

Organizational Information

870th Bombardment Squadron, 497th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy)
73rd Bombardment Wing, 20th Air Force
Isley Field, Saipan, Mariana Islands

<u>Aircraft Manufacturer</u>	<u>Aircraft Type</u>	<u>Aircraft Name</u>	<u>Aircraft Tail #</u>
Boeing Airplane Company, Wichita, Kansas	B-29-40-BW	Superfortress	42-24616

Facts and Circumstances

This grave marks the final resting place for nine individuals who were killed while aboard this aircraft that had departed Isley Field, Saipan, Mariana Islands enroute to the Nakajima Aircraft Factory, Japan and a bombardment mission. Information discovered revealed that on this date, clouds and high winds forced seventy-six B-29 aircraft from the 73rd Bombardment Wing to divert from their primary targets, which were the Musashino and Nakajima aircraft plants in the Tokyo area. Fifty-six of the B-29 aircraft employ radar to attack urban areas in Tokyo, and six attack alternates and targets of opportunity. Fighter opposition is the heaviest to date. Five B-29s are downed by Japanese fighters and four others ditch at sea or crash-land in the Marianas.

Combat actions for this date were as follows: 8th Air Force: Effective this date, General Doolittle, Commanding General, is relieved of duty in the European Theater of Operations and assigned to Headquarters Army Air Forces, Washington. He is relieved by General Kepner. 11th Air Force: The Eleventh and Fleet Air Wing Four execute the heaviest and most successful joint mission to date. Twelve B-24s bomb shipping targets at Kataoka naval base, and fly photo reconnaissance over East and West Paramushiru on return trip. Sixteen Attu-based B-25s take off. One aborts while the others hit shipping between Kashiwabara and Kataoka. Heavy AA fire claims one B-25. A B-24 and a B-25 force land in the USSR. Far East Air Force: B-24s bomb airfield in Canton area. A-20s and fighter bombers hit Cagayan Valley targets and support ground action in battle zones throughout Luzon. B-24s hit Impasugong, Kalasungay, and Malaybalay and B-25s in support of ground forces attack Kibawe and Tagolaan. B-24s bomb Makassar ship basins, shore targets at Balikpapan on Borneo, and Limboeng airfield on Celebes. B-25s, with fighter escort, hit Kari and communication targets of opportunity on Formosa. 14th Air Force: Nineteen B-25s and four P-47s attack bridges at Fengstun and Pinyang, on the Song Chu River, and North of Singtai (Pinyang target is destroyed), hit Yungfengshih and Chingshuping, and bomb airfield at Paoching. 100-120 fighter bombers pounding targets of opportunity over South and East China, disrupt enemy movement and supply lines. 9th Air Force: 9th Bombardment Division redesignated 9th Air Division. No operations for Tactical Air Commands and 9th Air Division. 7th Air Force: Eleven Guam-based B-24s bomb airfield on Marcus in the morning. During afternoon nineteen B-24s flying in two forces, hit airfields on Param and Moen. 20th Air Force: Forty-two B-29s hit airfields at Matsuyama, Usa, Miyazaki, and Kanoya. 302 others bomb Tokuyama naval fuel station and coal yards, Otake oil refinery, and Amami-O-Shima naval oil storage facilities. B-29s claim ten aircraft destroyed. All remains recovered were examined and efforts made to segregate and effect individual identification, but it was not possible due to the circumstances of the crash and commingling of remains. Casualty date was 27 January 1945 and these remains were returned to Zachary Taylor National Cemetery for interment on 10 May 1945. Missing Air Crew Report # 11558 covers the loss of this aircraft.

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>MI</u>	<u>Suf</u>	<u>Branch of Service</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Crew Position</u>
Bena	Joseph		Jr	US Army Air Forces	2Lt	Navigator
Campbell	James	F		US Army Air Forces	Sgt	Left Waist Gunner
Connell	John	J		US Army Air Forces	SSgt	Central Fire Control
Hardy	Graydon	V		US Army Air Forces	2Lt	Engineer
Hassell	Cecil	V		US Army Air Forces	SSgt	Radio Operator
McDonell	Walter	S		US Army Air Forces	Capt	Pilot
Pleus	William			US Army Air Forces	1Lt	Bombardier
Preisser	Albert	W		US Army Air Forces	Sgt	Right Waist Gunner
Williams	David	C	Jr	US Army Air Forces	1Lt	Co-Pilot

Other individuals on this aircraft/mission

Below two individuals parachuted to safety only to be captured as prisoners of war. Both were repatriated to the United States after the war

Radar Observer
Carpenter, Vera D, SSgt, US Army Air Forces

Tail Gunner
Lodovici, Olinto F, Sgt, US Army Air Forces

Nickname of Aircraft: "Haley's Comet"