

*Sam*

164 Dora Street  
Hurstville 2220 NSW  
3 September 1994

The AOC  
RAAF Command  
Glenbrook 2773.  
NSW.

Dear Sir,

B24 Liberator "Beautiful Betsy"

I refer to the abovementioned aircraft the wreckage of which has been found at Biloela, Queensland.

In December 1943 this aircraft under command of Captain Craig USAF, was assigned to an Australian Army Parachutist Test Team by 380 Bomber Group, USAF to assess if parachutists (using statichutes) and stores (using storpedoes) could be safely dropped from liberator aircraft.

It was necessary to modify the aircraft, the waist guns were removed and the camera hatch in the botton of the plane was used to exit from the aircraft as there were no doors. Captain Carey who was in charge of the team designed and made a shovel shaped slippery dip slide to guide parachutists through the camera hatch. In addition jump control red and green signal lights and a static line were installed. After experimenting with a wooden dummy, known as ACW Wood, solo and stick jumps as well as stores drops were successfully completed by the team. This was the first occasion live drops had been made from a liberator aircraft using statichutes. Beautiful Betsy then proceeded to Fraser Island where experimental water jumps were made into Lake McKenzie.

The successful tests carried out with Beautiful Betsy enabled Services Reconnaissance Department (Z Special Unit) to use the exit procedures evolved from these tests to insert parties of operatives and their supplies into areas behind Japanese lines. Initially 380 Bomber Group supplied aircraft but later our own liberators from 200 Special Flight RAAF carried out the drops.

Beautiful Betsy is part of the history of Z Special Unit and it would seem appropriate if some part of the wreckage, such as the slide, the exit lights or static line could be made available to our Association for lodgment with our exhibit in the Australian War Memorial.

Captain S.W. Carey (Professor), Captain M.G. Lees MC and myself are the only survivors of the test team and we would favouably consider any invitation to attend a commemorative ceremony should transport be made available.

Yours faithfully,

LIBERATOR B24

Vogelkop area

19/3/44

Passenger on B24 aircraft.

Departed from Darwin for the Vogelkop area, Dutch New Guinea.

Reported that a flash was seen near Kakas in the Vogelkop area. Thought possible that this was aircraft striking a mountain.

6109 SGT. CLAPINSON, H.W. (1st T.A.F.- H.Q. D.P.S. for duty)  
(S.R.D.)

LIBERATOR B24 42-72801

A Press report from Batavia which referred to the discovery of wreckage and bodies in the Mountains near Fak Fak, D.N.G., was considered to relate to this aircraft since there was no record of another large aircraft lost in the vicinity. A subsequent report from SEAC confirmed this by referring to clothing marked with the name of the captain of the aircraft. In view of the visit to the area by O6-16 which was planned, no further enquiry through the Dutch was considered to be called for.

A report has now been received from O6-16 which states that the incomplete remains of fifteen persons were recovered, a flying jacket marked "O.H. Martens" and some Australian badges definitely identifying the crew. The wreckage had been located by an Indonesian Medical Officer in the Baham Mts. and the bodies removed by him to Fak Fak where they were taken possession of by the AWGU representative of the party.

None of the remains has been identified, except a portion of a body in the jacket referred to. One body was complete but could not be identified. The remainder were only a heap of bones but were sorted and the presence of 15 was established with the assistance of the medical officer.

The RAAF member of the crew has been reclassified "Killed" in air operations on the date of the crash. The Army personnel on board are believed to have been presumed dead already. AFHQ will convey the report to AFWESPAC and will advise the U.S. authorities to communicate with DWGS (Melbourne) direct, with respect to burial of Martens and the unidentified U.S. members of the crew.

The crew and passengers were as follows:-

USAAC 1st Lt. Otto How Martens (437245)  
2nd Lt. Ernest Roger Hedges (681411)  
2nd Lt. Clifford Mike Odegaard (682551)  
Tech. Sgt. William Tare Rabbitt Jr. (32535761)  
Tech. Sgt. Arthur J...Schechtel (12157189)  
Staff Sgt. Charles Fox Burtis (32427593)  
Staff Sgt. Henry Peter Flanagan (31231640)  
Staff Sgt. Howard William Musen (16156517)  
Staff Sgt. Walter Roger Dellinger (34085818)

AIF . VX16623 Cpl. McPherson, J.N.  
. QX6556 Cpl. Filewood, A.W.  
. NX134272 Cpl. Taylor, M.C.  
. WX4211 Cpl. Marshall, E.C.  
. NX134938 L/Sgt. Ireland, K.D.

RAAF 6109 Sgt. Clapinson, H.W.

CASE CLOSED  
29.10.46. (Amendment List No.10)

RAAF HISTORICAL SECTION  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE  
AIR FORCE OFFICE  
A-LG-02  
RUSSELL OFFICES  
CANBERRA A.C.T. 2600

15 Dec 1992