

PLANE CRASH

Springfield Republican _____ 17 August 1942.

Three Soldiers, Badly Burned, in Hospitals

Transport Hits Garnet Peak, Bursts Into Flames

Ranks With Nation's Worst Military Air Disasters —
Sergt Lee, Clothes Completely Burned From Body,
Hero of Disaster — Has Only 50-50 Chance to
Live — Darkness Hampered Rescuers

Peru, Aug. 16—(AP)—A large army transport plane carried 17 men to flaming death last night when it crashed on isolated 2200-foot Garnet peak on Peru mountain, located in one of the most inaccessible spots in the Berkshires.

Three severely burned men survived the crash, which with the exception of mishaps to lighter-than-aircraft, was one of the worst tragedies in the history of United States military aviation.

Sheared Off Tree Tops

Shearing off the tops of trees for a distance of about 100 yards before it crashed onto a level area atop the peak, the plane immediately burst into flames, the public relations officer at Westover field said.

Sergt Robert Lee of Columbus, O.—his own clothes completely burned from his body—made two trips from the flaming wreckage, dragging four fellow passengers to what he thought was safety.

First, he carried out Private James Fern of Abington, Va., and Private Alonzo Pearson of Windber, Pa., who are given a good chance for recovery at Mercy hospital, Pittsfield. Then he carried out two others only to find that they already were dead.

Walked Nearly Mile In Daze

Signaling for help by firing three shots from his revolver, Sergt Lee walked dazedly three-quarters of a mile through dense underbrush to the nearest roadway, and directed state police back to the scene of the wreck. He was taken to St Luke's hospital, Pittsfield, where he was given a "50-50" chance for recovery.

The army said that an investigation of the crash, which occurred at 9.30 p. m., already was under way, and that a crew from Westover field was at work recovering the bodies, some of which already had been brought out.

On Flight From South

The plane was on a routine mission out of Pope field, Fort Bragg, N. C., the army said, and left Mitchel field, L. I., early last evening.

Peru's civilian defense aircraft observation unit first sighted the big craft as it plunged down among the pine trees, 16 miles east of Pittsfield, and notified state police. Then, by firing shotguns in answer to the shots from Sergt Lee's gun, the officers