

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP - EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
Russell A. Strong, Rt. 1, Scotch Meadows Dr. Laurinburg, NC 28352

Name ROBERT J TROUTZ  
Address 1102 NE 6TH TERR. WADSTONE MO. 64118  
Telephone 816-436-1729 Date 8/22/77  
Occupation Elect. Employer INDEPENDENT ELECT MACH. CO  
Address 300 SW BLVD. HQ MO. 64108 Telephone 471-2610

Service Record:

Before joining the 306th:

Jefferson Bks, St Louis. Oct 24, 1941 to Nov. the day before Thanksgiving. to Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill. for Mech. & instrument school. I was there when War was declared. From there to Winderover, Utah. then to Maclover Mass. 3rd Lieut. After leaving the 306th: by ship (Queen Elizabeth) then to Thurleigh. Discharge Sept 12, 1945.

306th Record:

Arrival Date June 1942 Squadron or other unit 368th  
MOS June to Oct. in States Combat Status Mech, Comd'g Flight Chief & asst. Line Chief  
Missions Completed \_\_\_\_\_  
Promotions Private to Sergeant & Sergeant to 1st Lt  
Decorations AM olcs DFC olcs SS DSM DSC MH SM Bronze Star  
PH Battle Stars Do not Remember other \_\_\_\_\_

(OVER)

Other personal data:

When we first arrived at ~~the~~ <sup>Thurleigh</sup> we at with the English mess hall until new ones were constructed. Then Thurleigh was the first Base to fly the American Flag. My first Plane was the first Plane shot down from the 368th. Four men killed, six taken prisoner for rest of war. Pilot Lt. Ferguson state not known.

Description of Air Missions:

(What were the highlights of your combat career? What was your role? What heroics did you witness? What events were there of which you have special knowledge?)

One man that I know of is now living

James M Corrigan 5 E 67st N. Gladstone Mo. 64118  
Tel. 816-436-2115. Please contact 368th

I was very pleased to hear from you and would like to hear more information if possible as it is collected.

Your Combat Buddy  
M/sgt. Robt J Trout  
17033812

P.S. All material that I am sending you may keep as I have the papers for me on.

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award. (continued).

8. The foremost reasons for the fine records set up in this flight is the close cooperation maintained between Sgt. Troutz and his cre chiefs. No job is too small for his personal attention and the fact that he is on the line with his first crew chief in the morning and leaves with the last one at night, has commanded the respect, admiration and cooperation of each and every one of his men.

9. Sgt. Troutz's ability to judge men is highly commendable. That his character is superior is unquestionable. In every phase of the duties of a soldier and mechanic, he has exemplified himself. He has been a valuable asset in the smooth functioning of the squadron.

10. It is with the above facts in mind that, I, unhesitatingly, wish to recognize Sgt. Troutz's splendid devotion to duty, diligence, leadership, character, and fine mechanical skill by recommending that he be awarded the Bronze Star Medal for services which reflect credit, not only upon himself, but upon the traditions of the Army Air Force, as well.

THOMAS M. BULINGS  
Major, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

## Congratulated By Gen. James H. Doolittle

Six men, members of the Eighth Air Force from Liberty received congratulations after VE-day from General James H. Doolittle, their commander.

They were 2nd Lt. John D. Hubbard, 110 S. Main; S-Sgt. James P. Kelley, 127 Terrace Ave.; Sgt. Alton J. Moon, 412 Miller Ave.; Sgt. Charles M. Thomas; Cpl. James V. Stewart, 421 N. Leonard St., and Cpl. Robert J. Troutz, all of Liberty.

"I wish to extend my personal congratulations and my heartfelt appreciation to everyone of you for the magnificent job you have done," Gen. Doolittle said in a message to all personnel. "Each of you," he continued, "may be proud of your part in the defeat of Germany. I am proud of you. The world is proud of you."

The Eighth Air Force was the world's mightiest strategic bombing force.

THESE PICTURES WERE TAKEN  
HERE ON THE BASE

## STORY OF THURLEIGH BASE

(Continued from Page 1)

Princess Elizabeth visited the field, and with a bottle of champagne the Princess christened a new Fortress "Rose of York." The royal party stayed to lunch, the King enjoying his favourite dish of fish salad and Princess Elizabeth eating ice-cream with great enthusiasm.

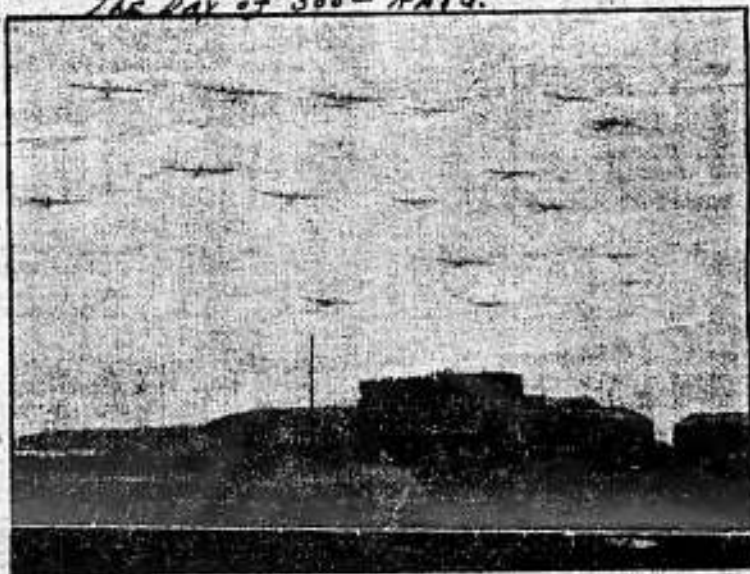
Guy Byam, the B.B.C. correspondent, was present that day, little realising that he was to meet his death while flying in "Rose of York." The plane was hit over Berlin and crashed into the North Sea on February 3rd, 1945.

The King first visited the station

in direct support of Montgomery's assault across the Rhine. On March 30th, at the request of the British Admiralty, it sent rocket-propelled bombs hurtling on to the submarine construction pens at Fargo. It was the first Group to use these weapons and the lead pilot, Major Thomas F. Witt, received the Silver Star.

On its 300th raid (February 22nd, 1945) the Thurleigh Group led the largest force ever sent out by the 8th. The target was Wittstock, and on their return the Forts gave a display for the benefit of the ground men, whose resourcefulness and zeal, especially under the makeshift conditions of the first winter in Eng-

THE RAY OF 300th RAID.



Landing in tow for a display after the 300th mission.

land, are freely praised by the flyers. Schweinfurt was first raided on August 17th, 1943, no losses resulting, but in the second raid, on October 14th, 10 planes went down out of 29 dispatched, and only five reached the target.

When the final mission to Falkenberg was completed on April 19th of this year, Fortresses from Thurleigh had dropped 23,381 tons of bombs for a loss of 175 planes and a casualty toll of 1,807 killed, missing and prisoners. On one occasion 64 planes were dispatched on a mission, and on D-Day three missions were flown.

The first attack on Berlin was on March 6th, 1944, and the only loss was one plane which landed in Sweden. The Group has raided Berlin 15 times in all.

### HELPED "MONTY"

On March 26th, 1945, the Group flew three missions to attack airfields in Holland and N.W. Germany.

The list of Commanding Officers has the names of Col. Charles (Chips) Overacker, Col. (now General) Frank Armstrong, Col. Claude S. Putnam, Col. Geo. L. Robinson, Col. James S. Sutton and the present C.O., Col. Hudson H. Upham.

Bicycle-riding has added to the Thurleigh casualty list. Some of these rides must have been amorous expeditions, for the Group has captured no fewer than 148 British brides. Capt. Van Norman, the Public Relations Officer, had a twinkle in his eye when he told us this—he himself married a Bedford girl.

## CANDLE FLAMES INSCRIBED AIRFIELD HISTORY

### STORY OF THE 306th

CANDLE FLAMES HAVE WRITTEN A STRANGE BUT GLORIOUS DOCUMENT WHICH MAY SOON BE REMOVED FROM THE AMERICAN AIR BASE AT THURLEIGH—A FEW MILES FROM RUSHDEN ON THE BEDFORDSHIRE SIDE—AND TAKEN TO A NATIONAL MUSEUM IN THE STATES.

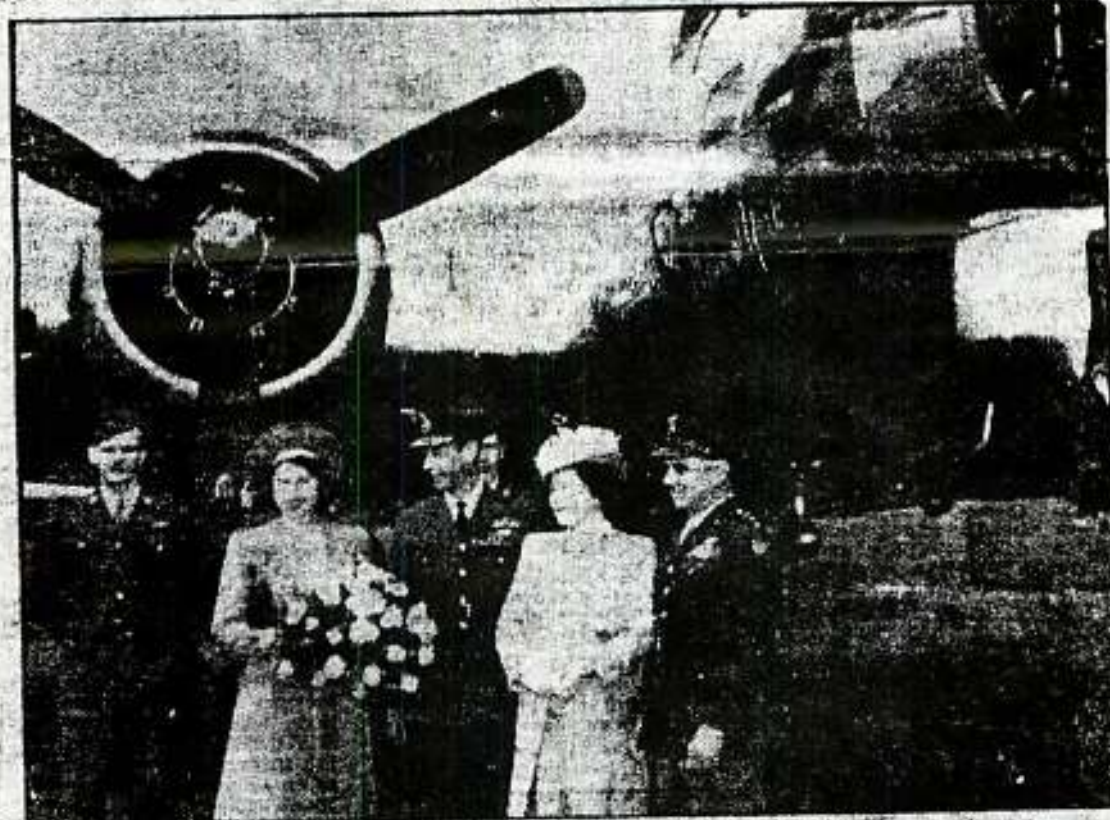
In its early days the Thurleigh airfield was occupied by Polish airmen who went over Germany in Wellington bombers. The Poles carried out two operations—on Cologne and Essen. Each time, on returning, they took a lighted candle and, holding it close to the ceiling of the Senior Officers' Mess, inscribed with smoke the name of the place they had bombed.

#### COSTLY EXPERIENCE

When the Thurleigh Fortresses went off for their first mission on October 9th, 1942, all the Fortress work was being done by the 1st Wing from Basingbourne, Chelveston, Thurleigh and Molesworth. It was the work of these four Groups, at first regarded as experimental, which convinced Churchill and Roosevelt that daylight bombing from England would be a sound policy.

Part of the most threatening weapon at this source, the Forts went to St. Nazaire on November 9th, 1942, with orders to attack at low altitude. There was terrific A.A. fire, but the Thurleigh Group, led at that time by Col. Overacker, went in at zero level and bombed with good results. They lost three ships, however, and the mission showed that low-level bombing was too costly.

On January 27th, 1943, the 8th Air Force bombed Germany for the first time, and Thurleigh was chosen to lead the whole force. The target



A salute from Princess Elizabeth, seen with the King and Queen and Gen. Doolittle (right) after the christening of "Rose of York."

With the arrival of the 306th Group, U.S.A.A.F., the custom was continued, and now the ceiling is completely covered with names representing 341 missions in which the Group has become the most-decorated one in the 8th Air Force. Plans are going forward for the entire ceiling to be transported across the Atlantic.

From the arrival of the 306th on September 8th, 1942, Thurleigh—the first 8th Air Force station to fly "Old Glory" in England—became the headquarters of the 40th Combat Wing. Fortresses and their personnel flew over from the States; the ground personnel came by liner, and no time was lost in preparing men and machines for what has been an extremely colourful chapter of the air war on Germany.

In that first raid on a railway marshalling yard at Lille, the Thurleigh Group lost one ship. The Americans knew little or nothing about the technique of daylight bombing, and their only means of learning what methods to employ was to go out and see what happened. It was costly experience, because the R.A.F. Spitfires could fly no further than France on escort work, and the Forts came up against frenzied fighter attacks.

Fortunately the Luftwaffe was baffled by the Americans' massed fire power. Sixty-six Forts went on the first mission and claimed 54 enemy aircraft destroyed. Thurleigh sent 23 ships and claimed 10 victims.

#### LOW-LEVEL ATTACK

Concentrating on the submarine pens in an effort to destroy Hitler's

was Wilhelmshaven, and in the ship—the first plane of the 8th Air Force to cross German territory—the pilot was Colonel (now Gen.) Gwiler Armstrong.

As the campaign developed the targets changed in succession to production, marshalling yards and Luftwaffe factories.

The Thurleigh men soon got to know and respect the Abbeville K— the yellow-nosed German fighter



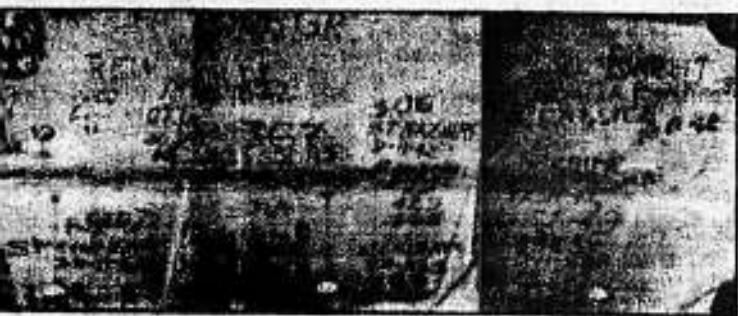
WELLS-BRENS and VALERIO  
MILANO ROAD  
WELLINGTON  
Established 1942  
ALSO at RUSHDEN, BEDFORDSHIRE

Temperance Hall,  
Friday June 11th  
Town Hall,  
The School,  
Church Room.

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AND

# FIRST OVER GERMANY



...ing of records—soon to be exhibited in America.

stationed at Abbeville in France. These were manned by excellent pilots—Goring's pride and joy—who almost became "friends of the family," so persistent were they in their attentions.

## THE "CLAY PIGEONS"

At the same time the four Thurlough squadrons were earning significant names for themselves. One of them in the early days seemed to have nothing but bad luck and suffered terrific losses. An American correspondent, writing in the "Saturday Evening Post," said that the squadron reminded him of a bunch of clay pigeons. That stuck, and the quarters of the squadron still display the "Clay Pigeons" sign.

Another squadron, first in the group to drop 1,000 tons of bombs, was the "Beavers."

"Fitin' Bitin'" made 42 consecutive missions without loss—a record which stood in the 8th Air Force until D-Day and was achieved at a time when opposition was fiercest.

## CO-OPERATION

Just to touch the fringe of Thurlough's wealth of action stories we go back to the first mission and picture a Fortress limping back to England in badly damaged condition. Scarcely knowing what course to choose, the pilot noticed a Spitfire which came close and wobbled its wings. This was taken correctly as a signal to follow, and the Fortress was led to the landing field at Manston. The Spitfire dropped its landing gear. Again the Fortress followed suit, and by this admirable co-operation the craft was saved.

aircraft was the two top turret guns striking defiantly out of the water and still firing. Sgt. Harris was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Sgt. Maynard Smith, known to all as "Snuffy," won the supreme award, the Congressional Medal of Honour, during a mission to St. Nazaire on May 1st, 1943. The ship was in caught fire after being hit and was divided in half by flames. Three of the crew baled out and some were killed, leaving Smith as the only unwounded man in the rear part of the ship. While still under fighter attack Smith put the fire out, at the same time jumping from one gun to the other and driving off the Germans. He also gave first-aid to the tail-gunner, who was badly wounded, and saved his life. Thanks to Smith, the plane landed in England. Its control wheel is now mounted on the P.R.O.'s desk at Thurlough.

## "PAPPY'S" LAST RIDE

Capt. Raymond J. Check, known as "Pappy," had a wonderful personality and was a universal favourite. On his 25th mission (intended to be his last) a 20 m.m. explosive shell burst in the cockpit, killing him instantly and setting fire to the ship. He was the pilot. His co-pilot that day, Lt. Col. Wilson, was so badly burned that it was impossible for him to fly the ship home. By a stroke of luck Check's regular co-pilot, Lt. William Carr, had been



Sgt. Smith getting Metal of Honour from General Jacob Devers, from Mr. Stimson, U.S. Secretary of War.

recognition of its liking for work. A third, rather partial to a "scrap," became the "Fitin' Bitin'," and the fourth, called the "Grim Reapers," was a death's head with a fiery cythe as its insignia.

During the early part of 1943

was on its 100th mission, with Halberstadt as the target. Bad weather caused the recall of the fighter escort, and the Luftwaffe promptly came up in strength; but the Group, led by the C.O., Col. Robinson, shot its way through and hit the target hard, so earning, with others of the 1st Division, the Presidential Unit Citation.

## TWO HEROES

One of the most magnificent things ever done was on January 3rd, 1943, when the Group attacked St. Nazaire. One of the Ports, badly crippled, fell into the Channel, and as it went down was still being attacked by enemy aircraft. When the ships hit the water, Sgt. Arizona T. Harris remained at his guns in the top turret, trying to drive off the enemy and allow his comrades to escape. The last thing seen of the

along for the ride as waist-gunner, in order to be with Check on his last mission, and he was able to take the craft home bearing the body of a remarkable man whose death was mourned on the station for months.

Capt. Richard H. Clays, previously with the R.C.A.F., had a passion for action and flew 75 consecutive missions without going on leave or taking a single day's pass. He could not be persuaded to take a rest. Another rare character was Technical Sergt. Roskavitch ("Rosky"), who was called "the Mad Russian," always wore a Russian fur hat, and was the first man to complete 25 ops. He was afterwards killed on a passenger flight.

## "ROSE OF YORK"

In 1944 the King and Queen and

(Continued on Page 16)



RESTRICTED

CITATION FOR BRONZE STAR MEDAL

ROBERT J. TROUTZ, 17038812, Master Sergeant, Air Corps, United States Army. For meritorious service as Crew and Flight Chief of B-17 aircraft, from 1 October 1942 to 21 December 1944. During this time Sergeant Troutz continually displayed superior technical leadership and diligence in carrying out his duties in an outstanding manner. While serving as a Crew Chief his aircraft was always used as lead aircraft and completed a large number of operational missions without an abortion. While serving as Flight Chief, Sergeant Troutz supervised the dispatch of three hundred and twenty six aircraft with only an exceedingly small percentage returning early for any reason. During the critical period of the first stages of the invasion Sergeant Troutz' expert mechanical supervision was an important factor in the superior efficiency of his Squadron. The actions of Sergeant Troutz reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Missouri.



RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS 306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
Office of the Commanding Officer

The 1st Bombardment Division has been awarded a Presidential Citation for "extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in action against the enemy on 11 January 1944." This award is the highest that can be given to a Unit. It is equivalent to the Distinguished Service Cross, which is the second highest award that can be given to an individual.

The targets of the 1st Division on 11 January were the Pecke Wulf assembly plant at Eschersleben and the factory supplying parts for Junkers fighters at Halberstadt, both in central Germany, about 300 miles inside enemy territory. The 306th Group, flying its 100th mission with Colonel Robinson leading, led the attack on Halberstadt. The other Divisions were scheduled to hit aircraft plants in the same area.

Two hundred seventy five Fortresses, including 33 from the 306th Group, comprised the 1st Division. Shortly before the Division reached its target areas, a recall was sent out from headquarters because increasingly bad weather threatened to close the home bases. At that time some of the bombers of the other Divisions and some of the fighters which had been assigned to our force returned to their bases. The 1st Division air Commander, however, because of the extreme importance of the assigned targets, decided to carry on the attacks. Both targets were hit visually with excellent results.

For two hours, from the target to the North Sea some 300 miles away, the Division, with its reduced fighter escort, fought its way through flak and unceasing fighter attack by Fw 190's, Ju 88's, He 109's, 110's, 210's and 410's. Of these, the Division is officially credited with having destroyed 210. This is the largest number ever destroyed by one Division on a single mission. Forty three more were probably destroyed and 84 damaged. These attacks knocked down 42 bombers of 1st Division, but there were five enemy fighters destroyed for every bomber which failed to return. The 306th Group was subjected to particularly savage attacks, during which we lost 5 aircraft in less than 10 minutes, including both of Colonel Robinson's wing men. This Group destroyed 17 fighters, probably destroyed 4 more and damaged 14.

Practically all the 306th aircraft were shot up -- thirteen severely. Three were so seriously damaged that they were scrapped. One man was killed, 13 wounded. Many were recommended for and received special decorations for heroism against heavy odds and for their efforts in successfully returning damaged aircraft and wounded men to England.

This mission was one of a series of heavy and effective blows which finally broke the back of the German Air Force. Not only were a great many aircraft destroyed in the air, but manufacture and assembly of new fighters was critically curtailed. The spectacular and destructive advances by ground forces on all fronts would have been impossible without the work done by 8th Air Force heavy bombers. In these operations, the 1st Division, the oldest Division in the E.T.O., has been outstanding from the beginning. The 306th Group, one of the original Groups and the oldest in continuous combat, has played a major part in these successes, and every member of this organization, on the ground or in the air, can feel justly proud of his contribution toward the successful prosecution of the war in Europe.

A Distinguished Unit Badge identifying this citation will be issued to all individuals who are assigned or attached as members of the 1st Bombardment Division, to become part of the uniform as follows:

- a. Individuals who were assigned or attached to this command on 11 January 1944 are entitled to wear it as a permanent part of the uniform.
- b. Individuals who have been subsequently assigned or attached are entitled to wear the Badge as long as they remain with this command.
- c. This decoration will be worn with the class "A" uniform at all times on the right breast centered over the pocket.
- d. Authority to wear the Distinguished Unit Badge permanently will be noted in service records and Qualification Cards.



368TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)  
Office of the Squadron Commander  
United States Forces

APO 634

31 AUG 1943

SUBJECT: Good Conduct Medal.

TO: M/Sgt Robert J. Troutz, 17033812, 368th Bombardment Squadron (H)  
306th Bombardment Group (H) APO.634

1. In accordance with AR 600-68, dated 4 May, 1943, and the authority vested in me, you are hereby authorized to wear a GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL or a Pendant Ribbon in lieu thereof.

2. This Medal is awarded for displaying exemplary behavior, efficiency, fidelity and serving one (1) year in the United States Army as required by the above Army Regulation.

*John M. Regan*  
JOHN M. REGAN,  
Major, AC,  
Commanding.



One of  
the Youth  
Bombers

1914

3





My ground  
crew on my  
first Plane  
to complete 25  
missions

# CHANUTE FIELD IDENTIFICATION CARD

Name Robert J. Troutz Date 3-3-42  
 Grade Private Org 4th Tech Sch Sq

Right thumb print



*Robert J. Troutz*

4-1983 Sign

ASN 17033812

Age 22

Weight 195

Eyes Blue

Hair Blonde



TROUTZ ROBT  
17033812

Authentication R. Odeweller

ANK  
L. L. ODWYER, JR., Capt. USAF

## INSTRUCTIONS

This card is for identification purposes only and does not extend pass or other privileges to bearer thereof.

Identification card will be carried at all times. Under no circumstances will it be allowed to come into the possession of any unauthorized person. It will be presented upon request to any authorized person.

Loss of this identification card and the circumstances connected with the loss thereof will be reported immediately to the immediate commanding officer.





I am in  
middle





(CPR-PR-2-34) (11-9-43) (C CREW)