CONFIDENTIAL

Classification changed to RESTRICTED
by [illegible] NAS, Lt. Col., AC
by [illegible] WENCH, Capt., AC

84th TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON
437TH TROOP CARRIER GROUP

5699

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT

16 MAR 1946

1. ORGANIZATION: Location Sta 469 Command or Air Force 9th Tr Carr Group 437th Tr Carr Squadron 84th Tr Carr Detachment None
2. SPECIFY: Point of Departure Station 469 Course Cornish Coast Intended Destination Neptune Serial #28 Type of Mission Glider Tow
3. WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR TIME LAST REPORTED *See below at bottom of page.
4. GIVE: (a) Date 6 June 44 Time 0400 and Location Cherbourg, France of last known whereabouts of missing airplane.
(b) Specify whether (x) Last sighted; ( ) Last contacted by Radio; ( ) Forced down; ( ) Seen to crash; or ( ) Information not available.
5. AIRPLANE WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS RESULT OF: (Check only one) ( ) Enemy Airplane; (x) Enemy Anti-Aircraft; ( ) Other circumstances as follows: _____
6. AIRPLANE: Type, Model and Series C-47A A.A.F. Serial No. 42-100803
7. ENGINES: Type, Model and Series R-1830-92 A.A.F. Serial No. (a) CR-352576 (right)
(b) CR-352282 (left) (c) _____ (d) _____
8. INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial No)
(a) NONE (b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____
(e) _____ (f) _____ (g) _____ (h) _____
9. THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW WERE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty _____ or (b) Non-Battle Casualty NOT REPORTED AS LOST
10. NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 4 Passengers 0 Total 4
(Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars: If more than 10 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on separate sheet and attach original to this form.)

Crew Position	Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number
1. Pilot	Lawson, Jack A.	1st Lt	0-745017
2. Co-Pilot	Handegaard, Donald W.	2d Lt	0-686848

Please turn over

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*3. Broken and cumulus clouds approaching coast of France. Upon ascending over the coast, planes entered status clouds. Visibility became o/c and instrument flying became necessary. Missing plane was last seen entering status clouds.

Incl 24

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DFB

3.	Crew Chief	Maranz, Henry S.	T Sgt	32590448
4.	R.O.M.	Kittle, Charles R.	Sgt	15358727
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

RECEIVED

11. IDENTIFY PRICE THOSE PERSONNEL WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LEFT THE PLANE OR AIRCRAFT, AND GIVE APPROPRIATE DETAILS AS TO PARACHUTE USE:

Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number	Contacted By Radio	Last Sighted	Saw Crash	Saw Forced Landing
1. Pilon, David A.	1st Lt	0-675620		X		
2.						
3.						

12. IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, STATE WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS: (a) Parachutes were used ___; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash ___ or (c) Any other reason (Specify) ___

13. ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, IF ANY, SHOWING EXACT LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN. None

14. ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRPLANE.

15. ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE None.

Date of Report 7 June 1944

William A. Black
(Signature of Preparing Officer)

WILLIAM A. BLACK,
Captain, Air Corps,
Executive Officer.

/rrr/

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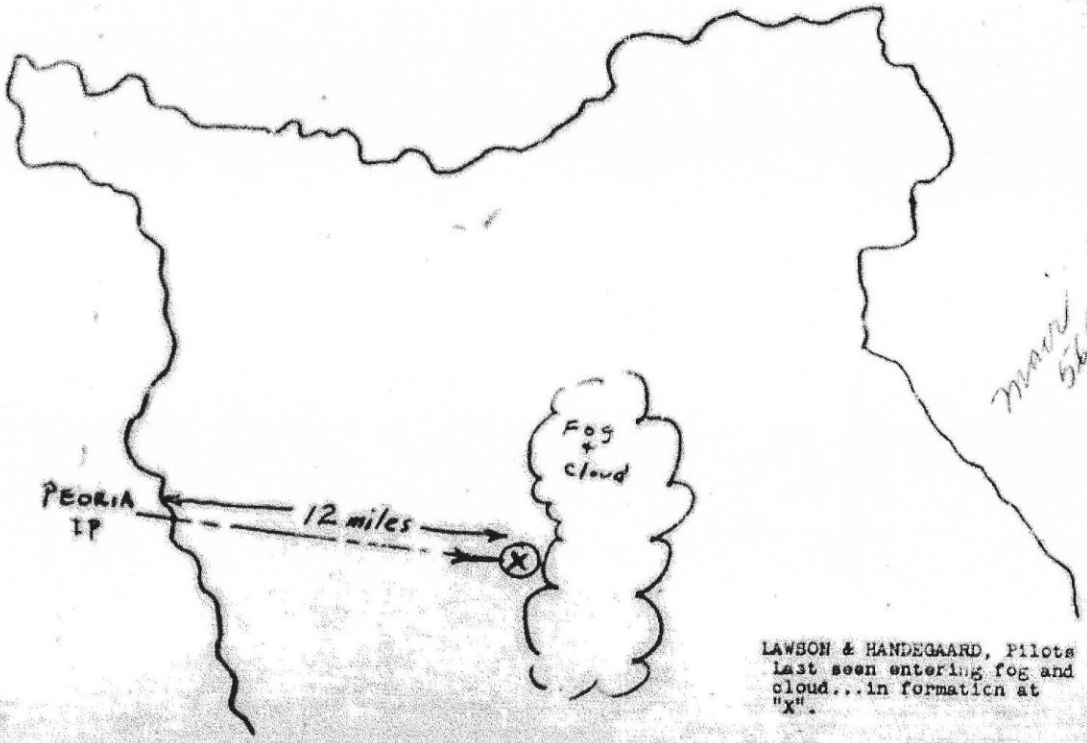
CERTIFICATE

I observed as we reached the coast of France that Lt LAWSON was still flying formation with us just off our right wing. We let down to the overcast and as we came out, Lt LAWSON was missing from the formation.

David A. Flow

DAVID A. FLOW,
1st Lt., Air Corps.



LAWSON & HANDEGAARD, Pilots
Last seen entering fog and cloud...in formation at "X".

1st Lt. Jack A. Lawson, on left standing, and crew, 84th Squadron, 437th Group, at Aldermaston, May 1944. Jack and his crew were killed as they towed a CG-4A in the 82d Airborne Division's initial glider lift before dawn on D-Day.

While our planes were being loaded with ammunition at Ramsbury, I went over to 437th Operations specifically to find my cousin 1st. Lt. Jack Lawson, a pilot with the 84th Squadron. I learned that he and his crew had not returned from their D-Day glider lift, and that they were missing in action. I found the two glider pilots he had towed, F/O James L. Larkin of Minneapolis, Minn., and F/O William Kostiak of Glassboro, New Jersey, both of the 84th. They said that as they crossed the French coast going in, they struck the cloud bank which we all hit, but which they thought to be smoke as no moisture showed on their windshield as normally happens in clouds.

Shortly thereafter Jack's ship began to oscillate in the clouds. There was light flak or machine gun fire through that area then, but they didn't see the plane hit, or any signs of fire from it. They were way below the plane at one time, and they remembered seeing normal exhaust fires from both engines, so they think both engines were running normally.

After further weaving back and forth, and a descent in which their air speed showed up to 180 mph (140 is the maximum speed for which the glider is stressed), Larkin said Jack's ship went off in a steep dive to the left, breaking the tow rope at about 900 feet. They broke out underneath the clouds and started to make their approach into a large field. Machine gun fire was directed at them from the center of that field, so they turned away, knowing they would have to take whatever came on this approach, as they were quite low. The glider was badly crashed in the landing, but everyone got out with no more than scratches and bruises.

They hid, living on their emergency rations and what help some of the French people could give them, until they were later able to work their way back to American lines. They were gone about two weeks.

No word of Jack or his crew could be learned from the French, although the Underground gave them some information on some Americans who had been wounded and were being cared for by them. Both of these glider pilots had flown behind Jack considerably, and had asked to be towed by him on the invasion. They think he was either hit, or the plane was out of control in some other manner, as he had always given them smooth rides in the past.

Jack's ship was C-47 No. 42-100803.

I learned later that Jack's airplane had crashed, killing the flight crew. We will probably never know exactly what happened, but I feel pretty confident in speculating that they took a burst through the cockpit, or through their control cables. The C-47's oscillations described by James Larkin (see story below) are very descriptive of what an untended airplane will do. Up until it begins to stall, down until the speed gives it more lift, up again, then down, and so on, usually until one wing gets higher than the other and it goes over.

The story following is that of the two glider pilots Jack Lawson and crew towed in on this mission. Glider pilot James Larkin recounts their experiences before and during the Normandy invasion.

Long Journey Into Normandy

by James L. Larkin

[The following article by former GP James L. Larkin (see above story) is edited from the original, which appeared in Silent Wings, The Voice of the World War II Combat Glider Pilots *(Horn, a, 1,8-9). James Larkin was a glider pilot with the 84th Squadron of the 437th Troop Carrier Group.]*

Today when I think of D-Day and that night landing 25 miles behind German lines, my thoughts bounce back to the many milestones of my wartime glider-piloting experience. I particularly remember the excellent training I received to prepare me for that first combat on D-Day.

An important milestone was graduation day at Lubbock Advanced Flying School. It was February 1943 and I was in Class 43-3. Immediately after graduation about a hundred of us newly-minted Flight Officers left for Ardmore, Oklahoma for our first taste of infantry-type training, designed to enable us to survive on the battlefields we were destined to fly into. A couple of months later came a transfer to Bowman Field in Louisville, Kentucky. At Bowman we did both flying and infantry training. Our training continued through a three-month stay at Laurinburg-Maxton, and when we got to England we had more intensive training. There we were also taught advance ground- survival techniques by some hard-bitten airborne officers.

I piloted the last glider in the 437th TC Group formation. I made it to the western coast of Normandy, but it took me over two weeks to get to Sainte-Mère-Église, only 25 miles to the east. The C-47 pulling my glider was shot down and its crew killed shortly after we came over the French coast.

James L. Larkin

Our four-ship echelon hit heavy ground fire at the Normandy coast line. In just a few minutes I was no longer able to get a response from my tow ship on the intercom. Then the tow ship began a series of steep dives followed by steep climbs. Twice we repeated these wild ups and downs—through a cloud layer yet! I stayed on tow until the tow rope snapped. Now on my own at 900 feet over western Normandy, I lowered my airspeed to the minimum and eased my way toward the dark, hidden ground. Shortly after touchdown, the left wing of my CG-4A hit an unseen concrete telephone pole. We stopped rolling and found that none of us were seriously hurt.

Our glider had a 57mm anti-tank cannon on board along with three 82d Airborne gun crewmen. Bill Kostiak was riding as co-pilot. Cpl. Jasinske, the gun crew chief, hastily removed the firing mechanism of the big gun and it was under his arm as we took off into some nearby thick woods.

We buried the firing mechanism in the woods and stayed there all of D-Day watching the airshow overhead. Allied warplanes were everywhere bombing and gunning the enemy all around us.

The next day we ran out of drinking water. Late on the night of June 7 we left the woods and knocked on the door of a nearby farmhouse which we had scouted during the day. The response from the French family who answered my knock was overwhelming. We were welcomed with smiles and hugs, but conversation was impossible. In the confusion of the crash landing I had lost my French-English dictionary.

We pantomimed that we were really thirsty. René, the lady of the house, brought us a pitcher of hard apple cider and we all had a glass of that lively beverage, but we still wanted water. More mimicry of drinking gestures brought us in succession red wine, white wine, and some fiery Calvados brandy. We took a good slug of each of these and kept up the mimicry. Finally some water showed up and we drank lots of that, too. We had some cheese and sausage to eat and then hugged our hosts goodnight and returned to our woodland hideout. We were feeling no pain.

The five of us came back to the farmhouse about midnight the next day. René fixed us a welcome meal of ham and eggs and we drank more wine and less water. Waiting for us at the farm house were two young men from the French underground forces. One of these men spoke enough English to get us out of the pantomime business.

With the help of various other Free French guerrillas, we began to thread our way eastward across Normandy. We walked nearly every night for the next two weeks. Our guides tried to find an opening through to American battle lines, but no luck. We had some hair-raising brushes with Germans on some of those night hikes. By day we hid out in woods and ravines; sometimes in old buildings. When the weather was nice we had a good airshow every day. Once we were very nearly taken out when a P-47 dropped a big bomb near us. In the end we got through the battle lines by hiding in a barn near the town of Valognes in central Normandy.

We just stayed still one day, and the 4th U.S. Infantry Division "captured" us in the barn. We gave up without a struggle. My two years of training had served me well.

*Used by permission (Horn and Larkin).

First Lieutenant Jack A. Lawson	Mrs. Marjorie A. Lawson, (Wife) 1818 Oakland Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas. Mr. W. A. Lawson, (Father) 130 North Erie, Wichita 8, Kansas.
Second Lieutenant Donald W. Handegaard	Mrs. Edith O. Handegaard, (Mother) Dell, Minnesota.
Sergeant Charles S. Kittle MIA	M[illegible] Beulah Kitt[illegible], (Mother) 1302 Hillcrest Avenue, Toledo, Ohio.
Technical Sergeant Henry L. Maranz MIA	Mrs. Rebecca Maranz, (Mother) 547 Belmont Avenue, Newark, New Jersey.

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