ENS. JOSEPH EDWARD COX

September 6th, 1944 • US Navy, VF-20 Squadron
F6F-5 Hellcat from the carrier USS Enterprise (CV-6)

The Man: The wreckage you see today is what remains of an F6F-5 Hellcat flown by Ens. Joseph E. Cox from Idaho during his final mission of WWII. In the early afternoon of September 6, 1944 Joseph and thirty-four 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 plane flown by Lt. Harry Brown was hit by anti-aircraft fire and went down in a shallow dive just west of Colonia. Soon Joseph's F6F-5 Hellcat was hit as well. He lost control and turned into Ens. Howard Holding'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 fell not far from this location. 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 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 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.

This marker is in memory of Ens. Joseph Edward Cox and all the other brave men who lost their lives on Yap Island during Word War II.

A man is not dead unless he is forgotten!

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USS Enterprise