

# THE ISLAND REMEMBERS



*Yap honors the loss and sacrifice  
during World War II*

WWII Memorial Project by the Yap Visitors Bureau  
and the Missing Air Crew Project

**A MAN IS NOT DEAD UNLESS HE IS FORGOTTEN**

# YAP WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL SITES



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Yap Island WWII Tourism and Memorial Project: Experience Yap Island's History .....	4
The Missing Air Crew Project.....	5
The Story of Yap Island during WWII.....	6
Timeline.....	6
Falling Skies: American Planes Lost Over Yap .....	8
American Losses on Yap Island .....	9
The Japanese Airfield A Key Strategy.....	10
Japanese Gagil-Tamil Airstrip on Yap Island.....	11
Japanese Sites .....	11
Ens. Cox, Hellcat Site.....	12
Lt. Crowley Crew, TBM Avenger Site.....	14
Lt. Lillard, Hellcat Site.....	15
First Lt. Girvis Haltom, Jr., Corsair Site .....	16
Lt. George Beall Site .....	17
Ens. Armbruster, Jr., & Arm3c. Billings Helldiver Site.....	18
Japanese Lighthouse at Dalap .....	19
Maj. Clay, Corsair Site .....	20
Lt. Brown, Hellcat Site.....	21
Memorial Park in Colonia .....	22
Ens. Howard Holding, Hellcat Site.....	23
The Coleman B-24 Crew .....	24
The Saylor & Diederich B-24 Crew .....	25
The End of the War and Its Aftermath .....	26

## YAP ISLAND WWII TOURISM AND MEMORIAL PROJECT: *Experience Yap Island's History*

THE YAP VISITORS BUREAU (YVB) and Patrick Ranfranz with the Missing Air Crew Project have a long-lasting partnership. By working together, they have created World War II resources and memorial sites that symbolize the tremendous sacrifice and loss of human life near Yap Island during WWII. They have preserved and created some of the most unique World War II memorials in the Pacific. They have also created numerous resources for the Yap tourism industry which document the WWII history of Yap Island. Visitors are encouraged to use these resources to visit an array of WWII sites throughout the island and remember the sacrifice of World War II.

The Yapese tourism industry have been trained on the history behind each of the memorial sites to assist visitors in locating the sites and to tell the story of the men, the planes and the losses. Local hotels also offer experienced guides to bring visitors to notable sites around the island. It is highly recommended that visitors utilize the services of these local guides to visit the WWII sites. If you decide to take a self-guided tour, please contact the Yap Visitors Bureau for important instructions and precautions before starting out on your tour of the island.

The villages' cultural and natural attractions on the island of Yap are accessible to visitors by paved and coral-top road. Please observe the speed limits and take responsibility for your own safety and that of the residents. Driving is done on the right side of the road and the Speed limit is 25 mph for hard pavement and 15 mph for coral-top roads. Please do not play music loudly or act in a disruptive manner when traveling around the island. Always ask permission when exploring an area in Yap, as all land is privately owned—except where designated. Enjoy your exploration of our island home. Do not forget to carry a green leaf when you go through villages and stone paths. Ask your guide for more details.



*Yap's culture and traditions run deep.  
The island's heritage and way of life can be seen  
throughout the islands.*



## THE MISSING AIR CREW PROJECT



PATRICK RANFRANZ STARTED THE MISSING AIR CREW PROJECT to find the remains of his missing uncle, T/Sgt. John R. McCullough. John was one of 10 crew members on a B-24 Liberator that was shot down by a Japanese fighter over Yap Island on June 25, 1944. Piloted by Lt. Gerald Coleman, the plane crashed just off the southeast reef of Yap and has never been found. All 10 crew members, who were part of the 13th Air Force, 307th Bombardment Group and 372nd Bombardment Squadron, were declared missing in action (MIA) and the search for their remains continues today.

Patrick started researching his lost uncle in the 1980s while he was in college. In 2005 Patrick and his wife Cherie made their first trip to Yap Island to search for his uncle's missing plane off the southeast reef. After several return visits, they have yet to find his uncle's plane but during their search, they located numerous American crash sites around the island (water, jungle and mangroves) with the help of Yapese guides.

Patrick expanded the breadth of his original project to include finding and memorializing all Americans declared missing in action near Yap Island. Patrick has researched and documented the loss of close to 40 American planes and hundreds of American men. He and Cherie also have located and identified many American crash sites and helped numerous families find some form of closure.

The Yap Visitors Bureau (YVB) partnered with Patrick's Missing Air Crew Project to help preserve the World War II history of Yap Island. Through this partnership, the two groups have created resources for the Yap tourism industry and have set up memorials near crash sites throughout the island. Although Patrick's dream of locating his uncle's missing plane continues, the memorial project with the YVB has made a lasting impact on Yap Island that other visitors can now see firsthand.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com](http://www.missingaircrew.com)



*Patrick Ranfranz identified the  
Ens. Cox Hellcat crash site in 2005*



*Patrick & Cherie  
Ranfranz's memorial  
service for the Coleman B-24  
crew on October 26, 2005*

*Patrick Ranfranz with  
the Yap Visitors Bureau  
staff at the start of the  
memorial project  
in 2008*



# THE STORY OF YAP ISLAND DURING WORLD WAR II

MORE THAN 150 MEN AND NEARLY 40 AMERICAN AIRCRAFT WERE LOST in missions against the Japanese-held island of Yap during World War II. Although some of the men were rescued and others' remains were recovered after the war, many of the men continue to be listed as missing in action (MIA) today. During the war, American losses near Yap (now part of the Federated States of Micronesia) were substantial yet continue to be overlooked even today. Many considered the island a backwater to the overall Pacific war, but its strategic location held great importance.

Japan wanted to use Yap as an essential transit point for air reinforcements as the allies rapidly advanced westward. In 1944, the Japanese finished construction of a large airfield on Yap and began working on a second airfield when the United States commenced regular attacks on the island. From June 1944 to August 1945, the island was bombed almost daily. Close to 40 American planes and hundreds of men were lost in the process and the new airfield never became operational. Both airfields can be visited today where wreckage from WWII battles remain.

Yap is located between the Philippines and Guam, a crossroads for many of the Pacific battles. Once the US decided not to invade Yap in September 1944, they needed to ensure it remain isolated from the Japanese supply chains and that it could not be used as an offensive forward operating base. This was especially important once the US occupied the nearby deep-water harbor of Ulithi in the fall of 1944. Keeping Yap out of the war was a major factor for US success in the rest of the Pacific theatre. Attacks were

launched against Yap through long-range B-24 bomber raids, carrier raids, ship-to-shore bombardments, and land-based Navy and Marine planes and submarines. The following is a brief summary of American attacks on Yap during WWII that resulted in the destruction of much of the island, including the important Japanese airfield.



## APRIL 1944

The first American raid against Yap Island is launched. US carrier planes from Task Force 58 under the command of the Fifth Fleet (Admiral Raymond A. Spruance) raided Yap with no losses. The Yap airfield was found under construction with no planes yet present.



## JUNE 5, 1944

Three PB4Y-1Ps from the US Marine unit VMD-254 fly over Yap to take photographs from 18,000 feet. They observe approximately 30 fighters parked in rows and numerous other aircraft around the airfield. The American forces start preparing a campaign against Yap to attack and destroy the airfield and infrastructure. Plans include US Army Force bomber attacks, Navy carrier attacks and a September 1944 invasion.

## JUNE-AUGUST 1944

US Army Air Force B-24 bombers from bases in the Admiralty Islands launch almost daily raids against Yap throughout the summer of 1944. Most days saw 20-35 American B-24s attacking Yap. The 307th Bomb Group and 5th Bomb Group flew joint missions against Yap until early July when they began attacking Yap on alternate days. The Japanese Navy anti-aircraft (AA) units on Yap returned fire with several anti-aircraft guns. Numerous B-24s suffered damage from AA fire during the campaign and a number of bombers are shot down. The Japanese sent Zeros and other fighters to intercept the B-24s during the early part of the campaign. Both sides suffered numerous losses.



## JULY 26-28, 1944

US carrier planes from Navy Task Force 58 return to raid Yap but find the Army Air Force B-24 heavy bombers had left few targets undamaged. The Yap airfield, port installations and Colonia are all heavily damaged by tons of bombs dropped by the large bombers. There was no aerial opposition to these American carrier attacks; however, numerous American Navy planes are lost due to anti-aircraft fire and mechanical failures.

## JUNE 17, 1944

On June 17, 1944 the largest of the Japanese raids from Yap was mounted when 31 Zeros, 17 Suiseis, and 2 Gingas attacked several American escort carriers near the island. Several American ships were damaged, resulting in many casualties.

## AUGUST 13, 1944

Three US Navy UDT men from the submarine USS Burrfish are captured on Yap Island while performing reconnaissance on the island for the upcoming invasion.

## SEPTEMBER 6-8, 1944

US carrier planes from Navy Task Force 58 return to raid Yap for the third time but once again find the American B-24 heavy bombers had left few targets undamaged. There was no Japanese aerial opposition to these attacks. The attacks are a prelude to a planned invasion of Yap on September 13, 1944. Although Yap is heavily battered, the Japanese continue to put up a fight using anti-aircraft guns. Over a three-day period, four Hellcats and one Helldiver are lost.

## OCTOBER 1944

American Marine fighter squadrons flying Corsairs begin attacking Yap from the newly acquired air base on Peleliu Island. The battered Japanese units on Yap continue rebuilding efforts on the airfield and installations, but they are repeatedly attacked by Marine Corsairs. Over seven American Corsairs are shot down over Yap and numerous planes are forced to abort their mission.



## MARCH 25, 1945

The last Japanese offensive action involving Yap was indirect and almost accidental. On March 11, 1945, twenty four Yokosuka PIY Ginga "Frances" attack bombers took off on a one-way "tokko" (suicide) mission to Ulithi from Kanoya, Japan. As a result of a navigational error and unexpected headwinds, they found themselves near Yap Island, not Ulithi. Three PIYs of the Special Attack Unit arrived at Yap. One PIY landed at the damaged airfield around the bomb craters. One PIY failed in landing at the airfield and was damaged; and one PIY ditched off of Rumung, Yap. Only two PIYs, instead of the original 24 bombers, reached Ulithi, both well after dark. The American ships in the Ulithi harbor did not detect the approaching Japanese planes. Many of the ships' crew were relaxing, watching movies on the flight decks of the carriers. A PIY slammed into the starboard side of the American carrier, the USS Randolph, causing significant damage and killing 26 men while wounding another 105. As a result of the Ulithi raid, American attacks against Yap were increased.

## SEPTEMBER 5, 1945

Japanese surrender Yap Island in a ceremony onboard the destroyer Tillman (DD-641). Although the Japanese surrendered Yap, the Americans allowed the Japanese to keep their arms and continue to rule Yap until December 7, 1945 when the first American flag was raised over Yap.



## APRIL 1944

## MAY 1944

Japan orders planes to Yap, designated as a dispersal base for many Japanese air units including fighters, night fighters, dive bombers and bombers. The Japanese forces could no longer match the Americans carrier-for-carrier and began using Yap as an aircraft base, hoping it would help make up for the difference in carrier strength. Japanese planes begin to arrive on Yap in late May and early June 1944. The aircraft included Zero fighters (Mitsubishi A6M), Judy reconnaissance planes (Yokosuka D4Y), Suisei Dive bombers (Aichi D1A), Gekko night fighters (Nakajima JINI), Betty twin-engine bombers (Mitsubishi G4M) and Tabby transport planes (Showa L2D).

## JUNE 12-14, 1944

The first US Army Air Force B-24 bombers from bases in the Admiralty Islands begin launching raids against Yap Island. The B-24 raids take 13 hours to fly to Yap and return to bases. The 13th Air Force initiated the Yap campaign on the night of June 12. Subsequent raids will be during the day for most of the Yap campaign. The B-24s of the 5th Air Force also begin their attacks on Yap with a night raid. The first 5th Air Force strike was largely abortive and the first B-24 was lost on June 13th from enemy action near Yap.

## JUNE 22, 1944

To stop Japanese attacks from Yap against the advancing American forces, the American 13th Air Force bombers begin a large-scale day bombing campaign against Yap on June 22nd with 33 B-24s from the 307th and 5th Bombardment Group. The Japanese were not expecting a strike by unescorted land-based bombers over so great a distance (over 1,000 miles). Forty-four Japanese fighters, four twin-engine bombers and a dive bomber were photographed on the Yap airfield and 12 were destroyed and eight badly damaged. One Japanese twin-engine bomber was observed engulfed in a bomb blast as it attempted to leave the runway.



## AUGUST 10, 1944

The final B-24 is lost over Yap when it becomes lost on the way to the island and arrives 30 minutes after the rest of the 307th Bomb Group had already left the area. A gunner from another squadron reported hearing the following message. "Am going down in flames over the target." Two of the 11 member Anthony crew are captured by the Japanese near the mouth of the harbor. One of the men captured, Sgt. Hilary Gilbert, was shot down and rescued on July 17, 1944 after going down on a mission to Yap. He was shot down a second time in less than a month, both over Yap.

## JULY 1944

The B-24 raids take a toll on American planes, and the Japanese lose numerous aircraft and pilots. By early July 1944, the Japanese had only an assorted collection of fighters capable of opposing American bomber raids. The remnants of Japanese air groups were withdrawn by late July. Only a small group of survivors from various Japanese air groups remained to defend Yap. After the end of July, the B-24s never again encountered Japanese fighters over Yap, but they still had to contend with anti-aircraft fire.

## SEPTEMBER 13, 1944

Admiral Halsey recommended that the proposed invasions of Yap be cancelled in favor of a direct strike on Leyte (closer to Manila, and to Tokyo). With General MacArthur's concurrence, Halsey's new plan is approved by President Roosevelt and other top Allied planners then in conference at Quebec.

## AUGUST 1944

As it became clear that the Marianas were irretrievably lost, the Japanese scaled back their remaining air power in the central Pacific to build up the Philippines. In allocating their remaining air strength, planes were assigned to Palau but none to Yap. Approximately 20 Japanese aircraft around the Yap airfield were all unserviceable and were frequent targets of American attacks.

## AUGUST 15, 1945

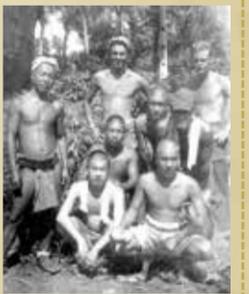
The surrender of Japan in August 1945 brought World War II to a close. Although some isolated commands and personnel from Japan's far-flung forces throughout Asia and the Pacific Islands refused to surrender for months and years later, the Japanese on Yap immediately wrote a message in English on the Yap airfield with painted stones stating that they were waiting for orders from their commanders in Palau to surrender.

## NOVEMBER 1944-AUGUST 1945

American Navy and Marine planes from Peleliu, Ulithi, Guam and Saipan attack Yap daily. The Yap airfield, port, lighthouse, Colonia and other Japanese held areas of Yap are repeatedly pounded by bombs, bullets and torpedoes. The Americans continue to lose planes and men including Hellcats, Avengers and Corsairs. Passing US Navy ships repeatedly target Yap with heavy guns as they pass offshore until the end of the war.

## DECEMBER 8, 1945

Japanese guards are relieved and replaced by Americans. The Americans take control of Yap and surrounding islands from the Japanese. American records show that 4408 Japanese remain on Yap. Arrangements were made for the Japanese to be evacuated from Yap via repatriation ships back to Japan.



## DECEMBER 1945 - JANUARY 1946

Remaining Japanese are evacuated from Yap. American engineers repair and begin using the former Japanese airfield on Yap. Japanese arms and equipment are gathered from the island and dumped into the ocean south of the harbor.

## FALLING SKIES: American Planes Lost Over Yap



### Consolidated B-24 Liberator

The B-24 Liberator was a four-engine American heavy bomber. It was produced in greater numbers than any other American combat aircraft of World War II and still holds the record as the most produced US military aircraft. Often compared to the better known B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-24 was a more modern design with a higher top speed, greater range and a higher bomb load. The B-24 provided excellent service in a variety of roles thanks to its large payload and long range. 18,482 B-24s were built by September 1945.

### Grumman F6F Hellcat

The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a fighter aircraft descended from the earlier F4F Wildcat fighters. The Hellcat and the F4U Corsair were the primary US Navy carrier fighters in the second half of WWII. The Hellcat proved to be the most successful aircraft in naval history destroying 5,171 enemy aircraft.



### TBM-3 Grumman Avenger

The TBM-3 Grumman Avenger was a single-engine torpedo bomber developed initially for the United States Navy and Marine Corps, and eventually used by several air and naval arms around the world. It was the heaviest single-engine aircraft of World War II. Nearly 10,000 TBM aircraft were produced during the war. It entered YS service in 1942, and first saw action during the Battle of Midway. The TBM typically included three crew members: a pilot, turret gunner and radioman/bombardier/ventral gunner.



### FG-1A Corsair

The FG-1A Corsair was a Goodyear version of the inverted gull-wing F4U-1 Corsair fighter. It was considered the most capable fighter bomber of World War II. The Japanese allegedly nicknamed it "Whistling Death" for the noise made by its wing-mounted air intakes. F4U and FG pilots claimed 2,140 air-combat victories against 189 losses to enemy aircraft. The Corsair bore the brunt of land-based fighter-bomber missions.

### Curtiss SB2C Helldiver

The Curtiss SB2C Helldiver was a carrier-based dive bomber aircraft produced for the United States Navy during World War II. Due to its difficult handling characteristics, the airmen nicknamed the aircraft the "Big-Tailed Beast" (or just the derogatory "Beast") and "Son-of-a-Bitch 2nd Class." In spite of its problems and due to its highly trained crews, the aircraft was flown with a fine combat record throughout the last two years of the Pacific War.



## AMERICAN LOSSES ON YAP ISLAND

Patrick Ranfranz and his Missing Air Crew Project have spent over 30 years studying the history of Yap during WWII. Through his work researching military missions, Patrick has uncovered the personal stories of many soldiers, preserving their memories for future generations. Patrick's uncle, John R. McCullough, is among the airmen who remain MIA near Yap.

Date	Plane	Unit
13 June 1944	B-24 Liberator	5th AF, 43rd BG, & 67th BS
14 June 1944	B-24J Liberator	5th AF, 90th BG, & 320th BS
23 June 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 5th BG, & 20th BS
25 June 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 372nd BS
5 July 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 372nd BS
13 July 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 370th BS
15 July 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 372nd BS
15 July 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 370th BS
15 July 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 371st BS
19 July 1944	B-24J Liberator	13th AF, 5th BG, & 394th BS
22 July 1944	F6F-3	From the USS Cabot
26 July 1944	SB2C-1C Helldiver	VB-2 from the USS Yorktown
27 July 1944	TBM-1C Grumman Avenger	VT-31 from the USS Cabot
27 July 1944	SB2C-1C Helldiver	VB-2 from the USS Hornet
27 July 1944	F6F-3 Hellcat	VF-31 from the USS Cabot
28 July 1944	F6F-3 Hellcat	VF-31 from the USS Cabot
9 August 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 5th BG, & 394th BS
10 August 1944	B-24 Liberator	13th AF, 307th BG, & 371st BS
13 August 1944	Submarine	Three US Navy UDT men from the Submarine USS Burrfish captured on Yap Island
6 September 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-20 from the USS Enterprise
6 September 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-20 from the USS Enterprise
6 September 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-20 from the USS Enterprise
6 September 1944	SB2C Helldiver	VB-20 from the USS Enterprise
8 September 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-13 from the USS Franklin
24 October 1944	F4U Corsair	VFM-122 from Peleliu Base
31 October 1944	FG-1A Corsair	VMF-121 from Peleliu Base
12 November 1944	FG-1 Corsair	VMF-121 from Peleliu Base
18 November 1944	FG-1 Corsair	VMF-121 from Peleliu Base
21 November 1944	FG-1 Corsair	VMF-121 from Peleliu Base
22 November 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-20 from the USS Enterprise
22 November 1944	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-22 from the USS Cowpens
22 November 1944	F4U-1 Corsair	VMF-114 from Peleliu Base
3 February 1945	F4U-1D Corsair	VMF-122 from Peleliu Base
11 February 1945	F4U-1D Corsair	VFM-122 from Peleliu Base
23 February 1945	PBM-3D Martin Mariner	VPB-22 from Ulithi Base
16 March 1945	TBM-3 Grumman Avenger	VMTB-232 from Ulithi Base
21 March 1945	F6F-5 Hellcat	VF-12 from Ulithi Base
22 March 1945	F4U-1D Corsair	VFM-122 from Peleliu Base
25 March 1945	F6F-5P Hellcat	VF-86 from the USS Wasp
3 August 1945	F6F-5P Hellcat	VDM-354 from Guam Base

## THE JAPANESE AIRFIELD

### A Key Strategy

**GPS Coordinates:** 9°29'13.69"N | 1138° 4'42.50"E

Early in 1944 the Japanese began construction of their large primary airfield on Yap. Their goal was to create a transit point for Japanese air reinforcements as the allies rapidly advanced westward in New Guinea and toward the Philippines and the Japanese home islands. The Yap airfield was a key Japanese base for launching attacks against pending Allied invasion forces. In May 1944, the Japanese ordered planes to Yap, designated as a dispersal base for many Japanese air units including fighters, night fighters, dive bombers and bombers. Japanese planes arrived on Yap in late May and early June 1944. The aircraft included Zero fighters (Mitsubishi A6M), Judy reconnaissance planes (Yokosuka D4Y), Suisei Dive bombers (Aichi D1A), Gekko night fighters (Nakajima J1N1), Betty twin-engine bombers (Mitsubishi G4M) and Tabby transport planes (Showa L2D). Over 50 Japanese planes were based on Yap at its height; however, many of the planes were destroyed on the ground shortly after they arrived by American long range B-24 bombers. Numerous other Japanese planes were shot down over the island during air battles with American bombers.

Destruction of the Airfield: The first American raid against Yap Island was on April 1, 1944 when carrier

planes raided Yap with no losses. The Yap airfield was found under construction with no planes yet present. Once the Japanese airfield was completed, it was targeted by American attacks almost daily from June 1944 until August 1945. More than 150 men and nearly 40 American aircraft were lost in missions against the Japanese-held island of Yap during World War II. Although some of the men were rescued and others' remains were recovered after the war, many of the men continue to be listed as missing in action (MIA) today. The airfield and the surrounding area were so heavily bombed it looked more like the surface of the moon at the end of the war than the lush tropical jungle it once was a few years earlier. American forces rebuilt the airfield after the war and it was used as the primary Yap airport until a new airport was constructed in the 1980s. Wreckage of numerous Japanese and American planes and other war materials can be viewed all around the former airfield. Wreckage that was not buried was pushed into the jungle where it remains today for visitors to view.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com](http://www.missingaircrew.com)

*August 15, 1945: The surrender of Japan. The Japanese on Yap immediately wrote a message in English on the Yap airfield with painted stones stating they were waiting for orders from their commanders in Palau to surrender.*

*August 1944. The Japanese airfield after multiple B-24 bomber raids.*

## JAPANESE GAGIL-TAMIL AIRSTRIP ON YAP ISLAND

**GPS Coordinates:** Lat: 9.53882N | Long: 138.16795E

The Japanese attempted to construct a second airfield on the Gagil-Tamil Municipality of Yap Island. The "Tamil" airfield construction began in April 1944. American forces discovered the strip and began bombing it with the same intensity they used to attack the main strip. Due to relentless American attacks, construction work was stopped in July 1944 and the airstrip never became fully operational. A number of American planes were lost attacking the airfield during its construction and throughout the remainder of the

war as the Americans prevented the Japanese from resuming construction. You can walk the airfield today and still see the remains of the Japanese construction equipment, including small rail lines and cars as well as the numerous bomb craters created by American bombs that impacted the entire area.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com/japanese/](http://www.missingaircrew.com/japanese/)

## JAPANESE SITES

Scattered throughout the island and the waters of Yap, visitors will find Japanese wreckage from the war years. Although much of the wreckage is slowly decaying in the jungle and water, tour guides can show visitors an array of sites that will help explain why the American forces lost close to 40 planes attacking the island.

### AIRFIELD & REVETMENT AREAS

The main Japanese airfield still contains a large number of Japanese planes that were destroyed on the ground or in the air by attacking American forces. Visitors can view the wreckage of Zero fighters (Mitsubishi A6M), Judy reconnaissance planes (Yokosuka D4Y), Suisei Dive bombers (Aichi D1A), Gekko night fighters (Nakajima J1N1), Betty twin-engine bombers (Mitsubishi G4M), Tabby transport planes (Showa L2D) and more. Many of planes were pushed into the jungle at the end of the war when the airfield was rebuilt. Other planes still sit in their revetment areas from the time they were bombed or strafed and put out of action.

### ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS

Although many of the large anti-aircraft guns were taken down and either dumped in the sea or used as rebar in construction projects, a few remain in the hills overlooking Colonia. Tour guides can take visitors to see the guns which remain in their original locations from the war. The guns were disabled after the war when explosive charges were placed in the barrels and detonated.



### AIRCRAFT IN THE WATER

Guides can take you to numerous Japanese wreck sites in the waters around Yap including a Judy (D4Y) in water on the north side of the island where you can snorkel within the reef. There is also a Zero that crash-landed short of the runway on the west side of the island and numerous other pieces of wreckage that are slowly disappearing due to salt water, surf and time.

### WAR MATERIALS DUMP

At the end of the war, the American forces gathered the Japanese war materials on the island and dumped guns and ammunition into the ocean off the second channel. Dive guides can take divers to visit the war materials dump; however, extreme caution is advised because live ammunition of all sizes remains in the water. Some of the large anti-aircraft guns were used as rebar in the concrete to rebuilt Yap. Many of the concrete causeways around Colonia have Japanese guns inside them as rebar to support the concrete.

### BUNKERS

Some Japanese bunkers remain in various locations around the island. Many of the bunkers were destroyed after the war, however, tour guides can take visitors to see some of the few that remain.



## ENS. COX, HELLCAT SITE

**GPS Coordinates of memorial site:** 09°30' 49.217"N | 138° 6' 7.940"E

**GPS Coordinates of original crash:** 09°30' 49.217"N | 138° 6' 3.979"E

Located at the Dept. Public Works and Transportation (PW&T) ground by the main road to the west side of the island.

Despite the violent crash and years of neglect in the jungle, the wreckage of Ens. Cox's plane remains relatively intact today. It is one of the most unique World War II wrecks, and now memorials, in the Pacific. Rescued from its original crash site at the modern-day Yap dump, the plane was moved one-half mile in September 2008 to the Yap Public Works property, where it is now on display. A joint partnership between the Yap Visitor Bureau, Yap Public Works Department and the Missing Air Crew Project created the memorial to honor Ens. Joseph E. Cox and all the men who lost their lives near Yap during WWII. The memorial was dedicated on July 27, 2010. Several distinguished guests spoke at the dedication, including the Governor of Yap, Sebastian Anafel, the US Ambassador to the Federation of Micronesia, Peter Prahar, Commander Bryce Gibb, representing Admiral Bushong and Patrick Ranfranz with the Missing Air Crew Project. Three members of the Ens. Cox's family attended the dedication including Ellis Cox, the 89-year-old brother of Ens. Joseph Cox as well as two members of the Ens. Holding family. Although the memorial displays Ens. Cox's aircraft, it is intended to be a symbolic memorial for all of the men lost near Yap during WWII.

**Date of Loss:** September 6, 1944

**Plane Type:** F6F-5 Hellcat

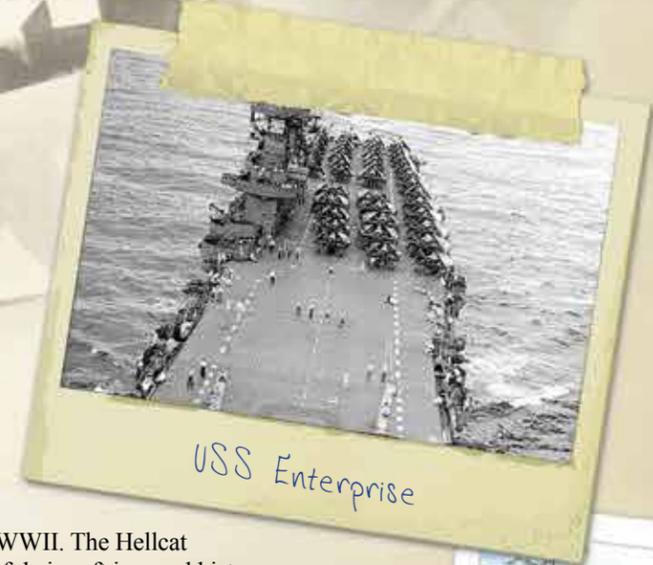
**Unit:** United States Navy VF-20 from the USS Enterprise

**The Man:** Ens. Joseph E. Cox was from Sand Point, Idaho. He graduated from Sand Point High School in 1939 and then worked as a chief body and fender man at an auto body shop before enlisting in the Naval Air Corps in 1942. Joe married Fern in 1944 prior to shipping out to the Pacific. Following the war, Ens. Joseph Edward Cox's remains were found near his plane and returned to Idaho for burial in a private cemetery.

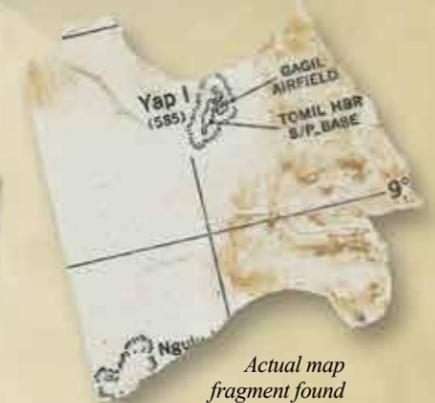
**The Mission:** In the early afternoon of September 6, 1944 Joseph and 34 fellow US fighter pilots ascended from the flight decks of the carriers USS Enterprise, USS Franklin and USS San Jacinto to conduct a fighter sweep of the already battered island of Yap. The island had been hit hard over the previous months by high-flying long-range B-24 bombers of the US Army Air Force. They circled around to attack from the southwest out of the sun. On the first pass of what was thought to be a routine neutralization strike (milk run), the situation quickly proved more serious. A Hellcat flown by Lt. Harry Brown was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and began streaming black smoke before crashing into a hillside near the village of Talguw. Before long, Joseph's Hellcat was also hit. He lost control, colliding mid-air with Ens. Howard

Holding. Both planes quickly became caught in a tight, nose-down spiral from which neither recovered. Howard's plane crashed into the harbor while Joseph's plane fell not far from this location. Following the war, Joseph's remains were recovered near his plane and returned to Idaho for burial in a private cemetery. By the end of the war, wreckage and remains for both Lt. Harry Brown and Ens. Howard Holding had not yet been found. They were presumed missing and eventually declared dead in February, 1946. Sixty years later in September of 2006, their planes were finally discovered.

**The Plane:** The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a fighter aircraft descended from the earlier F4F Wildcat fighters. The Hellcat and the F4U Corsair were the primary US Navy carrier



USS Enterprise



Actual map fragment found under Joseph's plane.

The Ens. Cox Hellcat in September 2008 after it was moved from its original crash site

fighters in the second half of WWII. The Hellcat proved to be the most successful aircraft in naval history destroying 5,171 enemy aircraft.

**The Carrier:** The USS Enterprise (CV-6), the "Big E", was the sixth aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy and the most decorated ship of WWII. She participated in more major actions of the war against Japan than any other US ship. Her aircraft and guns downed 911 Japanese planes; her bombers sank 71 ships, and damaged or destroyed 192 more.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp)



## LT. CROWLEY CREW, TBM AVENGER SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** 09°29.392'N | 138° 04.713'E

The Lt. Crowley TBM crew memorial is located side-by-side with the Lt. Lillard Hellcat memorial in the village of Luwech on the east side of the old Japanese airfield. The memorials were erected next to a piece of the TBM left wing and a short distance from the partial wreckage of the Lt. Lillard Hellcat. Both planes went down over the airfield.

**Date of Loss:** March 16, 1945

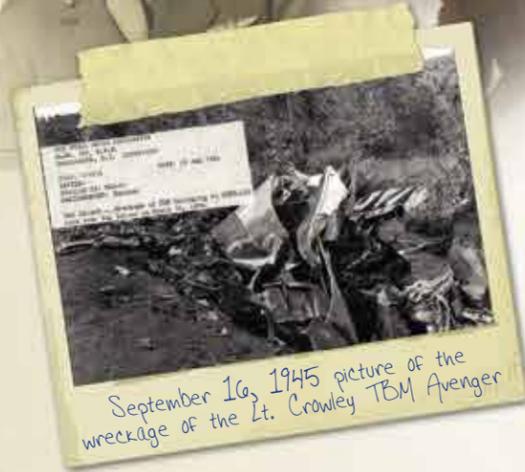
**Plane Type:** TBM-3 Grumman Avenger

**Unit:** United States Marine Corps, VMTB-232 Squadron

**The Crew:** 1st. Lt. Joseph Crowley from Milton, Massachusetts  
PFC. Kenneth D Gillispie from Moberly, Missouri  
PFC. Edgar Russell Norcross from Manchester, New Hampshire

**The Mission:** On March 16, 1945 twelve TBM-3 Grumman Avengers with three crew members each took off from Ulithi Island to strike the Japanese held airfield on Yap Island. The airfield had been repeatedly attacked by American forces since June 1944 therefore it was already severely damaged. The goal of the raid was to make sure the Japanese could not repair or utilize the airfield. The planes approached the target from the southeast in two formations of six TBM's gliding in from 9000 feet. The dive bombers released their 1000 pound bombs before pulling out to the southwest. The TBM flown by Lt. Crowley in the second flight of six started its glide but flipped over and lost its left wing at 6000 feet. The plane cartwheeled and spun to the ground near the northeast corner of the airstrip, killing all three men. It was undetermined if the plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire or if it was the result of structural failure. The wreckage of the plane and the grave of PDF. Kenneth Gillispie were recovered at the end of the war and his remains were returned home. First Lt. Crowley and PDF. Edgar Russell Norcross remain missing in action.

**The Plane:** The TBM-3 Grumman Avenger was a single-engine torpedo bomber developed initially for the United States Navy and Marine Corps,



and eventually used by several air and naval arms around the world. It was the heaviest single-engine aircraft of World War II. Nearly 10,000 TBM aircraft were produced during the war. It entered YS service in 1942, and first saw action during the Battle of Midway. The TBM typically included three crew members: a pilot, turret gunner and radioman/bombardier/ventral gunner.

**The Base:** Ulithi Atoll is 19 1/2 miles long and 9 1/2 miles wide at its northern and widest point. The Japanese had established a radio and weather station on Ulithi and used the lagoon as an anchorage occasionally early in the war; however, they abandoned it in 1944. The Americans took over Ulithi and used it as a naval base. They established a fleet anchorage and an air base for carrier replacement aircraft, a utility squadron and staging facilities for transport aircraft. The island of Mog-Mog in the lagoon was converted to a rest and relaxation station.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/16march1945.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/16march1945.asp)



## LT. LILLARD, HELLCAT SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** 09°29.392'N | 138° 04.713'E

The Zack Lillard Hellcat memorial is located side-by-side with the Crowley TBM crew memorial in the village of Luwech on the east side of the old Japanese airfield. The memorials were erected next to the TBM wing and a short distance from the partial wreckage of the Zack's Hellcat. Both planes went down over the airfield.

**Date of Loss:** November 22, 1944

**Plane Type:** F6F-5 Hellcat

**Unit:** United States Navy VF-20 from the USS Enterprise

**The Man:** Lt. Zack F. Lillard

Zack Ford Lillard from Decatur, Texas, was a 1939 graduate from Woodrow Wilson High School. He attended Southern Methodist University from 1935 to 1941 and was married to Ann Lacey Lillard of Longview, Texas. Zack was a landing officer on the USS Enterprise, serving his second tour in the Pacific, when he volunteered to fly a fighter sweep against Yap Island and was shot down.

**The Mission:** On 22 November 1944, Lt. Lillard, in F6F-5 Hellcat, Bureau number 56638, took off from the USS Enterprise in a flight of 80 planes from three carriers to participate in a rocket and napalm bombing attack on Japanese held airstrip on Yap Island. After the rocket and bombing runs were completed, most of the planes, including Zack's, returned for a strafing attack. Zack made a strafing run on anti-aircraft positions at the east end of the runway. Since the anti-aircraft fire appeared to be meager, he went low in a shallow dive. His plane was hit and the tail blown off. After two slow rolls out of control, it dove into the ground from several hundred feet altitude at the east end of the runway, and violently exploded. Zack was not seen to leave the plane prior to the crash.

**The Plane:** The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a fighter aircraft descended from the earlier F4F Wildcat fighters. The Hellcat and the F4U Corsair were the primary US Navy carrier fighters in the second half of WWII. The Hellcat proved to be the most successful aircraft in naval history destroying 5,171 enemy aircraft.

**The Carrier:** The USS Enterprise (CV-6), the "Big E", was the sixth aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy and the most decorated ship of WWII. She participated in more major actions of the war against Japan than any other US ship. Her aircraft and guns downed 911 Japanese planes; her bombers sank 71 ships, and damaged or destroyed 192 more.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/22nov1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/22nov1944.asp)



Patrick Ranfranz with the tail of Lt. Zack F. Lillard's F6F-5 Hellcat located in July 2010



## FIRST LT. GIRVIS HALTOM, JR., CORSAIR SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** 09° 29' 27.231"N | 138° 4' 3.731"E

The crash site is located in Tafnith village, Kanifay Municipality. Tafnith village is on the west side of the old Japanese airfield. The FG-1 Corsair wreckage was originally spread out over a large area throughout the village. Many of the largest pieces have been consolidated to a central area near the all-weather informational sign and marble memorial plaque.

**Date of Loss:** October 24, 1944

**Plane Type:** FG-1 Corsair

**Unit:** United States Marine Corps, VMF-122 Squadron

**The Man:** First Lt. Girvis Haltom, Jr.

Girvis "Snooks" W. Haltom, Jr. was the son of Girvis W. & Lossie Mattison Haltom of Stephens, Arkansas. He was a graduate of Stephens High School, Class of 1941, and attended Magnolia A & M College prior to entering the Navy Flight Program in the summer of 1942. Upon graduation and receiving his commission and wings in 1943, Snooks was assigned to the Marine Fighter Training wing at El Centro, Calif. After instruction in aerial gunnery for several months, he was given an overseas combat assignment and ended up on the South Pacific island of Peleliu during its invasion. After flying close ground support for the invading Marines, he was assigned to a bombing mission to the nearby bypassed island of Yap. After the bombing mission, Snooks dropped down to strafe gun emplacements and was shot down by ground fire. This island was eventually bypassed and it was after war's end that his remains could be returned and interred at Stephens, AR.

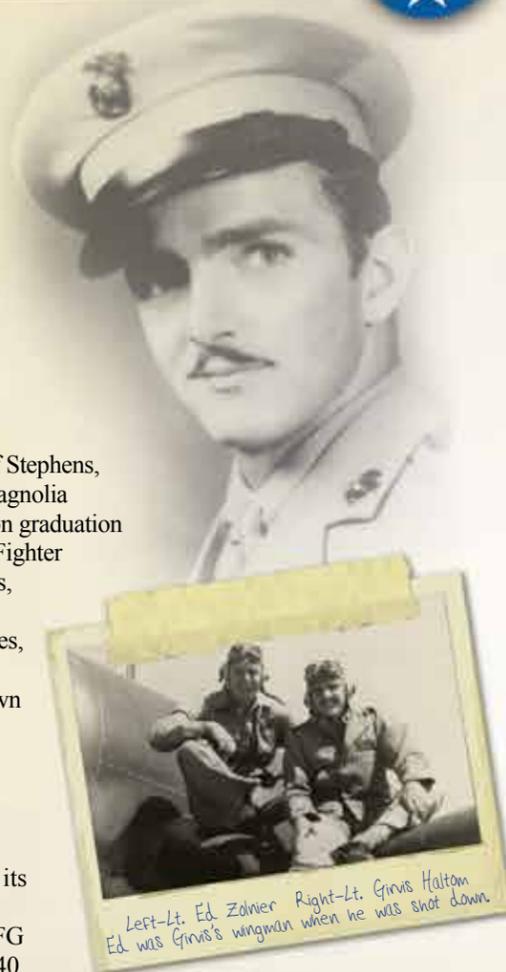
**The Mission:** On the morning of October 24, 1944, Girvis and seven fellow pilots from the Marine fighter squadron VFM-122 took off from the island of Peleliu to bomb and strafe targets on Yap. The purpose of the mission was to ensure the continued inoperative status of the Yap airstrip. The island had been hit hard over the previous six months by high-flying, long-range B-24 bombers of the US Army Air Force as well as raids from US carrier aircraft. Both airstrips were out of commission and few buildings remained standing on the island. After dropping bombs on the main airfield and revetment area, Girvis and his wingman, Ed Zolnier, circled the island looking for anti-aircraft positions to attack. They approached low and fast from the south while firing at gun positions. Girvis's plane was struck by anti-aircraft fire when at 600 feet. His plane was seen to do a slow roll to the right and then crash and explode. After the war, the remains of 1st Lt. Girvis Haltom, Jr. were found near this site and returned to Stephens, Arkansas for burial.

**The Plane:** The FG-1A was a Goodyear version of the inverted gull-wing F4U-1 Corsair fighter. It was considered the most capable fighter bomber of World War II. The Japanese allegedly nicknamed it "Whistling Death" for

the noise made by its wing-mounted air intakes. F4U and FG pilots claimed 2,140 air-combat victories against 189 losses to enemy aircraft. The Corsair bore the brunt of land-based fighter-bomber missions.

**The Base:** At the time of his final mission Girvis's VFM-122 squadron was based on the island of Peleliu. The island was the site of the vicious Battle of Peleliu between September and November of 1944. U.S. Major General William Rupertus, commander of 1st Marine Division, predicted that the island would be secured within four days. But due to Japan's well-crafted fortifications and stiff resistance, the battle lasted more than two months. Peleliu remains one of the war's most controversial battles due to its questionable strategic value and high death toll. The battle was waning as Girvis took off on his fateful mission.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/24oct1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/24oct1944.asp)



## LT. GEORGE BEALL SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** N09deg 31.603' | E138deg 09.200'

The memorial is located at Tamor Community Center in Tomil Municipality.

**Date of Loss:** October 31, 1944

**Plane Type:** FG-1A Corsair

**Unit:** United States Marine Corps, VMF-121, Squadron

**The Man:** Lt. George O. Beall, Jr.

The wreckage at the memorial site is what remains of an FG-1A Corsair flown by 1st Lt. George O. Beall, Jr. of Binghamton, New York who was survived by his wife Ethel (Hanners) Beall. Prior to the war George was a sophomore at Marysville College in Tennessee preparing for the ministry. He enlisted in the Naval Air Service in 1942 and received his commission on May 11, 1943.

**The Mission:** On the morning of October 31, 1944, George and 12 fellow pilots from the Marine fighter squadron VMF-121 took off from the island of Peleliu to bomb and strafe targets on Yap. The purpose of the mission was to destroy a soon-to-be-operational airfield on Gagil-Tomil. The island had been hit hard during the previous six months by US forces. Maj. William Clay (who would be killed on Yap the following month) led 12 planes on a 70-degree dive from 11,000 feet. Each plane took aim from the southwest end of the airstrip and then returned southward to rendezvous five miles south of the island. Six direct hits imposed serious damage along the length of the strip; however, Lt. Beall did not rejoin the formation at the rendezvous point. Major Clay searched the field for any trace of George but no visible evidence was found. American forces discovered George's wreckage and remains near the airfield at the end of the war.

**The Plane:** The FG-1A was a Goodyear version of the inverted gull-wing F4U-1 Corsair fighter. It was considered the most capable fighter bomber of World War II. The Japanese allegedly nicknamed it "Whistling Death" for the noise made by its wing-mounted air intakes. F4U and FG pilots claimed 2,140 air-combat victories against 189 losses to enemy aircraft. The Corsair bore the brunt of land-based fighter-bomber missions.

**The Base:** At the time of his final mission George's VFM-121 squadron was based on the island of Peleliu. The island was the site of the vicious Battle of Peleliu between September and November of 1944. U.S. Major General William Rupertus, commander of 1st Marine Division, predicted that the island would be secured within four days. But due to Japan's well-crafted fortifications and stiff resistance, the battle lasted more than two months. Peleliu remains one of the war's most controversial battles due to its questionable strategic value and high death toll. The battle was waning as George took off on his fateful mission.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/31oct1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/31oct1944.asp)



## ENS. ARMBRUSTER JR. & ARM3C. BILLINGS HELLDIVER SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** N09°33'24.2" | E138°09'26.0"

The memorial for the Armbruster and Billings Helldiver Crew is being developed at the original crash site in Makuy Village, Gagil Municipality. The Community Chief of Makiy Village is planning an access road to come within 50 yards of the undisturbed crash site. This site is under development in 2015.

**Date of Loss:** July 27, 1944

**Plane Type:** SB2C-1 Helldiver

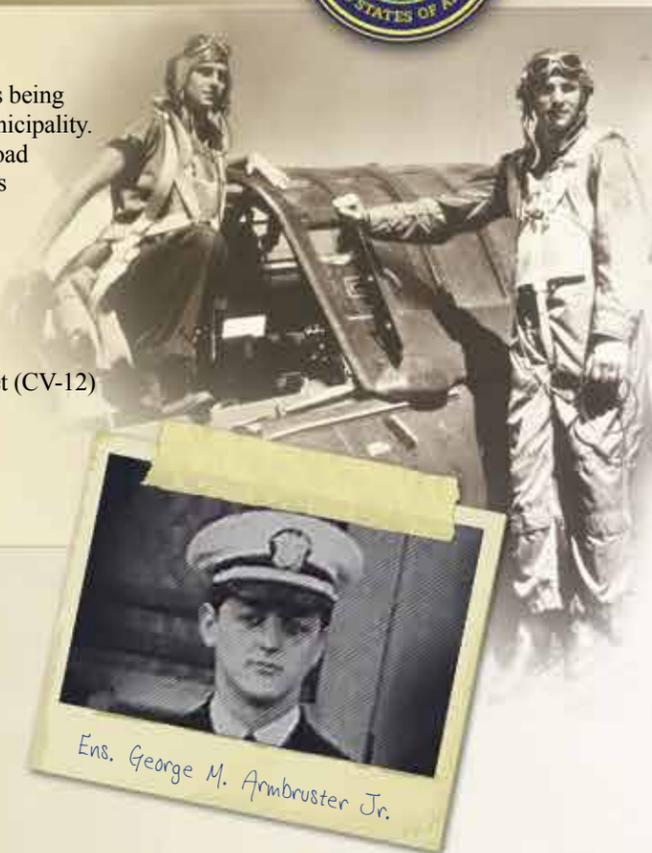
**Unit:** United States Navy, VB-2 Squadron from the USS Hornet (CV-12)

### The Crew:

Ens. George M. Armbruster Jr., Pilot  
Arm3c. Harold Billings, Gunner

**The Mission:** On July 27, 1944, an American naval taskforce descended upon Yap and launched a large attack of fighters, dive bombers and torpedo planes. Four SB2C-1 Helldivers from the USS Hornet were sent to attack the Japanese lighthouse near Dalap, Yap. A few of the planes scored near misses north of the structure. The plane piloted by Ens. George M. Armbruster, Jr. lost part of its wing during a bombing approach. It spun and crashed a short distance from the lighthouse. Following the war, remains of the two men were found near the crash site and were returned to the US to be buried at Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky. Numerous other American planes tried to destroy the lighthouse before it was eventually toppled by the Japanese themselves in late 1944. The toppled lighthouse ruins and the remains of the Helldiver wreckage lay quietly among the jungle, masking their turbulent past.

**The Plane:** The Curtiss SB2C Helldiver was a carrier-based dive bomber aircraft produced for the US Navy during World War II. Due to its difficult handling characteristics, the airmen nicknamed the aircraft the "Big-Tailed Beast" (or just the derogatory "Beast") and "Son-of-a-Bitch 2nd Class." In spite



of its problems and due to its highly trained crews, the aircraft was flown with a fine combat record throughout the last two years of the Pacific War.

**The Carrier:** USS Hornet (CV-12) was originally named the USS Kearsarge, but was renamed in honor of the USS Hornet (CV-8), which was lost in October 1942. Hornet was commissioned in November 1943 and joined the U.S. forces in the Pacific War. She played a major part in the Pacific battles of World War II and was finally decommissioned in 1970.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/27july1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/27july1944.asp)



## JAPANESE LIGHTHOUSE AT DALAP

**GPS COORDINATES:** 09° 32' 2.164"N | 138° 10' 45.108" E

Located on a hill called Dalap in the village of Lebnaw. Lebnaw village is located in Gagil Municipality. One could imagine the view from the lighthouse when it was standing. You would have clear observations of the island's east side all the way down toward the southeast, as well as an overview of Pelak Channel all the way down to Waneday Channel. Waneday Channel is the widest channel and currently known as Tomil Channel or Yap's main channel where cargo ship and passenger ships enter Yap's commercial port.

### History of Japanese Lighthouse:

During their occupation, the Japanese built lighthouses in three parts of the FSM territory—Puluwat (early 1930s), Chuuk (1937), and Dalap (early 1940s). All three were constructed of stone and concrete. The lighthouse complex at this site includes the toppled main structure, generator building, keeper's quarters, entry posts, water and food storage areas, and other abandoned support infrastructure used by the Japanese during its construction and short defense. During the war, the site was protected by numerous anti-aircraft guns and troops.

**Lighthouse Need:** All lighthouses are aids to navigation, placed on or near navigable water to provide visual guidance to mariners. To guide ships to Yap, the Japanese strategically placed the Dalap lighthouse on the hilly eastern coast of the Gagil municipality. The lighthouse normally would have included a powerful flashing light, but it is thought that the Japanese never made it operational.

**Destruction of the Lighthouse:** American forces started targeting the lighthouse in July 1944 and continued throughout 1945. It was a prominent Japanese landmark that was easy to identify from the air. It often served as a marker for American aircraft attacking Yap. The bullet holes you see in the lighthouse and the craters you see around it were created by American bombs dropped by a variety of aircraft, including F4U Corsair, F6F Hellcats, TBM-1C Avengers and SB2C-1C Helldivers. Although numerous attempts were made by American planes to destroy the lighthouse, it was the Japanese who finally took matters into their own hands by blowing it up with dynamite. This stopped the continuous bombing and shelling by the American forces.

**American Losses:** On July 27, 1944, an American naval taskforce descended upon Yap and launched a large attack of fighters, dive bombers and torpedo planes. Four SB2C-1 Helldivers from the USS Hornet were sent to attack the lighthouse. A few of them scored near misses north of the structure. One plane, flown by Ens. George M. Armbruster Jr. and gunner Arm3c Harold Billings, lost part of its wing during a glide bombing approach. It went into a spin and crashed a short distance from the lighthouse. Remains of the two crew members were located near the crash site after the war and were returned to the US to be buried at Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky. Numerous other American planes tried to destroy the lighthouse before it was toppled by the Japanese in late 1944. Today the site is much like it was before the war, covered with papaya trees and dense foliage. The toppled lighthouse ruins and other structures lay quietly among the jungle, masking their turbulent past.

**This site was recovered and maintained by**  
Todai Youth Club of Yap.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/27july1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/27july1944.asp)



## MAJ. CLAY, CORSAIR SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** N09°28.844' | E138°03.826'

The memorial site is located in the mangrove swamp area in Wuluu Village, Fanif municipality. Access to the actual crash site has been constructed by the village so visitors can walk along a stone path, stone causeway and raised wood walking bridge right to the site in the mangrove swamp. Visitors can get within a few feet of the crash site.

**Date of Loss:** November 21, 1944

**Unit:** United States Marine Corps, VMF-121 squadron

**The Man:** Maj. William Clay, Jr.

William was a graduate of Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas and the United States Naval Academy class of 1941. His remains were located after the war and they were returned to the US and reinterred at Arlington National Cemetery. A reinterment ceremony was held in 1947. His parents attended, however, they were still distraught by his death.

A college scholarship in the name of Maj. William Jr. Clay was set up by his family, with Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. Recipients of the Major William Clay, Jr. Memorial Scholarship must be deserving students from Stephenville High School. This Scholarship was created in 1962 by family members of Major Clay.

**The Mission:** On a barge sweep of Yap Island, Major Clay took a northeasterly course over the airfield taking him west of Colonia and southwest of Map Island. No serviceable planes were observed. Circling Map Island, his wingman observed small craft just off the beach. Major Clay turned the lead over to his wingman as he was the one who had observed the boats. They made an approach to the southeast, passed to the left of the target and then made a right turn approximately 180 degrees in order to recover over the water. Major Clay's wingman, Lt. Fisher, looked back after completing his run and observed a large splash and immediately turned back and circled the spot, but observed nothing but an oil slick. Lt. Deen, who was the leader of the second section observed the planes throughout the strafing attack and saw Major Clay's plane, #14323, hit very close to shore and explode. Lt. Deen then turned so as to pass directly over the spot but although he circled the spot he observed nothing but an oil slick. Lt. Deen saw no one bail out. The planes remained over the scene of the crash for five to eight minutes. No anti-aircraft fire was observed either during the bombing or strafing runs. The weather was clear throughout with less than .1 cover over the target. Eleven planes returned to Peleliu undamaged at 11:40 am.

**The Plane:** The FG-1A was a Goodyear version of the inverted gull-wing F4U-1 Corsair fighter. It was considered the most capable fighter bomber of World War II. The Japanese allegedly nicknamed it "Whistling Death" for the noise made by its wing-mounted air intakes. F4U and FG pilots claimed 2,140 air-combat victories against 189 losses to enemy aircraft. The Corsair bore the brunt of land-based fighter-bomber missions.

**The Base:** At the time of his final mission, William's VFM-121 squadron was based on the island of Peleliu. The island was the site of the vicious Battle of Peleliu between September and November of 1944. U.S. Major General William Rupertus, commander of 1st Marine Division, predicted that the island would be secured within four days. Due to Japan's well-crafted fortifications and stiff resistance, the battle lasted more than two months. Peleliu remains one of the war's most controversial battles due to its questionable strategic value and high death toll. The battle was waning as William took off on his fateful mission.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/21nov1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/21nov1944.asp)



## LT. BROWN, HELLCAT SITE

**GPS COORDINATES:** N09°30.369' | E138°03.767

Located on a hillside just outside of Colonia near the village of Talguw.

**Date of loss:** September 6, 1944

**Plane Type:** F6F-5 Hellcat

**Unit:** United States Navy VF-20 from the USS Enterprise

**The Man:** Lt. Harry Dugan Brown, Jr.

Lieutenant Harry Dugan Brown, Jr. was born on November 27th, 1919 in Delaware, Ohio and was raised in Lakeville, a suburb of Cleveland. He first attended Ohio State where he was a member of Phi Gamma Delta, later transferring to Blue Ridge College in Maryland. Harry enlisted in the Naval Reserve in October 1941, and was appointed Lieutenant (junior grade) in August, 1944. While training out of San Diego, CA, he was assigned to the VF-20 squadron based on the USS Enterprise.

**The Mission:** In the early afternoon of September 6, 1944 Harry and 34 fellow US fighter pilots ascended from the flight decks of the carriers USS Enterprise, USS Franklin and USS San Jacinto to conduct a fighter sweep of the already battered island of Yap. The island had been hit hard over the previous months by high flying long range B-24 bombers of the US Army Air Force. They circled around to attack from the southwest out of the sun. On the first pass of what was thought to be a routine neutralization strike (milk run), the situation quickly proved more serious. Harry's F6F-5 Hellcat was hit by anti-aircraft fire and streamed a cloud of black smoke before crashing into a hillside near Talguw, Yap. Two other Hellcats flown by Ens. Joseph Cox and Ens. Howard Holding were also hit and crashed within seconds of Harry. Not yet married at the time of his death, Harry was survived by his parents, Mildred and Willard Greiner, and his sister, Jenna Lou Sandberg. Harry was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, the American Area Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal with one bronze star and the World War II Victory Medal.

**The Plane:** The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a fighter aircraft descended from the earlier F4F Wildcat fighters. The Hellcat and the F4U Corsair were the primary US Navy carrier fighters in the second half of WWII. The Hellcat proved to be the most successful aircraft in naval history destroying 5,171 enemy aircraft.



**The Carrier:** The USS Enterprise (CV-6), the "Big E", was the sixth aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy and the most decorated ship of WWII. She participated in more major actions of the war against Japan than any other US ship. Her aircraft and guns downed 911 Japanese planes; her bombers sank 71 ships, and damaged or destroyed 192 more.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp)



Lt. Brown's crash site was located and identified in September 2006



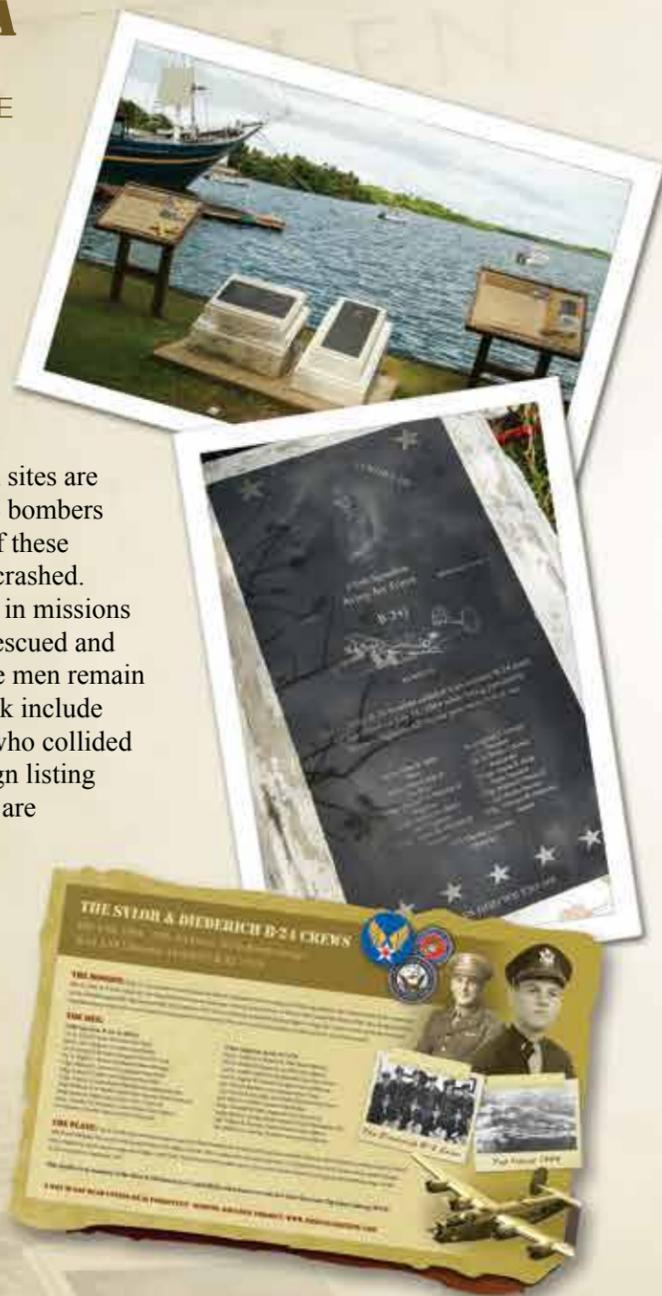
## MEMORIAL PARK IN COLONIA

**GPS COORDINATES:** 09° 31'3.796"N | 138° 7'18.996"E

The Colonia public park is located between O'Keefe's Waterfront Inn and the Manta Ray Bay Resort /Hotel.

**ABOUT MEMORIAL PARK:** World War II memorials have been erected in the public park near the harbor waterfront in Colonia to remember the American planes and men who crashed into the sea or are still missing. Dozens of American planes crashed into the waters around Yap after being shot down by Japanese fighters and anti-aircraft fire. Some of the wreckage can be found in the harbor a short distance from the markers while other crash sites are found inside and outside of the barrier reef. A number of B-24 bombers were damaged while making bombing runs over Yap. Some of these planes made it hundreds of miles away from Yap before they crashed. More than 150 men and nearly 40 American aircraft were lost in missions against Yap during the war. Although some of the men were rescued and some of the remains were recovered after the war, many of the men remain listed as missing in action today. Current memorials in the park include the Coleman B-24 Crew, the Saylor & Diederich B-24 Crews who collided together, the Ens. Howard Holding Hellcat and a memorial sign listing all the individual losses during the war. Additional memorials are planned for the park.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/yapmissions.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/yapmissions.asp)



## ENS. HOWARD HOLDING, HELLCAT SITE

### Location:

The wreckage of Ens. Howard Allen Holding's F6F-5 Hellcat rests in the Yap Harbor not far from his marker in the public park.

**Date of Loss:** September 6th, 1944

**Plane Type:** F6F-5 Hellcat

**Unit:** United States Navy VF-20 from the USS Enterprise

**The Man:** Ens. Howard Allen Holding

Howard was a college student and musician from Salt Lake City, Utah prior to entering the US Naval Aviation program in 1942.

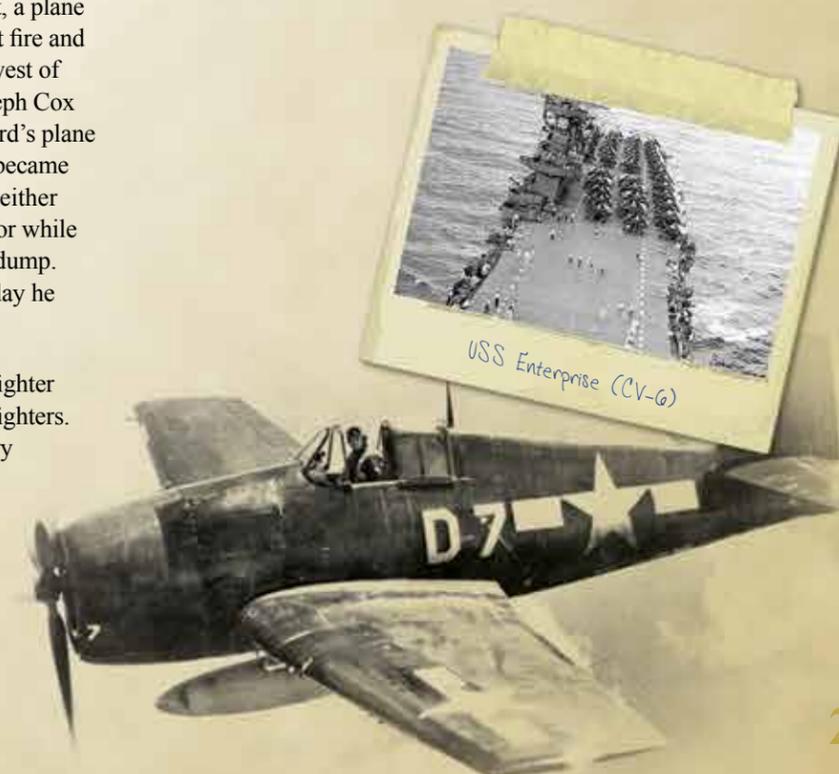
**The Mission:** In the early afternoon on September 6, 1944, Howard and 34 fellow US fighter pilots ascended from the flight decks of the carriers USS Enterprise, USS Franklin and USS San Jacinto to conduct a fighter sweep of the already battered island of Yap. The island had been hit hard over the previous three months by high flying, long range B-24 bombers of the US Army Air Force but there were still a few buildings standing. They circled around to attack out of the sun from the southwest. On their first pass of what was thought to be a routine neutralization strike (milk run) Howard and two other F6F-5 Hellcats from his squadron were shot down near this location. First, a plane flown by Lt. Harry Brown was hit by anti-aircraft fire and went down in a shallow dive hitting the ground west of Colonia. Shortly after, a plane flown by Ens. Joseph Cox was hit by anti-aircraft fire and turned into Howard's plane causing a mid-air collision. Both planes quickly became caught in tight, nose-down spirals from which neither recovered. Howard's plane crashed into the harbor while Joseph's plane crashed near the present day Yap dump. Howard's remains were never found and to this day he remains missing in action (MIA).

**The Plane:** The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a fighter aircraft descended from the earlier F4F Wildcat fighters. The Hellcat and the F4U Corsair were the primary US Navy carrier fighters in the second half of WWII. The Hellcat proved to be the most successful aircraft in naval history destroying 5,171 enemy aircraft.



**The Carrier:** The USS Enterprise (CV-6), the "Big E", was the sixth aircraft carrier of the U.S. Navy and the most decorated ship of WWII. She participated in more major actions of the war against Japan than any other US ship. Her aircraft and guns downed 911 Japanese planes; her bombers sank 71 ships, and damaged or destroyed 192 more.

More information can be found at:  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/6sept1944.asp)



## THE COLEMAN B-24 CREW

**Date:** June 25th, 1944

**Unit:** 13th Air Force, 372nd Squadron, 307th Bomb Group

**The Plane:** B-24J AAF Liberator, 44-20598

### The Men:

2nd Lt. Gerald D. Coleman, Pilot from Idabel, OK  
 2nd Lt. John E. Jurica Jr., Co-pilot from Freeland, PA  
 2nd Lt. Martin B. Unger, Navigator from New York, NY  
 2nd Lt. James F. Lind, Bombardier from Los Angeles, CA  
 T/Sgt. Robert P. Wagoner, Engineer from Bisan, KS  
 S/Sgt. James R. Lyken Jr., Asst. Engineer from Coatasville, PA  
 T/Sgt. James R. Hurd, Radio Operator from Martinville, VA  
 T/Sgt. John R. McCullough, Assist. Radio Operator from Covina, CA  
 T/Sgt. Romeo Tetreault, Gunner from New Bedford, MA  
 T/Sgt. Bill William Jr., Armorer Gunner from Grand Island, NE

**The Mission:** The Coleman Crew's B-24J departed the Admiralty Islands the morning of June 25, 1944 with the 10 crew members. Their 13-hour round trip was over long stretches of ocean without friendly fighter cover. While dropping bombs on the Yap airfield, their B-24 was attacked by Japanese fighters. The cockpit and bombardiers compartment were seen with flames coming out of the windows which had been shot out. The plane made a perfect loop, then fell off to the right in a spin and crashed just off Yap's southeast reef. No parachutes were seen and the crew was listed as killed in action and never located.

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/25june1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/25june1944.asp)



## THE SYLOR & DIEDERICH B-24 CREW

**Date:** July 15th, 1944

**Unit:** 13th Air Force, 372nd Squadron, 307th Bomb Group

**The Plane:** B-24 AAF Liberator, 44-405555 & 42-73119

### The Men:

#### 370th Squadron B-24J, 44-405555

1st. Lt. Ulna H. Sylor, Pilot from New York  
 2nd Lt. Sam Camp Jr., Co-pilot from Illinois  
 1st. Lt. Joseph S. Principe, Navigator from New York  
 1st. Lt. Walter C. Rowan, Bombardier from Michigan  
 T/Sgt. Michael G. Vetrecin Jr., Engineer from Ohio  
 S/Sgt. Ruben O. Miller, Assist. Engineer from Ohio  
 T/Sgt. Francis R. Keefe, Radio Operator from Massachusetts  
 S/ Sgt. William W. Jr. Waters, Assist. Radio Operator from Arkansas  
 S/Sgt. James M. Hitchcock, Gunner from California  
 S/Sgt. Clarence W. Dickerson, Gunner from West Virginia  
 F/O Charles J. Harder, Observer from Wisconsin

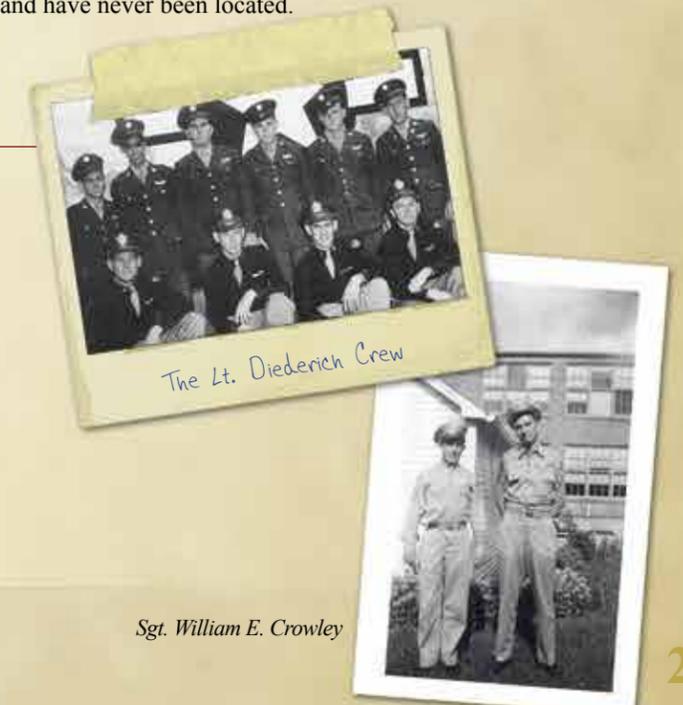
#### 372nd Squadron B-24J, 42-73119

2nd Lt. Anthony F. Diederich, Pilot from Nebraska  
 2nd Lt. Robert W. Pomeroy, Co-pilot from Illinois  
 2nd Lt. Andrew Sekanics, Bombardier from New Jersey  
 2nd Lt. Eugene W. Garret, Navigator from California  
 Cpl. Clint D. Hundley, Assist Engineer from Texas  
 Cpl. Charles F. Reynolds, Assist. Radio Operator from Iowa  
 Cpl. John O. Dunbar, Gunner from Kansas  
 S/Sgt. Kenneth W. Seiler, Engineer from New Jersey  
 S/Sgt. Robert F. Jacobs, Radio Operator from Washington D.C.  
 Sgt. William E. Moores, Camera Gunner from Illinois  
 Sgt. William E. Crowley, Armorer Gunner from Illinois

**More information can be found at:**  
[www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/15july1944.asp](http://www.missingaircrew.com/yap/mac/15july1944.asp)



**The Mission:** With 11 crew members on each plane, the Sylor and Diederich B-24 crews departed Mokerang airfield in the Admiralty Islands the morning of July 15, 1944. A 13 hour round trip over long stretches of unprotected ocean waters lay ahead of them as they travelled toward the island of Yap. After dropping bombs on the intended target of the Yap airfield, their formation of B-24s was suddenly attacked by Japanese fighters. Tragically, in their evasive action the Sylor and Diederich planes struck mid-air and exploded ten miles south of Yap. No parachutes were deployed. The crews were listed as killed in action and have never been located.



**The Planes:** The B-24 Liberator was a four-engine American heavy bomber. It was produced in greater numbers than any other American combat aircraft of World War II and still holds the record as the most produced US military aircraft. Often compared to the better known B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-24 was a more modern design with a higher top speed, greater range and a higher bomb load. The B-24 provided excellent service in a variety of roles thanks to its large payload and long range. 18,482 B-24s were built by September 1945.

**The Base:** The 307th Bomb Group was based on Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands during the summer of 1944. They flew off of coral runways on Mokerang Airfield after Naval Construction Battalions removed over 18,000 coconut trees to build two 8000 foot runways, taxiways and dispersal areas for the large bombers. The airfield was abandoned at the end of the war and has been reclaimed by vegetation.

Sgt. William E. Crowley

## THE END OF THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH



On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Two days later, they dropped a second atomic bomb, this time on the Japanese city of Nagasaki. The combined shock of these events caused Emperor Hirohito to intervene and order Japan to accept the Allies' terms for ending the war. The Japanese on Yap

used painted stones to write a message in English on the Yap airfield stating that they were waiting for orders from their commanders in Palau to surrender. This message stopped the year-long bombardment of the island by American forces. The surrender of the Empire of Japan on September 2, 1945, brought the hostilities of World War II to an official close.

On September 5, 1945 the Japanese on Yap surrendered to the Americans onboard the USS Tillman (DD-641) in the Yap harbor. Although the Japanese surrendered Yap, the Americans allowed them to keep their arms and continue to rule Yap until December 7, 1945, when the first American flag was raised over the island. American forces worked hand-in-hand with the Japanese during the fall of 1945 to clear mine fields and butterfly bombs (which were dropped on the airfields), and gather all war materials from the island for destruction. Hundreds of Japanese mines were retrieved from the waters around Yap; however, not all were located and the threat of live World War II mines remained

active for years. As recently as 2008, World War II mines have been located and destroyed. An array of war materials were collected throughout the island during this period and compared to Japanese records to make sure the materials could not be used in future conflicts. Some of the large guns were used as rebar to construct the new causeways while a majority of the materials were dumped off outside the reef where they remain today—rusting away.

Throughout the bombardment of Yap, numerous bombs, torpedoes and other ordinances missed their mark. The waters surrounding the island are littered with bombs and other ordinances of all sizes. Many of the planes that were shot down on both sides remain in watery resting places—unfound and untouched since the war.

After the surrender, the first Americans who arrived on Yap made a valiant effort to locate the wreckage of American planes and the men who were shot down over the island during the war. However, the Pacific war was so vast that no methods were available to show them what planes and men had been shot down over Yap. Although the American units kept good records, the squadron and group reports describing the individual losses were in boxes and crates on various ships and warehouses. There was no centralized location at the end of the war to provide the information they needed. The searcher had no idea that close to 40 planes were missing around Yap. It was not until decades later that all the records were placed in the national archives for researches to review. The Americans trying to locate the crash sites and graves on Yap in 1945 and 1946 had to use information from the Japanese and Yapese to calculate the losses.

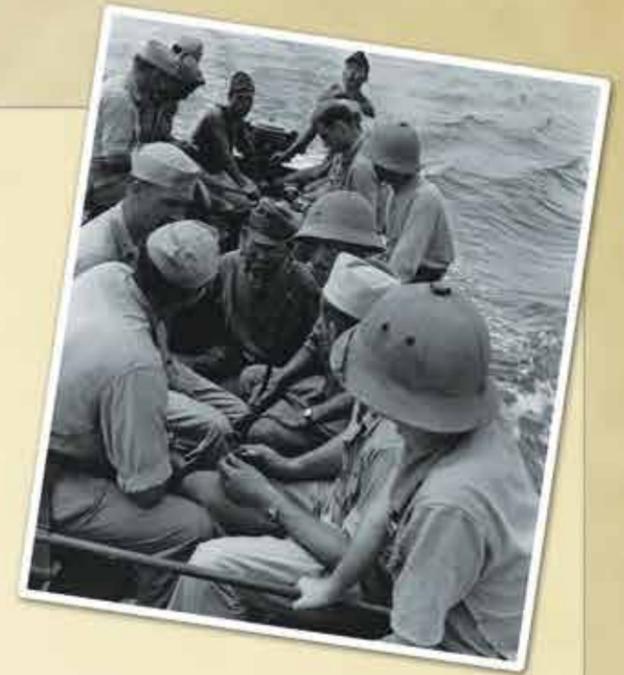
Initial searchers and grave registration teams worked hard to locate and identify the sites but without solid data, they could only make educated guesses and assumptions. For example, they found the name of a F6F Hellcat pilot who was shot down in the winter of 1945 and listed his name within their reports, but by the time the remains of the pilot were recovered in 1947, the name was no longer associated with the site and the pilot was buried in an unknown grave in the Philippines. His family never knew that he was located shortly after the war ended.

Although some of the graves were located on Yap and the remains were returned to their families for burial back in the United States, many of the men remain missing. The details of their losses faded as the war years were put on the backburner and time marched forward. The US helped rebuild Yap and built a US Coast Guard base and Loran station on Yap in the early 1960s. US Navy and Coast Guard ships unknowingly pulled their ships into the Yap harbor during this period and moored directly over an American F6F Hellcat crash site of a missing pilot. This particular site was not identified until 2006.

Throughout the years, various people located and visited some of the American crash sites scattered around the island of Yap. They often did not know the stories behind the losses but knew they were likely combat losses from World War II. It was assumed that the remains from the sites were recovered after the war, therefore most of the visitors to Yap focused on the array of Japanese wreckage around the old Japanese airfield. The Japanese wreckage in this area was widely photographed and was a common tourist location to visit.

In 1980, three Japanese Judys (D4Ys) were removed from the old airfield and brought to Japan. The parts from the three aircraft were used to create a single display that is now located at the Yasukuni Shrine Museum. In addition, a number of Zero wrecks were recovered from the airfield the same year to create an A6M5 Model 52 Zero display that is now at the Yasukuni Jinja Yushukan (Yasukuni Shrine) Museum in Tokyo.

It was not until 2005 that the complete story of the American losses around Yap emerged. Patrick Ranfranz, founder of the Missing Air Crew Project, traveled to Yap Island with his wife Cherie in an attempt to locate his missing uncle, T/Sgt. John R. McCullough. John was one of 10 crew members on a B-24 Liberator that was shot down by a Japanese fighter over Yap Island on June 25, 1944. While searching for John, Pat and Cherie discovered other American planes. When they returned home, they began researching all of the American planes lost over Yap Island during World War II. In subsequent years, they returned to Yap and located and identified additional planes using their research. The Yap Visitors Bureau partnered with



Patrick's Missing Air Crew Project to set up memorials at the sites they located to remember the men and tell the stories of sacrifices that took place in the skies over Yap during the war. Although Patrick's dream is to find his uncle's plane off the southeast reef of Yap, the memorial project has helped provide closure to numerous families who lost relatives on Yap during the war. Patrick's motto has been that a man is not dead unless he is forgotten.

Patrick is extremely grateful for the work that has been done to create World War II memorials throughout Yap Island. This would not have been possible without help by the people of Yap and the Yap Visitors Bureau to save and preserve the American crash sites and wreckages that remained after the war. Too many people have forgotten the men who gave their lives during WWII to preserve freedom. The memorials on Yap Island immortalize the forgotten and bring meaning to their sacrifices. If you have additional information, documents or pictures to share, please email Patrick Ranfranz at [pat@missingaircrew.com](mailto:pat@missingaircrew.com)



## Yap Visitors Bureau

Bldg#1 YVB Main Dr.

P.O. Box 988

Yap, FM 96943

Tel:(691)350-2298 • Fax:(691)350-7015

Email: yvb@mail.fm

# A MAN IS NOT DEAD UNLESS HE IS FORGOTTEN!

This memorial project is in memory  
of all the brave men who lost their lives  
on Yap Island during World War II.



*Patrick & Cherie Ranfranz searching for  
American crash sites on Yap Island in 2009.*



*The writing on the cross reads, "Unknown American Flier,  
Died in Service of his country." A 1947 Associated Press story stated,  
"Yap, Caroline Islands. One of the loneliest American graves in the  
Pacific lies beneath the palm trees of this lovely little island. It is the only  
American grave on Yap. No one knows the name of the young pilot whose  
plane crashed and burned. He was buried there by the natives in 1944.  
The grave is lonely, but it is not forgotten. Each day the natives place fresh  
flowers at the base of a cross and push back the encroaching jungle growth."*

Patrick Ranfranz, founder of the Missing Air Crew Project,  
is extremely grateful for the work that has been done to create  
World War II memorials throughout Yap Island. This would not have  
been possible without help by the people of Yap and the Yap Visitors Bureau to save and  
preserve the American crash sites and wreckages that remained after the war. The memorials  
on Yap Island immortalize the forgotten and bring meaning to their sacrifices.  
If you have additional information, documents or pictures to share,  
please email Patrick Ranfranz at: [pat@missingaircrew.com](mailto:pat@missingaircrew.com)

### **Patrick Ranfranz, Missing Air Crew Project**

1473 21 1/2 Street, Cameron, WI 54822, USA  
Phone: 612-282-5624 • Email: [pat@missingaircrew.com](mailto:pat@missingaircrew.com)