

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945

# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945



*By Ret SMSgt Clifford F. Lord*

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## THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

This report is dedicated to *Sgt Robert Gordon Lord* who perished in a B-24M airplane crash on May 12, 1945. I am proud to say, Sgt Lord was my uncle and fellow Flight Engineer.



May 29, 1924 - May 12, 1945



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Mishap Aircraft: Consolidated B-24M-10-CO (44-41949/44-42048) Liberator

Aircraft Tail Number: 44-41995  
Place of Manufacture: Convair/San Diego, California  
Date of Manufacture (Purchase): Dec 30, 1944  
Total Hours: 253:15 (Hours)  
Aircraft Weight at Takeoff: 61,404 (Pounds - from Form F -  
Weight & Balance Sheet)  
Fuel 18,120 (Pounds - 3,020 Gallons)  
Crew (11) 2,200 (Pounds)  
Bombs 0  
Home Station: March Field, California  
Air Force: Fourth  
Wing: 320th  
Group: 420th AAF BU  
Squadron: T-5



B-24M

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The B-24M:

In March 1943, Consolidated merged with Vultee to form Convair. The M model was the last production version in the B-24 series. It was essentially an L model with some additional weight saving features. The tail turret was standardized to the lightweight power operated A-6B type. The enclosed waist gunner positions of the **B-24L** were changed back to open positions on the M. The cockpit canopy was modified on late model B-24Ms by adding a "knife-edge" dual pane front windscreen. This change gave the pilots much better visibility.

More than 2,500 B-24Ms were built at Consolidated's San Diego plant and Ford's Willow Run facility between December 1944 and June 1945. Because the war was over in Europe and nearly over in the Pacific at the end of the production run, some late model B-24Ms were scrapped with only ferry time between the assembly plant and the scrap yard.

**Serial numbers:** 44-41807 to 44-42722; 44-50252 to 44-52052

**Note:** Consolidated built 916 B-24M aircraft at its San Diego plant, and Ford built 1,677 aircraft at its Willow Run plant.

### **SPECIFICATIONS:**

**Span:** 110 ft. 0 in.

**Length:** 67 ft. 2 in.

**Height:** 18 ft. 0 in.

**Weight:** 64,500 lbs. maximum weight

**Armament:** 10 .50-cal. and 12,800 lbs. of bombs

**Engines:** Four Pratt & Whitney R-1830-65 supercharged radials of 1,200 hp each (takeoff power)

**Crew:** 10

### **PERFORMANCE:**

**Maximum speed:** 300 mph

**Cruising speed:** 215 mph

**Range:** 3,700 miles (max ferry range); 2,100 miles with 5,000 lbs. of bombs

**Service ceiling:** 28,000 ft.

Below are the two letter identifiers for the different facilities that built the B-24:

CF - Consolidated/Fortworth  
CO - Consolidated/San Diego  
DT - Douglas/Tulsa  
FO - Ford/Willow Run  
NT - North American/Dallas

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The last major wartime variant was the B-24M with a lightweight Motor Products two-gun power-operated tail turret (A-6B).



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The cockpit canopy was modified on late model B-24Ms by adding a “knife-edge” dual pane front windscreen. This change gave the pilots much better visibility.



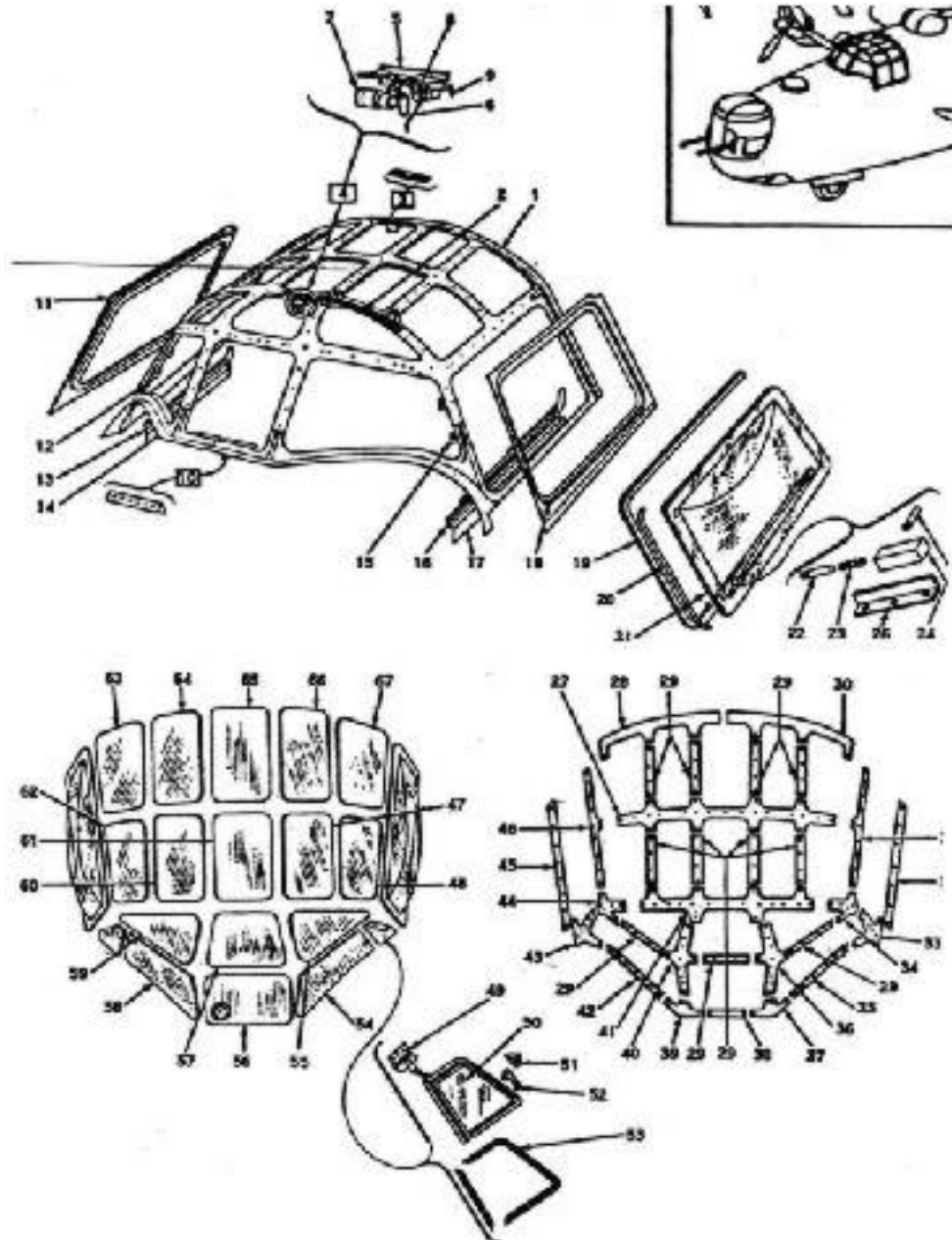
### REDESIGNED CANOPY/WINDSCREEN

The front part of the canopy “V” shape was made by taking out the flat center panel and the two triangular air vent windows. Compare the two pilot’s enclosures on the following two pages taken from the B-24M Parts Manual.



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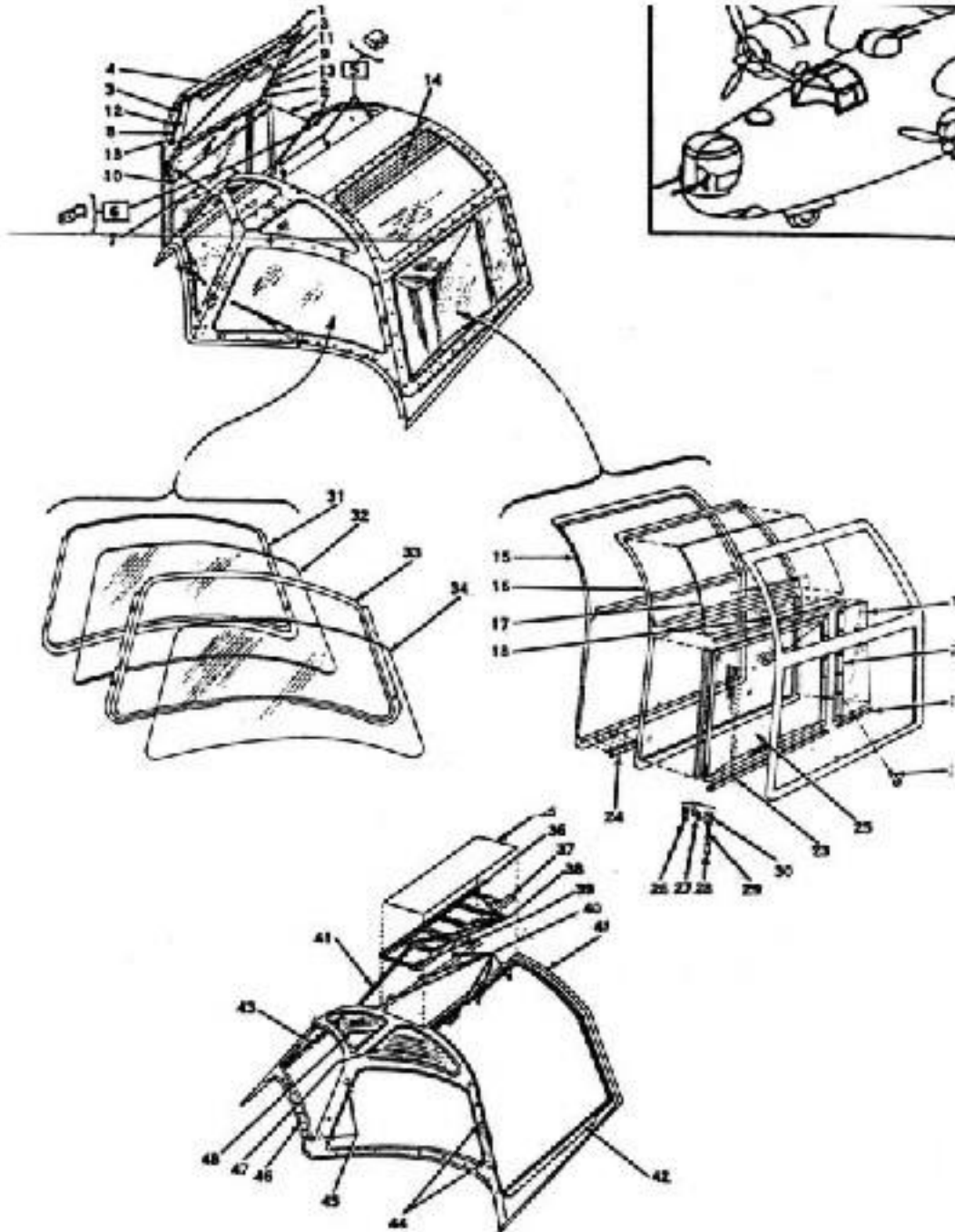
Old Windscreen From "L" Model



Source: Figure 10, B-24M Parts Manual.

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New Windscreen On "M" Model



Source: Figure 11, B-24M Parts Manual

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Mishap Crew NO. 505:

<u>Crew Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>ASN</u>
Pilot:	Apedaile, John W.	1st Lt	0-731786
CoPilot	Gold, James T.	F/O	T-133522
Navigator	Trowbridge, Carroll (NMI)	F/O	T-137481
RVO	Frantz, Jr. Adolf (NMI)	2nd Lt	0-872703
Engineer	Lord, Robert G.	Sgt	31268613
Asst. Engineer	Hamilton, Victor W.	Cpl	32055936
Radio Operator	Tippetts, Leroy T.	Sgt	37358123
RVO	Brown, Donald S.	2nd Lt	0-876430
Arm-Gunner	Oppenheim, Raymond	Sgt	42020966
RVO	Peters, Kenneth H.	F/O	T-4639
Instructor	Fuller, Jack L.	1st Lt	0-730249

RVO - Radar and Electronics.

Pilot Time:	Apedaile	1664:15 (Hours)
Pilot Time	Gold	335:00 (Hours)

Home Station: March Field, California

Air Force: Fourth

Wing: 320th

Group: 420th AAF BU

Squadron: T-5

All eleven crewmembers lost their lives in the accident.

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Crew from left to right of 536:

Top Row - Sgt Robert G. Lord (Flight Engineer), Tippetts (Radio Operator), Wagoner, Snively, Martin, Oppenheim (Gunner).

Bottom Row - Lt. Jacob Battenberg (Pilot), Gold (Co-Pilot), Trowbridge (Navigator), Boston (Bombardier).

Above picture of some of the mishap crewmembers (highlighted), was taken some time before May 12, 1945.

Note: Lt. Jacob Battenberg (Pilot) escorted Sgt Lord's remains back to Hampton Falls, New Hampshire for the funeral.

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John W. Apedaile - Pilot of 995  
With two month old son

## THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

### Mishap Flight:

Type of Flight: Navigation-Ferret (Intelligence Gathering) Training Mission

Aircraft: B-24M / 44-41955

Call Letters: 4JD

Crew: 505

Date of Flight: May 12, 1945

Departed From: March Field, California

Departure Time (Scheduled): 13:30 (1:30 PM)

Departure Time (Actual): 13:45 (1:45 PM)

Landing Time (Scheduled): 02:00 (2:00 AM) May 13, 1945 @ March Field

### Scheduled Flight Plan:

From:	To:	True Course:
33 51.93 N / 117 14.91 W (March Field)	34 34.60 N / 120 38.90 W (Pt. Arguella)	262? (Depart)
34 34.6 N / 120 38.90 W	37 10.00 N / 122 30.00 W	326
37 10.00 N / 122 30.00 W	37 53.19 N / 121 13.49 W (Stockton)	052
37 53.19 N / 121 13.49 W	38 30.17 N / 122 48.35 W (Santa Rosa)	292
38 30.17 N / 122 48.35 W	38 50.00 N / 124 00.00 W	270
38 50.00 N / 124 00.00 W	40 20.00 N / 124 30.00 W	352
39 52.00 N / 123 54.00 W	<b>Crash Site</b>	

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Scheduled Flight Plan (Continued):

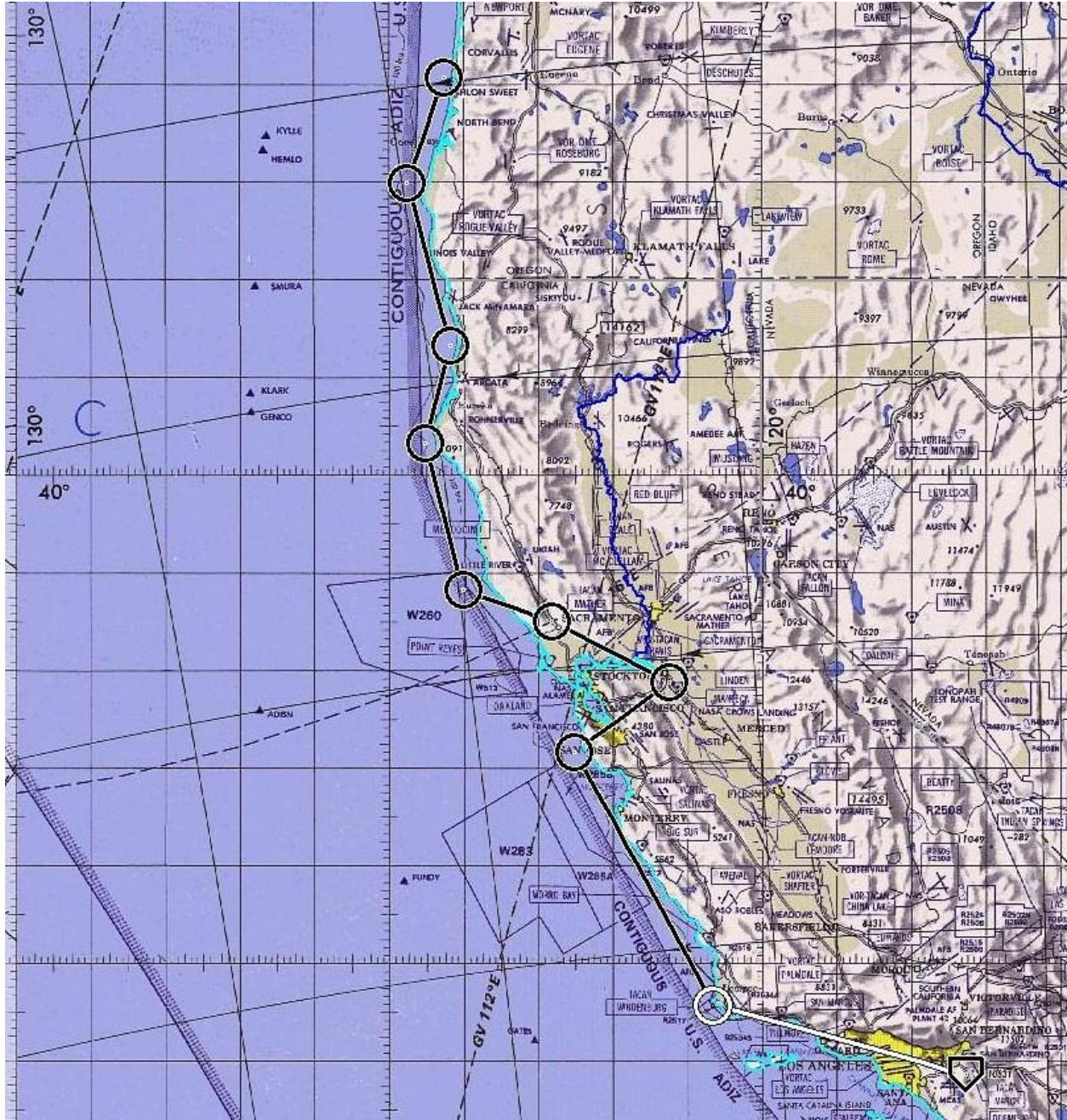
From:	To:	True Course:
40 20.00 N / 124 30.00 W	41 20.00 N / 124 10.00 W	322
41 20.00 N / 124 10.00 W	43 00.00 N / 124 45.00 W	014
43 00.00 N / 124 45.00 W	44 05.00 N / 124 15.00 W	346
44 05.00 N / 124 15.00 W	43 00.00 N / 124 45.00 W	019 (Return)
43 00.00 N / 124 45.00 W	41 20.00 N / 124 10.00 W	199
41 20.00 N / 124 10.00 W	40 20.00 N / 124 30.00 W	166
40 20.00 N / 124 30.00 W	39 50.00 N / 124 00.00 W	194
39 50.00 N / 124 00.00 W	38 25.00 N / 123 15.00 W	142
38 25.00 N / 123 15.00 W	38 30.17 N / 122 48.35 W	090
38 30.17 N / 122 48.35 W	37 53.19 N / 121 13.49 W	112
37 53.19 N / 121 13.49 W	37 10.00 N / 122 30.00 W	232
37 10.00 N / 122 30.00 W	36 00.00 N / 121 40.00 W	150
36 00.00 N / 121 40.00 W	34 34.60 N / 120 38.90 W	160
34 34.60 N / 120 38.90 W	33 13.85 N / 119 26.79 W (San Nicolas)	144
33 13.85 N / 119 26.79 W	33 36.55 N / 117 58.51 W (Huntington Beach)	071
33 36.55 N / 117 58.51 W	33 51.93 N / 117 14.91 W	068 (Home)

Map 1 shows the flight planned route from March Field up to Oregon.

Map 2 shows the flight planned route and the crash site.

Map 3 shows the flight planned route from Oregon back to March Field.

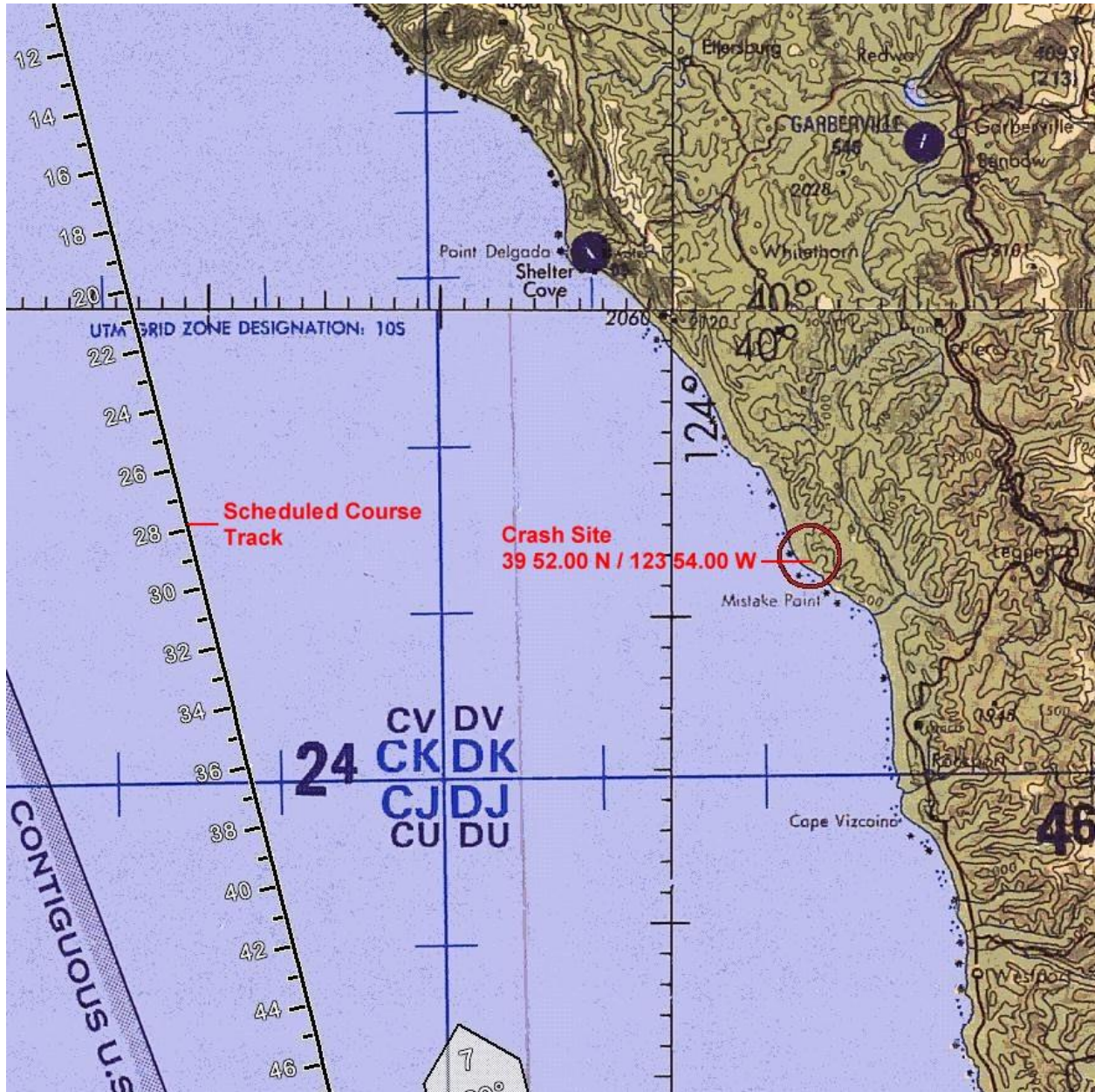
# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945



Map 1 - Scheduled Outbound Route from March Field to Oregon

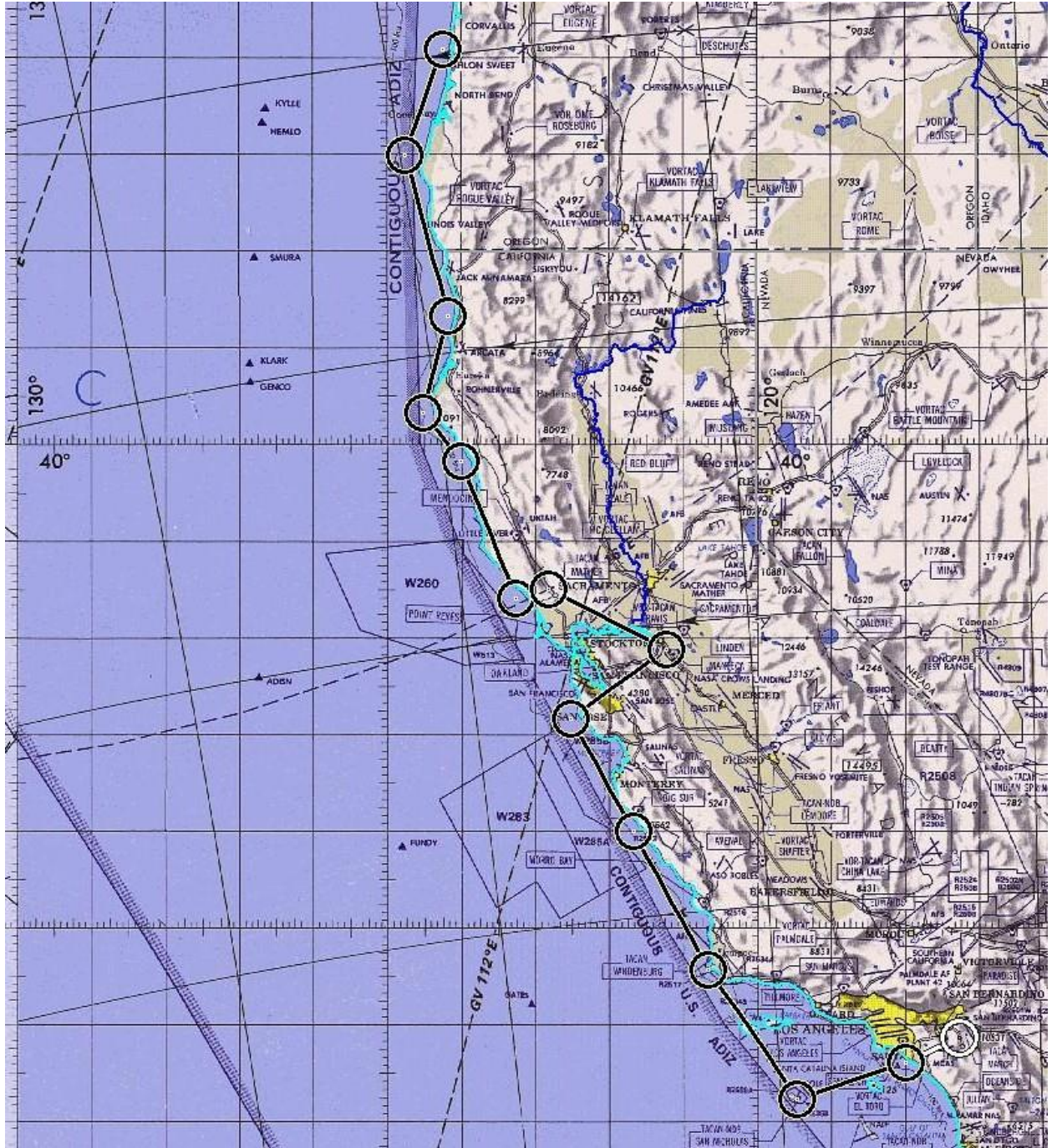


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Map 2 - Course and Crash Site

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Map 3 - Scheduled Return Route From Oregon to March Field

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### Weather at Time of Crash:

The following is a statement from 1st Lt Lloyd V. Mitchell, Air Corps, Base Weather Officer, Santa Rosa, California, 29 May 1945:

The weather at the time and the place of the accident is believed to be: Overcast at 500 to 1,000 feet MSL, which would mean that the clouds topped the mountains at this point. Visibility 0 to 1/2 mile in the clouds and 1 to 3 miles out of the clouds. There were probably some light rain showers along the coast at this time.

It is believed that the plane was flying in the clouds, where the visibility is believed to be 0 to 1/2 mile. The low visibility obscured the ground from the pilot.

### The Accident (Excerpts from official accident report):

On May 12, 1945 the mishap, B-24M made contact with several large redwood trees that extended above the top of a ridge or hill. At the time of the accident the aircraft was flying at approximately 1,000 to 1,200 feet MSL, straight and level and on a heading of 315° magnetic. The altitude of the plane at the time of the crash was almost identical to the elevation of the ground at the top of the ridge. The ridge elevation was approximately 1,200 feet AGL and had the trees not been in the way, it is possible that the plane could have just missed the ridge.

After hitting the trees, the plane started to break up and some parts of it struck the ground just below the ridge top. Other parts of the plane went over the top of the ridge and out into space, crashing through the trees and coming to rest at varying distances down the steep slope on the opposite side of the ridge. The entire airplane, except for the tail assembly and a small section of the fuselage up to about station 6 was completely torn to pieces and scattered through the dense forest and undergrowth.

All eleven crewmembers died in the crash.

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The crash site was found on May 19, 1945. The crash site is located at: 39° 52' N / 123° 54" W, South of Kenny, CA and North of Usal, CA, near Anderson Cliff and Mistake Point. The plane crashed just South East of the old "Wheeler Mill" site.



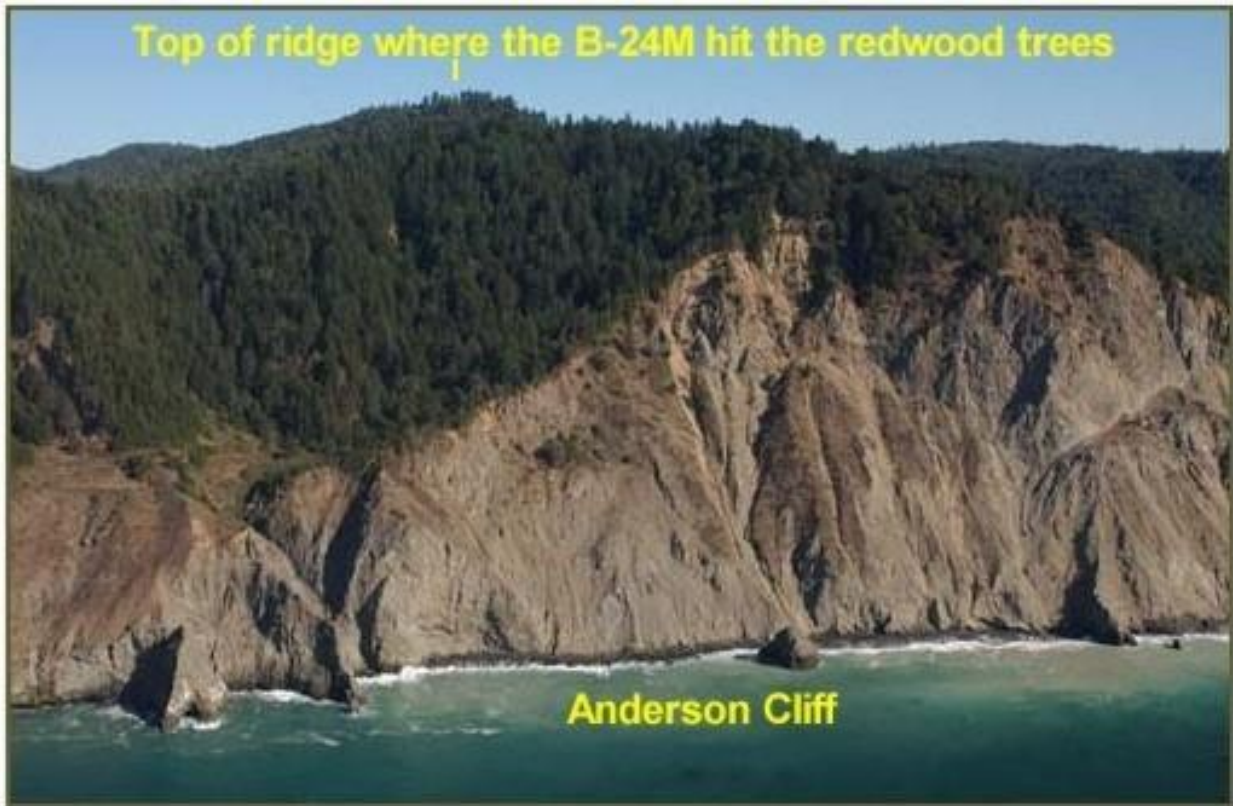
1945 Photo of Army Air Corp search airplane, flying over the crash site.

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Red dot is the location coordinates of the crash site -  
39 52.00 N / 123 54.00 W

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
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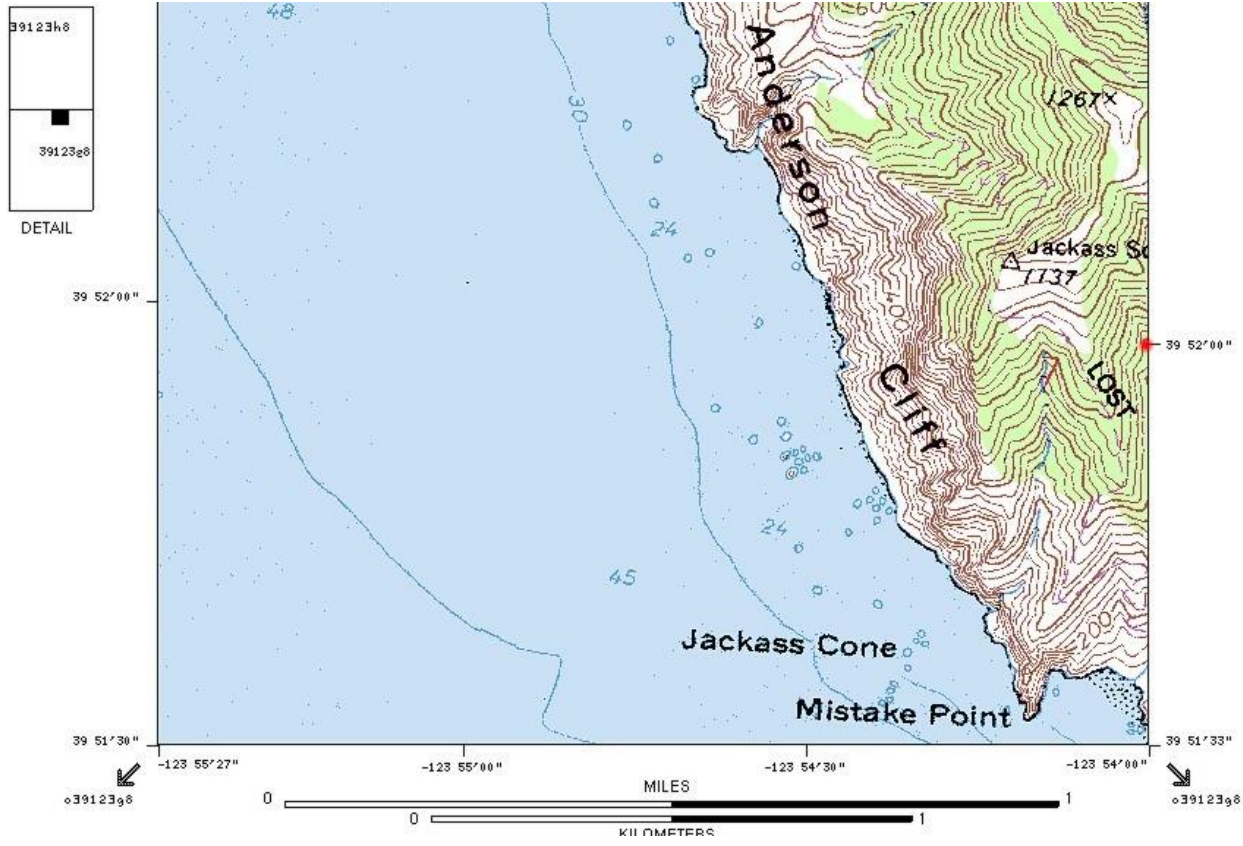
N39 52.04 W123 55.32

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N39 51.31 W123 54.65

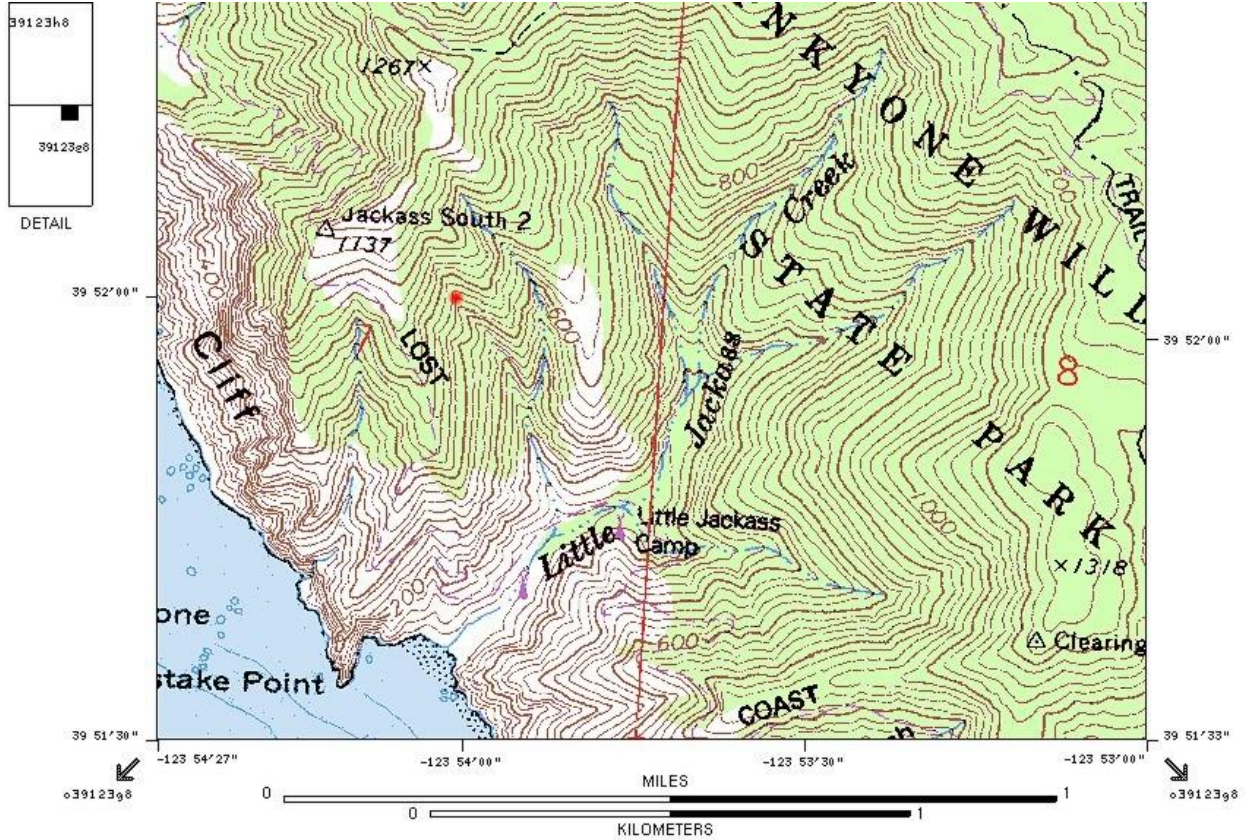
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Red dot is the location coordinates of the crash site -  
39 52.00 N / 123 54.00 W



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Red dot is the location coordinates of the crash site -  
39 52.00 N / 123 54.00 W

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### Possible causes of the crash (Excerpts from official accident report):

During the investigation, it was learned that the plane was to fly at 1,000 feet while out over the water doing its special work with the radar equipment if weather permitted. The crew was briefed to fly at 7,000 feet if weather prohibited satisfactory work at 1,000 feet.

1. The plane may have been held on a course at slightly above 1,000 feet under actual instrument conditions and the crew believed their position to be farther at sea. This could possibly have been caused through navigational error or through incorrect readings or malfunctioning of radio and or radar equipment used in plotting the course.
2. A second possibility is that while flying below the overcast, the ceiling, which was reported as very low by coastal weather observers, continued to drop as the flight progressed. After being forced very low in an effort to stay in the clear under the overcast the pilot may have started a gentle climb up into the overcast. If such were the case, the plane may have struck the ridge while in the overcast and while attempting to gain altitude for the remainder of the flight.
3. There were no witnesses to the accident and no reliable evidence was found which would indicate the exact time of the crash; however the crew made their last position report at 17:50 and they were instructed to report in every thirty minutes. The accident could have easily occurred at about the time (18:20) another position report was due to be given by the plane. The distance from the last position report given, to the scene of the crash, would have been covered in just about thirty minutes. This leads to the possibility that the pilot, in wanting to make an accurate report, may have seen the water through a break in the overcast while flying fairly low and nosed down just enough to break out into the clear. Had such been the case, his speed and path of flight would have been just about right to carry him across the coast line of the point of land upon which he hit and into the trees at the top of the ridge.

After discussing the accident with several B-24 pilots who were stationed at March Field with the pilot and crew of the crashed plane, the cause of the accident as mentioned under 3. above seems highly probable.

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## Recreation of accident using Microsoft Flight Simulator FS2004:

Fig 1 and Fig 2 has the accident report coordinates, heading, and altitude inserted with no weather, so a relationship between the airplane and the terrain can be established.

Fig 3 and Fig 4 has the accident report coordinates, heading, altitude, and weather inserted, so we can see what it must have been like for the crew to fly in the weather over the terrain.

The B-24M should be out over the ocean at this point.



Fig 1

# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

With no weather inserted we can see how precarious the flight path of the B-24 was.



Fig 2

# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

With the weather inserted, we can see, the flight crew could not even see the terrain they were flying over.



Fig 3

# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

This may have been the final view the crew had just prior to impact with the redwood trees.



Fig 4

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Poem by Carl Claunch  
(Father In-law of one of the crewmembers)

In their early twenties  
Eleven boys were born,  
Some in the city  
Some on the farm.

When the war broke out  
They took to the air,  
Each had his part  
With his buddies to share.

At last they were assigned  
To a B-24,  
When it came to flying;  
They held a high score.

So for Radar they picked  
This swell crew,  
And there was more to learn,  
Which they did do.

Here are the names  
And this is true,  
Of each one on  
This Radar crew.

Apedaile and Gold  
Were like pilots of old,  
With Trowbridge to keep them on the beam,  
With out ant trouble to them did it seem.

And Fuller with missions  
To help keep their position,  
They could with ease  
Have flown the seven seas.

(Continued on the next page)

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Brown and Peters, Radar to bear  
With Franze along, Their company to share,  
While Tippets the radio ace  
Sent all the positions, back to their base.

Lord the engineer was here and there  
And with his work, others would share,  
Hamilton and Oppenheim at their guns they would stand,  
Against an enemy from any land.

Then came their last flight,  
Last flight they said;  
This is the one,  
Most flyers do dread.

And at 2 P.M.  
On the twelfth day of May,  
Those eleven grand boys  
Went flying away.

We were told they were missing  
And prayers poured from our hearts,  
Only to have our prayers torn apart.

For one long week  
By night and by day,  
They kept up the search  
As our hopes faded away.

At last they told us  
What they had found;  
Eleven broken bodies, lifeless and still,  
All strewn about on that high rugged hill.

In a flag draped casket  
They went home to rest,  
Those eleven grand boys  
Gave Uncle Sam their best.

(Continued on the next page)



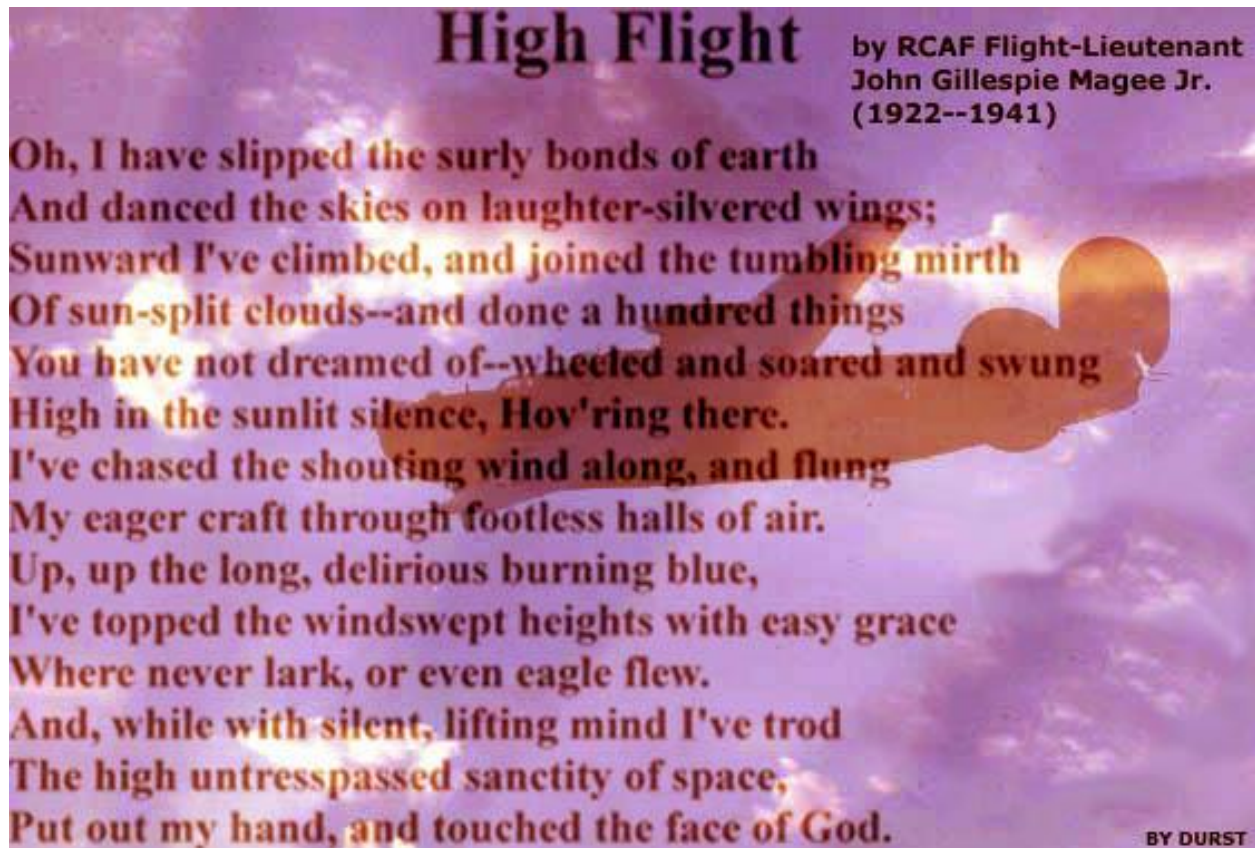
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They gave their full measure of devotion  
For the things they loved most,  
And now they are in heaven  
Where the Lord is there Host.

Yes, they are in heaven  
And on wings they still fly:  
If we are good Christians  
We'll meet them again by and by.

This does not do justice  
But it's the best I can do,  
In remembrance of  
This grand Radar crew.

*By Carl Claunch*



## THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

### Ride On the B-24J "Witchcraft":

On October 28, 2006 the Collings Foundation's B-17 (Nine O Nine) and B-24 (Witchcraft) visited The Middle Georgia Regional Airport in Macon, Georgia. Lowes Aviation hosted the visit of the WWII bombers.

After a cold and cloudy 120 mile drive, from my home in Powder Springs, Georgia, I finally arrived at the Middle Georgia Regional Airport. I had previously signed up for the ride on Witchcraft, but; I was in doubt as to whether or not the weather would allow the flight to go up at 16:30 (4:30 PM) as scheduled. The clouds finally cleared out in the early afternoon but the wind was blowing pretty hard and the windsock on the airfield was blowing straight out.

I had about four hours before the flight was to go up, so I spent the time touring both the B-17 and the B-24. Both these airplanes were amazing pieces of WWII history and had been beautifully restored to flying condition. I was also surprised to find just how little room the crews of these airplanes had to move around inside. To get from the back to the front of these airplanes one would have to negotiate a narrow catwalk through the bomb bay area; which must have been disconcerting to the crews if the bomb bay doors were open.

I also enjoyed talking to several other visitors who were signed up for the B-24 flight as well. We all had stories to tell of loved ones who bravely flew the B-24 during WWII. Some of us had family members who gave their lives while flying the B-24. Others had stories of family members shot down by the enemy and taken prisoners. I also got to meet and talk to a Pilot and two Flight Engineers who flew the B-24 during the war. In the end I walked away with a greater respect for the crews who flew the bombing missions of WWII.

At about 16:30 (4:30 PM) the crew of Witchcraft gave eight of us a safety briefing and then we boarded the airplane. The engines were started and then we taxied to the end of the runway. The crew performed an engine run prior to takeoff and found a propeller problem with number one propeller. The takeoff was aborted and we taxied back to the ramp for repairs. After changing the number one propeller governor we taxied back out to try again. This time the old B-24 roared and rumbled down the runway and went airborne around 17:30 (5:00 PM).

(Continued on the next page)

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To honor my uncle (Sgt Robert G. Lord) I brought along the United States Flag from 1945 that draped the casket at his funeral. My seat for takeoff was in the back of the airplane near the waist gunner positions. After takeoff the crew rang a bell giving us permission to move about the airplane. I took the flag, crawled around the right side of the lower ball turret, dropped down to the catwalk and worked my way forward through the bomb bay to the front of the plane. I had to climb up onto the flight deck area behind the pilots where my uncle Bob would have performed his duties, to include being the top turret gunner. I laid the flag down on a seat and took in the essence of being where uncle Bob must have been on that fatal day.

The B-24 flight lasted just thirty minutes, flying over the city of Macon, Georgia. The old bird was loud and windy inside and one of the passengers had his hat blow out the waist gunner window. The air was unstable so we bounced along in the turbulence, but I loved every minute of the flight. The crew rang the bell again so we had to return to our seats for landing and buckle in. We touched down at 18:00 (6:00 PM) to the smell of the rubber from the tires as we made contact with the runway and rolled out for a taxi back to the ramp.

The flight was officially over, but the memories of the flight and meeting other people with a spiritual connection with the B-24 will last me for ever. As I drove the 120 miles back home I could not help but run the events of the day over and over in my mind. A big heart felt thank you goes out to all the crew members who flew the bombers of WWII.

(See pictures of "Witchcraft" on the following pages)

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B-24 Crew Positions

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B-24H-15-FO "Witchcraft"



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### Past and Future Search:

Craig Fuller of AAIR Aviation Archaeological Investigation & Research put me in touch with Greg Stone in Santa Rosa, California. Greg was once a member of the Redwood Empire Aviation Historical Society.

Greg Stone and a friend Bill Pitts tried to find the B-24 crash site in 1996 for the second time. Although they did not find the site, Greg passed along to me several photos of the Anderson Cliff and the Wheeler road area. Greg and his nephew flew over the supposed crash site taking photos of the area, but could not pick out the site as the trees and vegetation had grown back since 1945. Greg and Bill searched the north side of Wheeler road in 1996 and said the vegetation was very thick, visibility was of short distance, and the terrain was walk-able but steep.

Greg also got to interview three local people who had some information about the crash:

Harold Lewis, who graded the Wheeler road for the county in 1945. Harold reported the plane hit the trees at the top of the ridge just to the right of Anderson Cliff. The plane then crashed into the canyon on the north side of the ridge, leaving part of the wing in a redwood tree on the north side of Wheeler road.

Mavis Bromaghim, who lived in Willits, California in 1996. Mavis told Greg that the plane was in a canyon on the north side of Wheeler road. Mavis also said that an engine ended up not too far from a cook shack at the old Wheeler Mill Site. In 1951 or 1952 Mavis's son Gary; who was a Boy Scout at the time, and other Boy Scouts helped scrap metal salvagers go in and recover the B-24 wreckage. The Scouts raised money to buy a piano for the church by doing this.

Gary Bromaghim, now (2006) lives in Fort Bragg, California. Gary was born in 1946 and was six years old at the time he helped the scrappers clean up the wreckage. Greg Stone got to interview Gary on October 6, 2006 and this is Gary's account of the crash and the events of the time. Gary's dad worked at the Wheeler Mill Site maintaining all of the mill equipment until 1960. In 1960 the Wheeler Mill was shut down and dismantled. Gary's dad supervised the dismantling of the mill and the family moved to Willits, California shortly there after. They were the last family to leave the area. Gary recalls that the crash site straddled the east-west portion of the road down into Wheeler, about 100 feet east of Don Etters cattle corral. The B-24, coming from the south and going north, first hit the tall trees about 60 feet up, on the south side of the road. By the time it crossed the road, it had lost altitude and hit the trees again at 30 feet up. A few small pieces of wreckage landed on the south side of the road. The main part of the wreckage landed on the north side of the road and spread out for approximately 200 feet down the canyon.

(Continued on the next page)

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Gary remembers seeing the B-24's tail numbers, but did not know what type of airplane it was at the time. There was a lot of tangled wreckage in the trees from all of the control cables and airplane wiring. Gary said if you were standing on the road, at the top end of the canyon, looking north, the wreckage was on the right hand side of the canyon, not down the middle of the canyon. While living in Wheeler in the 1950s, Gary and his friends went up to the crash site and carried one of the airplanes 50 caliber machine guns down to Wheeler. It took the kids a couple of days to carry the gun down the hill. Gary and his friends set the machine gun up in a play fort, positioned on the side of a hill, west of Gary's home. Gary's house was up the creek north of the Wheeler Mill Site. Gary and his family camped at the old Wheeler Mill Site in 1987. When he went back to find the machine gun, it was gone. Gary stated that when the scrappers came in and cleaned up the wreckage in 1951 or 1952, they cleaned up everything on the surface and in the trees. He also said the road down to the crash site may have been there at the time of the crash. If so, during the process of maintaining the road, some of the wreckage at the edge of the road on the north side may have been buried. There was also a major fire that burned that area in 1959.

If all goes well, Greg and I plan to go back to the crash site area in June 2007 and try again to find the site.

Due to some health issues I did not make it to the crash site in 2007 or 2008. Maybe some time in the future I'll get the chance to accomplish this goal.

(See the following pages for pictures of the location of the old "Wheeler Mill" site)

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945



Red dot is the B-24M crash site and the yellow dot is the old Wheeler Mill site location



THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945



Wheeler Mill site looking outwards to the Pacific Ocean

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945



Wheeler Mill site looking inwards from the Pacific Ocean

## THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW" MAY 12, 1945

### Final Remarks:

During World War II, the air over the continental United States was a virtual third front. These little-known statistics are alarming: The Army Air Force lost more than 7,100 aircraft in the United States to accidents in training and transportation. Such accidents claimed the lives of more than 15,530 pilots, crewmembers and ground personnel, and the stories of their deaths are largely forgotten. Sgt Robert Lord's training accident was one of those.

On the following page is a copy of one of the last letters he wrote to my dad (Bud) just thirteen days before his death. The following excerpt was taken from the letter and shows just how dangerous some of the training missions were:

"We went out to the air to ground gunnery range the other day and hit a target. We were flying 3 ft. off the ground. It stove the whole nose in, wrecked the bomb sight, and tore the antenna off the bottom. As a result of it we lost Batt for our pilot and now we've got a 1st Lt. as a pilot. He's a son-of-a-gun Bud. We're all trying to get Batt back now."

1st Lt. John W. Apedaile was the replacement pilot on the fatal crash and Lt. Jacob Battenberg escorted Sgt Robert Lord's remains back home for the funeral.

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945

4/29/45

Dear Bud

Received your swell letter this afternoon and was very glad to hear from you.

We're not doing much right now, still flying and going to ground school. We're on a radar crew now and almost finished here.

We went out to the air to ground gunnery range the other day and hit a target. We were flying 3 ft. off the ground. It stove the whole nose in, wrecked the bomb sight, and tore the antenna off the bottom. As a result of it we lost Batt for our pilot and now we've got a 1st Lt. as a pilot. He's a son-of-a-gun Bud. We're all trying to get Batt back now.

We might get Staff before we leave, here's hoping anyway.

Thanks a lot for the pictures, I'll try to send you some soon Bud.

I go to the show once in a while Bud; but not very often.

They cut a couple words out of your letter Bud. Where you said, "ever hear of \_\_\_\_\_" and "it's a lot nicer here than \_\_\_\_\_".

Maurine is swell and so is every one else Bud. We all miss you more every day Bud. God I'd love to see you again. It's going on three years for the both of us now huh!

I figure I've got three hundred and fifty hours in B-24's Bud. Wait till we get through; I might be where you are or in the C B1 before long, here's hoping. I'm fed up with this chicken s\_\_t, I've killed 2 years over here and it's about time I got over there. What do you have for ribbons Bud?

We get paid tomorrow and I'm going to have some big pictures taken, send mom some flowers for Mother's Day. Anything I can send you Bud?

We went to the show and saw "Patrick the Great" with Donald O'Conner Bud. Pretty darn good though.

Well Bud, this is about all for now. Write when ever you can and if there's anything you ever need, just let me know.

Take it easy and here's hoping we see each other soon.

Your loving brother, Bob

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
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Sgt Robert G. Lord's "Aerial Gunner" wings, dog tags, and rank insignia.

THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"  
MAY 12, 1945



Sgt Robert G. Lord's burial flag

In Memory

"So young and tender was his heart,  
It seemed so long we were apart,  
How can we ever, count the joy,  
He brought to us, our darling boy."

Ruth (Lord) Pelton (Sister)

# THE LOSS OF THE "RADAR CREW"

## MAY 12, 1945

### Credits:

**Harold F. Lord (Bud)** (Robert Lord's brother), my father who shared countless personal moments, stories, and photos of uncle Bob (Robert G. Lord) with me. Listening to my dad tell stories about his WWII experiences and looking at his old photos of C-47, B-24, and B-29 airplanes with their nose art got me to thinking about uncle Bob and his experiences as a B-24 Flight Engineer. I am a C-130 Flight Engineer myself, and even though I never new uncle Bob we are still fellow Engineers, just from different eras. I felt a need to learn more about my uncle and the circumstances that took his life, hence this project.

**Ruth Pelton** (Robert Lord's sister), my aunt who provided me an endless supply of newspaper articles about the crash, photos of uncle Bob in his uniform, high school and military school completion certificates to include his B-24 Heavy Bombardment Crew completion certificate. The information I received from aunt Ruth helped inspire me to continue with this project.

**National Archives and Records Administration/National Personnel Records Center**, who provided me information releasable under the Freedom of Information Act about Robert Lord's military career, his assignment to the 420th AAF BU, at March Field, and some information on the B-24 crash. At this point, I still do not know the model or Serial Number of the B-24, nor do I know exactly where the accident site is.

**Craig Fuller of AAIR Aviation Archaeological Investigation & Research**, who provided me with the key information to complete this project. Craig sent me a copy of the Army Air Forces - Report of Major Accident Report about the B-24 crash of 44-41995. Craig also provided me with a newspaper article from the Redwood Journal in Ukiah, Mendocino County, California called "Eleven Die in Air Crash Near Usal. This article helped confirm the coordinates of the crash site. At this point, I know the model and serial number of the B-24, the circumstances that surrounded the crash, and the coordinates for the crash site. Now to do some map work.

**Dan Williams** and **Terry Newhouse**, Navigators with the Lockheed martin C-130 ATS at Dobbins ARB, Georgia, who helped me research the accident site coordinates and come up with satellite photos, jogs and topographical maps. At this point, we take the coordinates from the Accident Report and start gathering the satellite photos, jogs and topographical maps necessary to pinpoint the site and understand the roughness of the terrain around the site.

**Greg Stone**, who has passed along eye witness accounts of facts and events relating to the crash site. I also thank Greg for all the photos and maps he has sent me concerning the site. Without Greg's help I may not have been able to finish this project.

# THE LOSS OF THE “RADAR CREW” MAY 12, 1945

Mavis and Gary Bromaghim, who shared first hand information of the of the B-24M crash site with Greg Stone.

The B-24J “Witchcraft” Flight Crew and the Collings Foundation, who gave me the most memorable B-24 flight experience.

SMSgt Clifford F. Lord (Ret)  
Vietnam Veteran and C-130 Flight Engineer

Report completed November 8, 2008



SMSgt Clifford F. Lord, retired USAF with engraved memorial paver honoring his next of kin, Cpl Harold F. Lord, Jr..