

LT. KLINEFELTER LISTED AS DEAD

Missing Airman Not Reported Since Forced Down at Sea

PART OF HIS CREW FOUND ON 2 RAFTS



HOPE GIVEN UP—The War Department has announced that hope has been given up for Lt. Leslie E. Klinefelter, missing in action nearly two years.

Reported missing in action nearly two years ago when the plane on which he served as bombardier was on a mission to Yap Island, Lieut. Leslie E. Klinefelter has just been listed as dead by the adjutant general's office of the War Department. The news of a "presumptive finding of death" after failure of the War Department to find trace of the young flier was received by his mother, Mrs. Grace Klinefelter of Brattleboro, now visiting in Hanover, Pa. In a letter to Mrs. Klinefelter Maj. Gen. Edward F. Witsell, adjutant general, writes in part as follows:

"Since your son was reported missing in action July 15, 1944, the War Department has entertained the hope that he survived and that information would be revealed dispelling the uncertainty surrounding his absence. However, as in many cases, the conditions of warfare deny us such information . . .

Forced Down at Sea.

"All available records and reports concerning the absence of your son have been carefully investigated . . . Information in the hands of the War Department indicates that your son was a crew member of a B-24 (Liberator) aircraft which participated in a combat mission to Yap Island on July 15, 1944. Both anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighters were encountered over the target, rendering two engines useless. When about halfway to Los Negro's Island the pilot was forced to ditch the plane, which broke into two sections when it struck the water and sank.

"The survivors, who were in two life rafts, state that they saw a radio aerial balloon and heard voices which they believed were from a third raft, but it was driven away from them by heavy ocean swells. When a Navy Catalina Flying Boat came to the assistance of the survivors, only two rafts could be located. No trace of your son has been found since that time.

"Since no information has been received which would support a presumption of his continued survival, the War Department must now terminate your son's absence by a presumptive finding of death . . .

"I regret the necessity for this message but trust that the ending of a long period of uncertainty may give at least some small measure of consolation. An appraisal of the sacrifice made by your son in the service of his country compels in us feelings of humility and respect. May Providence grant a measure of relief from the anguish and anxiety you have experienced during these many months."

Lieutenant Klinefelter, 26 years of age at the time he was reported missing, entered Army service in June, 1941. He first served in the military police, later being transferred to the Air Corps. Graduating from the AAF school at Carlsbad, N. M., on Feb. 5, 1944, he went overseas the following June. He was a graduate of Brattleboro high school, class of '36.

Besides his mother he is survived by three brothers, J. Richard of Island Pond, Ross of New London, Conn., and George Klinefelter of Montpelier. His father, John Klinefelter, died a number of years ago.