

He said that the parachute was in the plane. He also stated that it was the type of parachute that one could get in and out of the plane with it on.

He said that when he landed, the guy that controlled the runway asked him where he had landed. He told him "nowhere". The other guy said that he thought he must have landed somewhere else because he did not have his passenger in the back. He stated that it was the first he knew that James was not there.

The flight went up and down the coast and no more than fifty miles out to sea, but was mostly over land and marshland.

He had never seen any report of the investigation of the incident. He thought that someone might have seen something.

He said that he flew at an altitude of between 500 and 1500 feet. He did not remember seeing a camera.

He thought that if James had gotten sick, he might have leaned out. He did not recall if the intercom was out between the front and the back. He said that there was a control stick in the back and that James could have gotten the pilot's attention by shaking it.

It bothered him for a long time, but the only answer he could come up with was that James had taken his own life, but he would never tell the family that. His buddies bring the subject up every so often.

I mentioned that there was nothing from the family's side, including letters home saying that he was looking forward to going home after Christmas. No comment.

I said that the investigation did turn up someone who stated that he did see something fall from a plane that day. No comment.

He was, of course, elderly and hard of hearing, but sounded honest.

Milton S. Watkins
5231 County Road 114D
Wildwood, Florida 34785-9661

INVESTIGATION INTO THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF JAMES ERNEST RIGGS

SECTION 6

Notes from Shannon (Walter) Vandaveer concerning the investigation

James E. Riggs

born Jan. 15, 1925

died Dec. 22, 1945 ? according to Navy (1 yr. later)

- near Wildwood, New Jersey
- body never found
- death ruled not due to negligence

He was reported missing at approximately 1440 (2:40pm)
Dec. 21, 1944. Parachute was still in rear cockpit
of plane

Section 5 of Public Law 490

Bern Owem → Experimental Aircraft Assoc. (EAA)

plane — Curtiss SB2C-1 "Helldiver" divebomber
from U.S. Naval Air Station at Wildwood, NJ

James was a passenger on an orientation flight of SB2C-1
flight was 1 hr. + 45 min.

Seatbelt was unbroken + single glove was also left
in the seat

His state of mind was ruled as completely normal

He had been a passenger of a SB2C-1 two
previous times

No communication was made via intercom, radio,
(or visual) during the flight. Malfunctions
may have occurred in the electronic systems

3 The rear canopy was open on ~~take off~~ + landing
+ ~~closed~~ open closed on take off.

He was an Aviation Ordnanceman first class in rank

John Zimmerman

Milton D. Watkins (Ensign) - U.S. Naval Reserve

- was part of Bombing Squadron 97
- was on the flight schedule on Dec. 21, 1944 for an SRAC familiarization flight from 1300 to 1445 out of Wildwood, N.J. (bureau # 01038, squadron number 19)
- Riggs ^{did not} obtained permission to be a passenger on Watkins' flight and he ^{did not} followed all appropriate procedures for sign-up
- Riggs obtained a parachute, helmet, and life jacket prior to flight time

According to naval documents, Riggs was properly wearing all safety equipment previously mentioned.

These documents also state that Riggs was reluctant to give his name to the plane (Skute) captain for the Daily Flight Inspection Form ("yellow sheet"). He did not give his name until after the plane had proceeded to the wing-lock inspection station at the entrance to the taxi-strip

The flight took off at about 1320 and did not return until about 1440.

Watkins + Riggs were not able to communicate during the flight. Riggs made no attempt to communicate with the pilot during the flight

James did not report any malfunctions of the intercom system prior to take off

At about 1400, an object (the size of a man's body) was seen to fall from the aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean. By Whom?

James was missing when the plane landed

Upon inspection of the rear cockpit, a woolen mitten was found on the floor, the parachute and harness were in the back seat.

It showed no evidence of disarrangement, an accident, or airsickness. The outside of the plane showed no evidence of airsickness, violent maneuvering, or being struck by something.

Watkins, according to naval documents, did not engage in violent or acrobatic maneuvers.

★ The navy ruled that James unfastened his safety belt and removed his ^{parachute} safety belt, exhibiting "a reckless & wanton disregard" for his own life.

They also said the rear hatch was closed during flight after it took off but was then opened

Documents further state that the plane was not maneuvered in a manner ~~to~~ sufficiently violent to have accidentally thrown Riggs. Nor was the atmospheric condition severe enough to cause such an accident.

★ The navy says that Riggs voluntarily left the aircraft ~~and~~ without his parachute between Wildwood, NJ, & Ocean City, N.J.

The object seen falling from the plane was determined not to be James Riggs by virtue of the location.

James was ruled to be in sound mental condition

★ The navy said that Riggs had adequate cause to take his own life because of a break up with Virginia Kenyon.

★ His death was ruled a result of Riggs' own misconduct

Virginia Kenyon - #3835 S. 16th Street, Lincoln, NE

? June Bacigalupo - 1370 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn.

The ~~other~~ opinions marked above were disapproved by a board of investigation

The cause for Riggs to take his own life was an opinion made only by the finding of an unauthenticated letter. The text of which is susceptible to interpretation. The board said that Riggs' letter did not give reason for him to take his own life. The letter arrived after Riggs' disappearance

Thomas F. Delaney, 112 E. Poplar Ave., Wildwood, R.I.

- witness → falling object appeared to be a man

People to Contact

As of Dec 21, 1944

- Wildwood, N.J. Milton D. Watkins, ensign, USNR — pilot
Thomas F. Delaney, civilian — witness
112 E. Poplar Ave., Wildwood, N.J.
- Wildwood, N.J. William A. Andrews, aviation chief ordnance man - friend
Robert A. Deaman, aviation ordnance man 1c - friend
Hammond, Indiana + Wildwood
- Virginia Kenyon
3835 S. 16th Str., Lincoln, Neb.
- ✓ State Medical Examiner
150 Cabinet St., Newark, N.J. 07107

Cities to contact

Wildwood
Cape May
Ocean City
Seaville
Sea Isle City
Avalon
Stone Harbor
Strathmore