

5 Questions With Patrick Ranfranz



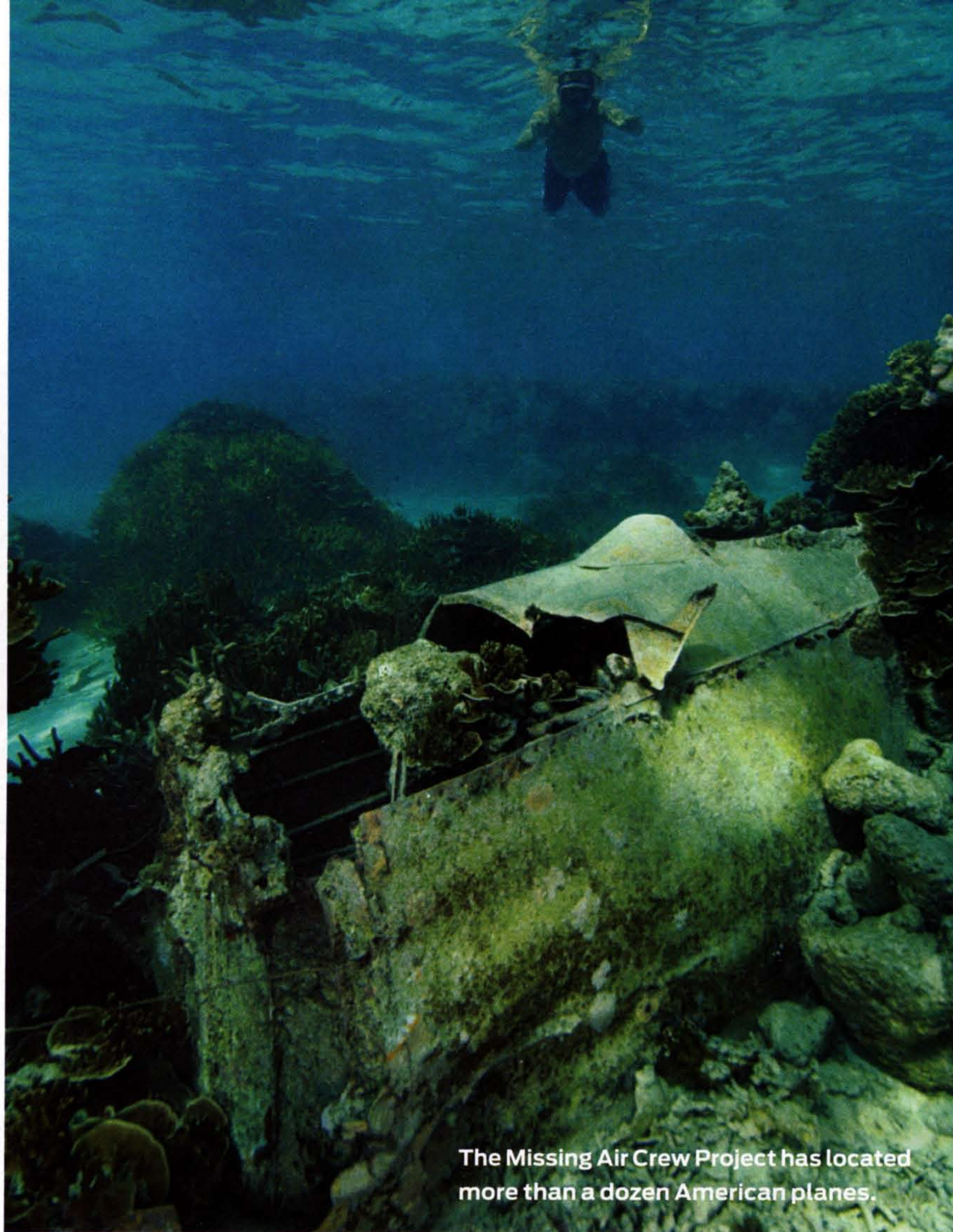
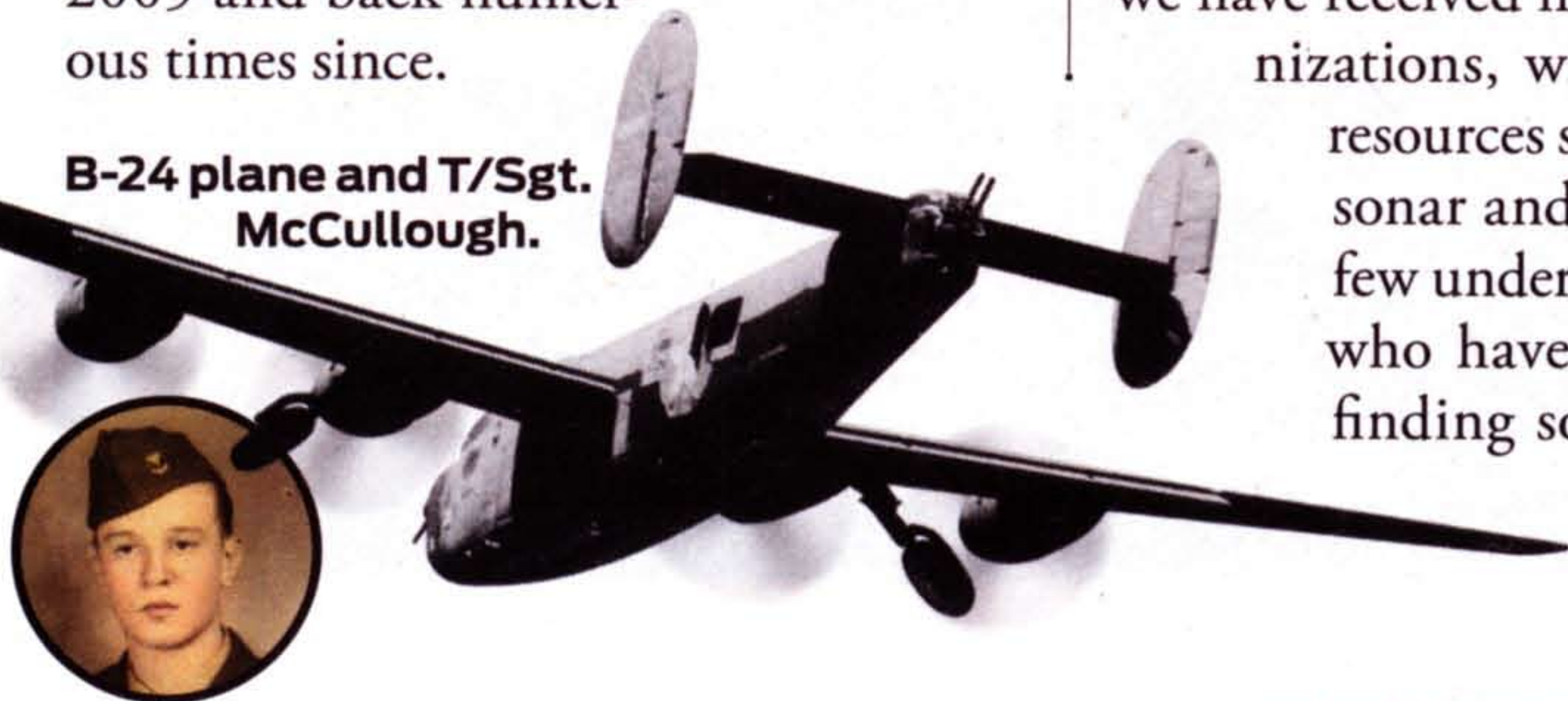
Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Missing Air Crew Project, dozens of American soldiers listed as MIA from World War II are gone but not forgotten

Patrick Ranfranz never met his uncle, T/Sgt. John R McCullough. An assistant radio operator for the 307th Bomb Group B-24 crew in World War II, McCullough was killed in action in 1944 on a mission off Micronesia's Yap Island. The government listed McCullough as MIA, but that didn't suffice for his nephew, whose fascination with aviation and history prompted him to start a costly, two-decade-long search for his uncle's plane. In 2005, Ranfranz traveled to Yap to put his research to the test. Although he hasn't yet found that B-24, his group, the Missing Air Crew Project (missingaircrew.com), has located 12 other missing American planes, including sites with remains, and is working with the U.S. government to get the MIA cases returned to the U.S.

Aside from the obvious personal connection, what motivated you to travel halfway around the world to find this particular plane?

PR: As a child I spun the globe around to find Yap Island after hearing my mother's stories about her missing brother. For me it's a combination of history, mystery and an internal passion to find my uncle that took me to Yap in 2005 and back numerous times since.

B-24 plane and T/Sgt. McCullough.



The Missing Air Crew Project has located more than a dozen American planes.

What are the difficulties you've encountered so far in locating T/Sgt. John R. McCullough's B-24?

PR: We thought that with a little luck, we might be able to find my uncle's missing plane in the waters off the southeastern reef of Yap. Our needle-in-the-haystack diving approach provided several hundred spectacular dives, but we needed more information and technology to find the plane — Yap's reefs are deeper and vaster than I could have imagined.

How close are you to finding the missing B-24?

PR: We're close. Over the past few years, we have received help from a few organizations, which have provided resources such as side-scanning sonar and a magnetometer. A few underwater-search experts who have been successful in finding some significant historic wrecks will join us on our

July trip. With their expertise and the additional equipment, including a ROV, we have an excellent chance of finally finding my uncle's missing plane.

How Can people help the Missing Air Crew Project?

PR: We are always on the lookout for people to help with information, research, technology and hands-on searching. Every year we have people who volunteer to join us to help search for the missing planes and men. Each year we find additional planes and make progress that is often the result of help from others.

Will you continue searching for MIAs even after you've found your uncle's plane?

PR: I plan to spend the rest of my life searching for the missing men around Yap and surrounding areas. The sad fact is that more than 78,000 men remain missing from WWII.