

12 January 1948

Subject: Compiled Report Concerning
Major Accident of Capt.
T.F. Mantell, Jr. on 7 Jan.
1948 at 1518 CST.

TO: Whom It May Concern

1. This report will be informal and fragmentary, but it is accurate to the best of my knowledge. The mission of the transport was to fly four ferry pilots, volunteer pilots of the guard, to Marietta Army Air Base where they were to pick up four P-51's that were left there because of weather 30 December 1947.
2. Upon arrival at Marietta the four P-51's were preflighted by mechanics flown there on the same transport, for that purpose. Capt. Mantell filed a VFR clearance to Standiford Field at Louisville. The flight took off and I watched them form and proceed north in formation at about 4000 feet.
3. Upon arrival of our C-47 at Standiford at 1615 CST on 7 January 1948 we were met by mechanics who told us about flying objects, and that our P-51's were after something and that is all we gathered. In operations about 1700 CST a phone call was received by Major Doyle that the plane had crashed near Franklin and the pilot killed.
4. At 1730 I was back in the air in the C-47 enroute to Bowling Green where I was to get transportation to Franklin. I had mechanics, and Administration Specialist, and a co-pilot aboard. We arrived at 1815 CST at Bowling Green and proceeded to Franklin via Highway patrol car.
5. At the scene of the accident we carried on as much of an investigation that as possible at night. We got affidavits from Mrs. Phillips.

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Accident, Major.

Mr. Becker (Booker), the County Coroner, and two boys who watched the plane come down. Our formal accident report is awaiting action by the investigation board that will meet at Standiford in the next 48 hours.

A summary of my opinion of the cause of the accident is compiled through what I have heard from various sources and affidavits concerning the accident.

6. As Capt. Mantell passed near Godman Field he switched to B channel to call Standiford Tower, the message was intercepted at Godman tower and he was directed to attempt to find out what the object was that they were watching. Lt. Hendricks, who was on Mantell's wing was in a hurry to get to Standiford, so he asked to break off and was given permission by Mantell. Clements moved up and could see Mantell was talking so he switched from C channel to B channel.....Mantell spiraled up at high power setting and finally took a heading of about 220 degrees and was climbing, about 180 MPH. Parts of the conversation between Mantell and Clements was that Mantell thought the object was traveling about the speed he was climbing. At 22,500 feet Clements told Mantell they were getting too high, Clements wingman, Lt. Hammond had no oxygen and was getting dizzy. Clements luckily had a plane that had some oxygen in it and he was wearing his mask because he could use a mask better for transmission than he could a throat mike. When Clements had reported to Mantell that he was turning back Mantell told him they would go to 25,000 feet level off, fly 10 minutes as they go down. When Clements broke off with his wingman at about 23,000 he called Mantell and informed him he had left and Mantell's reply was garbled. Clements last seen Mantell heading into the sun climbing at high power. Clements and Lt. Hammond landed at Standiford and Clements refueled and took off again at 1605 CST, climbing toward the Franklin, Kt. area. Upon reaching 33,000 feet he reported over B channel that he was at 33,000 feet and didn't see a thing.... this was about 1625 or 1630 CST. Clements left a vapor trail near Franklin on the ~~XXXX~~ way south and passed under it on the way back north.

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Accident, Major

At about 1600 CST, two pilots, flying a Reynolds Ketal C-47 were on VFH B channel, over Bardstown, Ky. when they heard someone say they were at 33,000 feet and couldn't see anything. They landed at Bowman Field, Louisville about 1615 CST.

7. My personal opinion of the accident is that Mantell, an aggressive pilot, attempted to pursue the object as long as possible, even though he realized his danger from lack of oxygen. At about 25,000 feet I believe he passed out from anoxia and the plane continued climbing to about 30,000 feet where it done three lazy circles and went into a power dive, slowly rotating to the left with the engine torque. I believe that he reached compressibility at about 15,000 feet and the left wing blew off, part started coning off and raining down for nearly a mile in a north to south direction, scattering the lightest part the farthest away. I think the pilot was dead of anoxia when he started down. When the left wing came off, the right wing acted as a fin or rudder for the fuselage and guided the fuselage straight down parallel to the ground. The plane did not burn upon impact. The pilots' watch shattered at 1518 CST.

8. Captain Mantell was graduated from a single Engine school, AT-6 ,.. he was put in a Troop Carrier outfit ... trained in the States .. went overseas to North Africa...from there to England ... was in D day invasion, Normandy ... flew the Holland mission ... flew the Rhine crossing mission ... during this time he flew transition in B-24's and C-47s. Back in the States at Bergstrom he taught Chinese cadets in the C-46. He was discharged about Nov. 20, 1946. His terminal leave was up about Jan. 20, 1947,.. the 21st day of March Capt. Mantell started in business as part owner of a GI flying school. Elkins-Mantell Flying School, Bowman Field, Louisville, Ky. He was federally recognized in the Air National Guard about the 16th of February, 1947. He started flying the P-51 about May of 1947 and built his time to around 70 hours up until his death. He was a flight leader. His military time was approximately 2300 hours, his civilian time was around 700 hours.

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Accident, Major

9. Captain Mantell 's home life was normal. He had a wife and two boys ,, one 17 months and one about 6 years.. I was Mantell's closest friend and can vouch that he never had any personal problems, except the normal business worries, which were unknown to me if he had any of that type. His interest in flying could not be excelled. He loved the P-51, felt he was the master of it, and flew...not carelessly but like an aggressive fighter pilot. I firmly believe that if he thought he had any chance of catching this object he would have pursued it knowingly to his death. I think he seen something more than a star or balloon...he was above average intelligent. He did respect the airplane and the dangers of anoxia. If some outside force did not cause his death, I think he passed out too quickly to change his line of flight. Mantell was six foot, weighted 190 lbs. A husky, well-build man.

RICHARD L. TYLER
Captain, KY ANG,
Operations Officer &
Investigator of the
Accident.

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