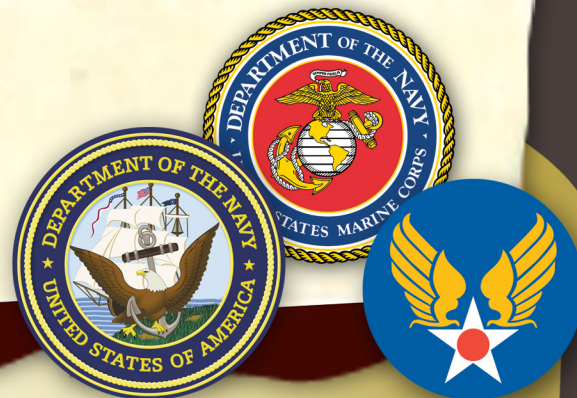


LT. ZACK F. LILLARD - NOVEMBER 22, 1944

US NAVY, VF-20 SQUADRON

F6F-5 HELLCAT FROM THE CARRIER USS ENTERPRISE (CV-6)

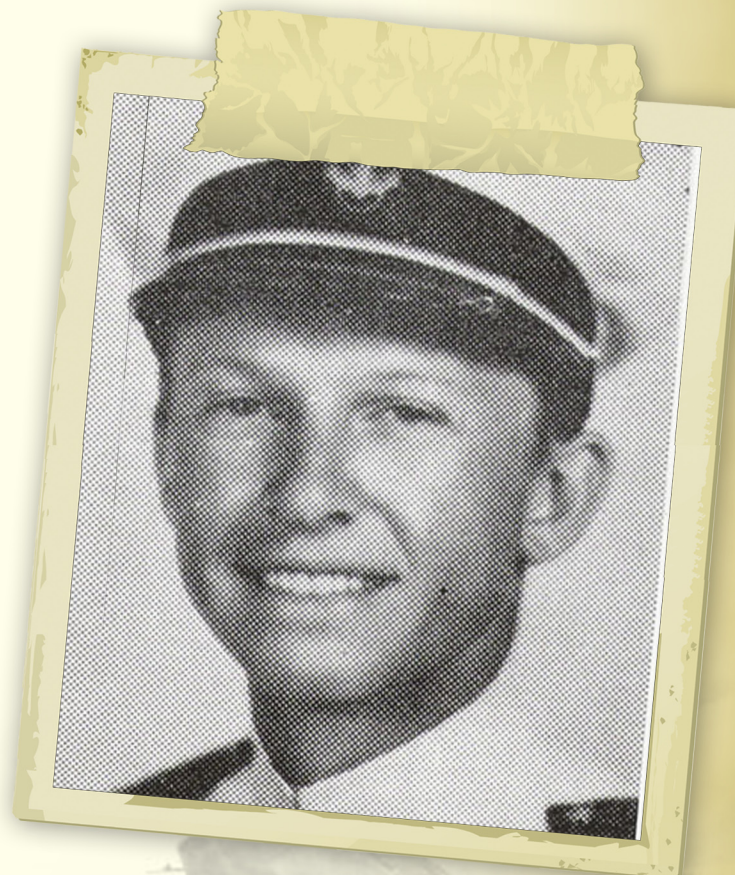


The Man: The Man: Zack F. Lillard was born and raised in Decatur, Texas. He graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1935, attended Southern Methodist University, and met and married Ann Lacey before entering the service. On 22 November 1944 Lt. Zack F. Lillard took off from the USS Enterprise in a F6F-5 Hellcat fighter with a flight of 30 planes of similar type to participate in a rocket and bombing attack on the Japanese held airfield at Yap Island. After their initial rocket and bombing runs were completed, most of the planes, including that of Lt. Lillard, returned for a strafing attack. Lt. Lillard 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 directly over the airfield. After two slow rolls out of control, his F6F dove into the ground from several hundred feet altitude at the east end of the runway, and violently exploded. Lt. Lillard was not seen to leave the plane prior to the crash. The Navy never found his body or the wreckage of his plane; however, a necktie pin with ZACK LILLARD DEC. 25, 1943 engraved was found near the airfield after the war. The Navy told his wife (Ann Lacey Lillard) and his parents after the war that Lt. Lillard was likely killed in action due to the strong probability that he was instantly killed when his plane crashed and exploded. The wreckage of his plane and the location of his remains are unknown. Post-war Japanese interviews indicate that the wreckage of his plane might have been dumped into the ocean before the Americans arrived to take over Yap Island.

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. Navy and Marine F6Fs flew 66,530 combat sorties (45% of all fighter sorties of the war, 62,386 sorties were flown from aircraft carriers) at a cost of 270 Hellcats (an overall kill-to-loss ratio of 19:1).

The Carrier: The USS Enterprise (CV-6), the "Big E", was the sixth aircraft carrier of the US 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. Enterprise earned 20 battle stars, the most for any U.S. warship in World War II. She participated in more major actions of the war against Japan than did any other US ship. These actions included the Battle of Midway, the Battle of the Eastern Solomons, the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, various other air-sea engagements during the Guadalcanal campaign, the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and the Battle of Leyte Gulf, as well as the "Doolittle Raid" on Tokyo. On three separate occasions during the Pacific War, the Japanese announced that she had been sunk in battle. Some have labeled her the most glorious and honored ship in all of United States Naval history, perhaps rivaled only by the 18th century frigate USS Constitution.

This is in memory of Lt. Zack F. Lillard and all the other brave men who lost their lives on Yap Island during World War II.



MISSING IN ACTION

Lt. Zack Ford Lillard, son of Mrs. Elsie Lillard of Dallas, and former residents of Decatur where Zack was raised, is reported to be missing in action in the Southwest Pacific theatre of operations. He has recently been assigned to an aircraft carrier as airplane pilot, Lieutenant Lillard is a nephew of Tom Rush.