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PB4Y-1 Liberator Bureau Number 31992

USN
VB-102



John Harding 1969

Pilot [Lt. Commander Bruce Avery Van Voorhis](#) (MIA / KIA) Aberdeen, WA
Co-Pilot Lt(jg) Herschel A. Oehlert Jr. (MIA / KIA)
Crew Lt(jg) Jack Orville Traub (MIA / KIA)
Crew ACOM Charles D. Linzmeyer (MIA / KIA)
Crew ACRM Johnny A. Renner (MIA / KIA)
Crew AMM1 George Charles Stephens, 3166113 (MIA / KIA) SD
Crew AOM2 Donald B. Clogston (MIA / KIA)
Crew AMM2 Charles A. Martinelli (MIA / KIA)
Crew AMM2 Henry Ford Watson, 3824481 (MIA / KIA) CA
Crew AMM3 Frederick C. Barker Jr. (MIA / KIA)
Crew ARM3 Richard W. Roscoe (MIA / KIA)
MIA [July 6, 1943](#)

Mission History

Commander Van Voorhis volunteered for reconnaissance mission to [Kapingamarangi](#) to report enemy movements. Took off at 4:20am from [Carney Airfield \(Bomber 2\)](#) on [Guadalcanal](#) on a combined patrol and bombing mission. After takeoff, there was no radio contact with the bomber.

Over [Kapingamarangi Lagoon](#), the bomber came under anti-aircraft fire and aerial opposition. Van Voorhis made six ground attacks on the base, attacking the radio station on Hare Island, and claimed one plane in the air shot down, and three seaplanes destroyed in the water. Likely caught by its own bomb blast or accurate anti-aircraft fire, it crashed into the lagoon only 700 meters from the base, near the beach area it was attacking. Everyone aboard was killed.

Failed to return at the estimated time of arrival and was declared missing in action. For his actions, [Van Voorhis earned the Medal of Honor](#), only navy PB4Y-1 pilot.

Search

Special search mission failed to find any trace of the bomber.

Wreckage

Remains is situ in [Kapingamarangi Lagoon](#).

Hugh Reilly / MV Westward adds:

"There were many large, identifiable pieces scattered over an area about the size of a basketball court in 20-30' of water. Presumably these scattered pieces were the result of a crash landing. An informed viewer should not have any difficulty confirming the type of aircraft. The locals described it as a U.S. aircraft; I recall also being told that the pilot/crew were captured & killed by the Japanese [according to locals]."

Memorials

Officially, the entire crew was declared dead on July 6, 1943. Two crew members are buried at [Honolulu Memorial Cemetery \(Punchbowl\)](#). Stephens at Plot P Row 0 Grave 921. Watson at Plot P Row 0 Grave 544.

At [Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery](#) is a group burial at [section 79 graves 279-281](#) buried on March 15, 1950, including Barker, Linzmeyer, Martinelli, Oehlert, Renner and Van Voorhis.

At Arlington National Cemetery, Van Voorhis has a memorial marker at section MI site 86. Orville is buried at section 34 site 3546. At Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Roscoe is buried at Fort section C-4 site 7964.

References

[We Flew Alone](#) covers this loss

Thanks to Jim Sawruk and Minoru Kamada for additional information

[The Honolulu Advertiser "photos confirm story of WWII's unluckiest plane" August 1969](#)

Contribute Information

Do you have photos or additional information to add?



PB4Y

-1



MIA
Remains
Recovered



Photo
Archive



Medal of
Honor