



TREASURY DEPARTMENT
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE



OFFICE OF DEPUTY COLLECTOR
DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

Wausau, Wis.,
Oct. 10th, 1951.

IN REPLY REFER TO

Mr. Glen D. Barbaras,
507 Brentwood Drive.,
Carrcroft, Wilmington, Del.

Dear Mr. Barbaras:

I have your letter of Oct. 8th and we all appreciate it very much. My only regret was that I could not be present and meet all of you folks, which my boys spoke so highly of on their return to this office. Perhaps we may all meet someday under better conditions. We all thought a lot of Gordon and the Revenuers stick together pretty well.

I visited the scene of the accident on Tuesday following the accident on Monday and went over the grounds pretty well and will give you my observation of what I saw and figured out in my own mind. The road at the place of the accident, is a good wide road and there was 22 feet between the two concret slabs on each side of the road, so you can see there was plenty of room. The slabs did not stick out into the blacktop road. There was not the least sign of skidding of tires and it would have been noticable, particularly in the grass growing on the road shoulder nor is there any evidence of any attempt to turn out to miss the concrete slab, it was hit dead center of the car and at such momentum that the bumper of the car was almost driven back in a perfect deep "U" almost to the windshield and the motor was almost under the front seat. The driveshaft was buckled and through the floor in the rear seat compartment, even the top was buckled and as you could see from the picture, the steering wheel was outside of the place where the windshield had been. It was my impression at the scene of the accident, that due to the fog, which was heavy on that morning, that as there was no marking line in the middle of the road, that Gordon was driving by the contrast of the blacktop and the green grass or gravel on the side of the road and in following that contrast, he got over too far and hit the bridge. ~~THE STEERING WHEEL WAS UNDER~~ The speedometer was locked at 55 miles per hour which may or may not mean anything in an accident. The road at this accident was wide and the normal ~~vision~~ range of vision was a half mile as it was fairly level. The road was straight as an arrow for miles and the ditch was a wet weather affair that drained the land and in dry weather would not contain any water.

I might add that since I wrote you folks, I have been to our Rhinelander office and talked to the boys there. Deputy Marshilles Eckrich with whom Gordon was working at that office told me of a conversation that he had with Gordon on Thursday before he left for Milwaukee on Friday afternoon, at which time I was present at that office and told Gordon to leave early if he wanted to. Gordon told Eckrich that he was going to kill himself in that car someday as it was hard for him to stay awake on the road and that he was driving too fast. He told him of an incident that happened a couple of weeks before when he went to sleep at the wheel and hit a curb in Oshkosh while returning to Wausau, but that the car was not going very fast and it woke him up in time to keep from hitting a light pole, so you see there may be something in the report from a trained traffic officer such as Ed Bahr.

I would rule out entirely any subversive action because Gordon had not gotten going on any cases that would be in that element, in fact we have none in this section and Gordon had gotten along fine with all people he had worked on.

In my mind there was one of two things happened there and I base my conclusion on experience as an investigator, which includes a term as Chief of Police of a large city in Kentucky, that he either dozed off or that he was driving using the contrast of the road shoulder and the blacktop and did not see the culvert, and I think with past things, that the evidence is stronger on the point of going to sleep at the wheel, because the visibility was 100 feet and he would have been able to see the culvert.

As far as the car is concerned, it is worthless and you no doubt will be able to get some salvage value from the insurance company, but my observation is that it is not worth repairing and that was also the observation of the garage owner.

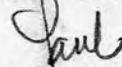
I have been told by many of the pilots of World War II that practically all of them were confirmed fatalists, that they flew over Germany with that in mind, that when their time came, they would get it, in fact I am rather inclined to think that was somewhat drilled into their mind. I do not know Gordon's attitude on that matter, but his talk with Deputy Eckrich would indicate that he thought along that line. I had a long visit with him the Friday before the accident with reference to flying in fogs over England and Germany and he told me that fogs did not bother him as he got use to them in England. Of course we will never know what happened in this case, but we will wonder and I have about made up my mind that he did fall asleep and in all probability his wife was asleep at the time. He usually left Milwaukee around two o'clock in the morning to get back here in time for work and would stop in Oshkosh and get a cup of coffee to help him keep awake.

If there is anything else that comes up in your mind on this matter, please do not hesitate to call on me.

I spent an hour with one of my boys who is Stationed at Antigo, Wis., this morning and he is slowly dying with a cancer of the stomach at 40 years old and will not last much longer. If we have to go, maybe it is better that we go as Gordon did.

With kind regards and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,



Paul W. Pemberton,
Division Chief.