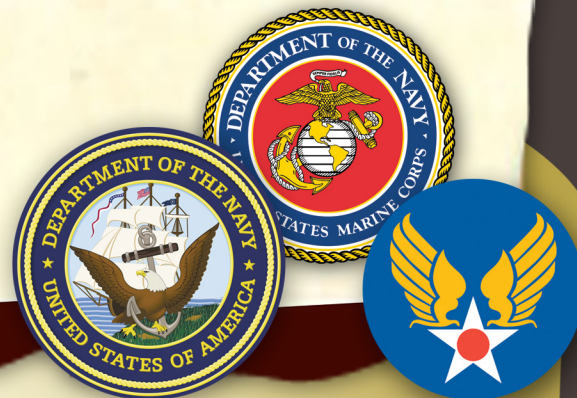


THE COLEMAN CREW - JUNE 25, 1944

13TH AIR FORCE, 372ND BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, 307TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP

B-24J AAF SERIAL #44-40598



The Mission: The Coleman Crew's B-24J departed Mokerang Field, Los Negros Island (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. After dropping bombs on the Yap airfield, their B-24 was attacked by Japanese fighters. Direct hits were scored by the Japanese fighters on two of the four engines. 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. They were strafed all the way down and also after hitting the water. No parachutes were seen and the crew was listed as killed in action and never located.

The Men:

Gerald D. Coleman, Pilot from Idabel, OK
John E. Jurica, Jr., Co-Pilot from Freeland, PA
Martin B. Unger, Navigator from New York, NY
James F. Lind, Bombardier from Los Angeles, CA
Robert P. Wagoner, Engineer from Bison, KS
James R. Lyken, Jr., Assistant Engineer from Coatesville, PA
James R. Hurd, Radio Operator from Martinsville, VA
John R. McCullough, Assistant Radio Operator from Covina, CA
Romeo Tetreault, Gunner from New Bedford, MA
Bill Williams, Jr., Armorer Gunner from Grand Island, NE



The Coleman Crew

The Plane: 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. It was used by many Allied air forces and every U.S. branch of service during the war, attaining a distinguished war record with its operations in the northern European, Pacific and Mediterranean theaters. 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 Coleman B-24 crew's home base at the time of their fateful mission was Mokerang Field in the Admiralty Islands. Mokerang field was located on Los Negros Island. On February 29, 1944 an American force landed on Los Negros Island, the third largest of the Admiralty Islands. A furious battle developed for control of the Admiralty Islands. The battle was fought out in the islands, on the surrounding waters, and in the sky. In the end, Allied air superiority and command of the sea allowed the Allies to heavily reinforce their position on Los Negros and capture it from the Japanese. The Admiralty Islands campaign officially ended on 18 May 1944. The Allied victory completed the isolation of the major Japanese base at Rabaul that was the ultimate objective of the Allied campaigns of 1942 and 1943. A major air and naval base was developed in the Admiralty Islands that became an important launching point for the campaigns of 1944 in the Pacific, including the Coleman crew's final mission.

