

DECLASSIFIED
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STATEMENT OF : Kenneth A. White, Flight Officer T-120489
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On the night of July 9, 1943, I took off in Glider Stick Number 96
at 19:30 hour. Tow was rough both over land and water, although the
air became more smooth after passing Malta. We saw numerous formations
of gliders and tow planes, many of them flying different headings. As
we came upon C. Passero, our formation broke-up, due to the heavy traf-
fic at the altitude we were flying. Several times we succeeded getting
back into formation but for five minutes or more before release time we
were not in formation.

Before the take-off our tow pilots told us that we would be informed
as to our position, before casting off. Instead of holding a straight
course from C. Passero to C. Mario de Peco, our tow-plane made several
sharp turns, climbed, dived and made things very difficult for us. At one
point we noticed light flash which was fully five miles from us and falling
very short; it was noticeable that the tow-plane was over position of this.
Shortly after this, we were informed by inter-phone that "Here's where you
got off, Champ" and the tow-plane cut us off - we unable to see shore.
We made a turn to the left, approximately 135 degrees and flew at 330 degrees.

The altitude at release was 2,000 ft., and we released the tow rope shortly.
As we landed in the water the order was given to open the emergency exits.
All personnel got out of glider, but a few minutes later it was discovered
that two men were missing. As we were seven miles out to sea, the heavy
swell and high waves caused the glider to break-up entirely before three hrs.
Broken pieces still afloat served to hold us up. About 0900 hrs. 10 July,
three of the Air Force personnel attempted to swim to a ship which we could
see in the distance. It is very improbable that they survived the heavy
sea. One other chap became delirious and after drinking salt water, jumped
into the water and disappeared. We were rescued at daylight by a landing
barge from H.M.S. Ulster Monarch. There were seven survivors out of our crew
of fourteen. After being taken to the Ulster Monarch and being in the sick
bay of that ship for four hours, we were given British Naval clothing. At
approximately 2000 hrs. 10 July, we were transferred to another British
Naval Ship, H.M.S. Bezenaford. At 1600 hrs. 11 July, we sailed for Malta
where we stayed for three more days.

It is my opinion that the tow-plane pilots were to blame in some cases
especially in mine.

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