

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This document is written to support evidence that Coman W. Rothrock made the first automatic blind landing under zero-zero conditions in a B-17 at Pinecastle Army Air Field, Pinecastle, Florida at some time shortly after 31 October 1944.

Pertinent data includes my graduation from a B-17 Transition School at Lockbourne Army Air Field, Ohio with subsequent assignment to the Army Air Force Tactical Center, (AAFTAC), 9th Bomb Grp., 1st Bomb Sqd., Brooksville Army Air Field, Florida on 19 November 1943.

Brooksville was approximately 50 miles north of Tampa where many secret projects were conducted. Here is where I met 1st LT. Coman Rothrock and was scheduled, and privileged, to fly with him on many major assignments. ("Privileged", because until I retired in 1977, I never again flew with a more capable, outstanding pilot.)

On 1 March 1944, our group was transferred to Pinecastle Army Air Field, south of Orlando, Florida, where a 10,000 foot runway made it possible to upgrade our test and development projects. Hundreds of exciting experiments were carried out, but this document will focus on what I believe to be the first automatic blind landing, under zero-zero conditions.

I flew with Lt. Rothrock on many of the early flights, acting as safety pilot. Though it has been 42 years, I can still see the "black box" mounted adjacent to the autopilot, with switches to be activated on "outbound" and "inbound" flight modes, prior to landing. I recall it was tied in with a localizer and glide path beam, and I am quite sure a radio altimeter was used.

The early flights produced many scary moments, but each one found faults corrected until on 31 October 1944, when Rothrock and I were walking back to operations for a debriefing, he said, "All we need is the final test: zerozero."

I remember the date well because I never before, or ever again, made so many take-offs and landings, (with Rothrock wearing special goggles to preclude ground observation), in any plane as I did that day. My Form 5 indicates twelve were accomplished and, like him, I knew the final test would be successful.

I do not recall why I was not on board for that momentous achievement, but I do know that not too much time passed between my "12-landings day" and the day I learned of what I had come to expect of Lt. Coman Rothrock: the successful completion of a historic project...the first automatic blind landing under zero-zero conditions.

*Robert W. Barry*  
Robert W. Barry  
Lt Col, USAF Retired  
10 Twisting Lane  
Wantagh, N. Y. 11793

*Swain to before notes*  
15<sup>th</sup> day of April 1976  
*Robert W. Barry*  
KENNETH W. BARRY  
Notary Public, State of New York  
No. 10-00000000  
Qualified in Nassau County