

## DUMBO<sup>5</sup> RESCUE MISSIONS –

After every mission, the Americans sent out flying boats to the areas in which their planes had fought, searching for and rescuing crews surviving aboard life rafts. Although their duties were extremely hazardous, the crews of these flying boats performed their missions gallantly and there arose few occasions during the war when groups of men so consistently exposed themselves to multiple dangers. Japanese pilots regarded them as unusually courageous.

Flying their big, black Consolidated PBY-5 Catalinas (sea planes called the Black Cats), crews showed the same determination, successfully completing each assigned mission, whether it was to rescue one man, a flight crew or survivors of a mortally wounded ship.



These rescue missions, which frequently entailed circling or landing in an area under attack were better known as *Dumbo* flights. This name, appropriate for the big-winged Catalinas so successful in rescue work, was taken from the 1941 Disney animated film of that name. Such flights were given the code name *GARDENIA*.

## THE SEARCH

6 May - Field orders were issued by the Office of the Intelligence Office at the Headquarters for the 72nd Bombardment Squadron the day after the incident on 6 May dispatching "two B-24 type aircraft." They went from the base at Los Negros directly to the area of the last reported sighting cruising at 8000 feet at 160MPH. They dropped to 1000 feet and covered the planned search area at altitudes between 500 and 1000 feet. There were no sightings. The weather conditions and visibility were less than ideal and the search planes returned to base.

7 May - The following day Pilot Lt. Finnel from the 23rd Bombardment Squadron went to the same area arriving at 0945. Two hours later on the last leg of their search at an altitude of 800 feet they found the life raft and two survivors. They tried placing emergency IFF calls to *GARDENIA* without success. They tried again at higher altitudes, again with no success. They tried calling the air fields of Momote at Los Negros and Hollandia and Aitape on New Guinea on a variety of frequencies but there was no reply.

The 23rd had been involved in a strike on Biak earlier that day and the searches managed to contact their returning planes to have one of them divert to Hollandia to make sure *GARDENIA* was coming. Radio contact remained poor for everyone but at 1400 the returning strike team reported that *GARDENIA* had been informed but there was no estimated time of arrival. Getting low on fuel, at 1430 Lt. Linnel dropped an emergency radio, a wooden case containing additional food, water, sea markers and other supplies and an additional raft all of which were recovered by the survivors and set course for Hollandia.



P-40 Warhawk

Having looked into the faces of the survivors Lt. Linnel was burning with the desire to move this rescue along. As soon as he landed in Hollandia he began pushing everyone he could. He was informed that *GARDENIA* had been two hours late in returning from a rescue mission of a P-40 fighter pilot. However, two Black-Cats had gone out arriving in the missing B-24 area at 1530 but unfortunately failed to locate the raft. It had now been two days of waiting for the survivors.

<sup>5</sup> A more detailed look at Black Cat Rescue Missions and several of their harrowing stories can be found in Appendix III.

8 May – At 1145 GARDENIA and two P-38 Lightning escorts set out to search for Major Cass' survivors. The tenacious Lt. Linnel was asked to go with them but his plan was down for engine repair.



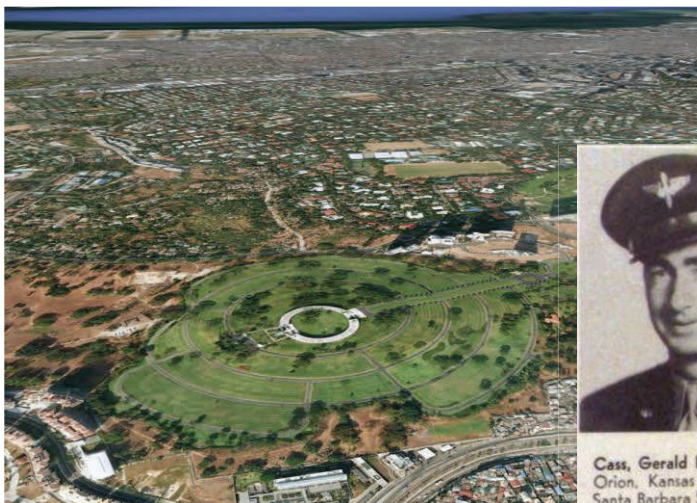
The raft was located later that afternoon and Black Cat Pilot Captain Paul L. Driscoll reported that two survivors were recovered – Pilot 1st Lt. Willard Love Horn and Co-pilot Flight Officer Joseph Brocato. The survivors were taken to Hollandia by Black Cat in fair condition. The remainder of the crew continued to be listed as missing in action.

As time passed it became clear that the only survivors of B-24J 42-110109 were the men who were on the bridge when the abandon ship order was given by 72nd Bombardment Squadron Commanding Officer Major Cass who perished trying to control the plane and save his crew.

Willard Horn and Joseph Broncato recovered from their physical injuries and moved on with their lives. Willard returned to his home in Sarpy, Nebraska, resuming his work as a plumber, gas/steam pipefitter and well driller. He married Hazel Augusta Holmgren of Kandiyohi, Minnesota, on 14 September 1946 in Santiago, Chile. They moved to Okaloosa, Florida, in their retirement years. Willard passed away on 12 November 1989 at the age of 70. Hazel lived in Okaloosa until her passing in 1999 at the age of 86.

Broncato returned to his home in New York City, relocating to the towns of Plainview, Massapequa and Bethpage on Long Island in the early 1980's until he passed away on 6 April 1986 at the age of 67.

The other nine crew members were officially declared killed in action several months later and their sacrifices were memorialized at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (also known as Fort William McKinley Cemetery) at Fort Bonifacio in the Metro Manila National Capital Region of the Philippines<sup>6</sup>.



Cass, Gerald M.  
Orion, Kansas  
Santa Barbara State College  
University of Colorado

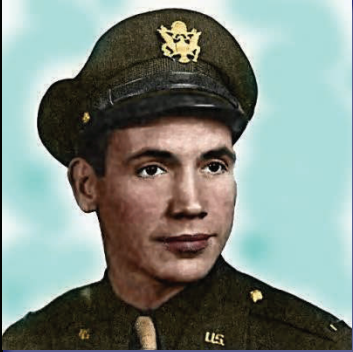



CASPIE ANTONIO	PFC	45 INF REGT (P)	PHILIPPINES
CASOCOT ALJANDRO	PVT	57 INF REGT (P)	PHILIPPINES
CASS GERALD M	MAJ	72 BOMB SQ 5 BOMB GP (H)	KANSAS
CASS WILLIAM	SGT	440 CREW CO (AVN)	COLORADO
CASSEDAY ROBERT V	PVT	PHIL ENGR DEPOT	COLORADO
CASSELL ROBERT M	PVT	52 INF 7 DIV	CALIFORNIA
CASSEL ROBERT E	1 LT	8 BOMB SQ 5 BOMB GP (H)	ILLINOIS
CASIDY KENNETH L	2 LT	65 BOMB SQ 45 BOMB GP (H)	MASS
CASMEER BENJAMIN J	S SGT	495 BOMB SQ 7 BOMB GP (H)	N.Y.
CATANARES RUFINO	PFC	12 MED BN (P)	PHILIPPINES
CASTELL CARROLL W	1 LT	19 BOMB SQ 22 BOMB GP (M)	MARYLAND
CASTELL FRANK	SGT	301 INF 8 DIV	TENNESSEE



In addition to being the hero pilot of this ill-fated flight, Major Gerald Cass, beloved Commanding Officer of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment Group, was memorialized by his officers and enlisted men who named the Momote Air Field baseball field on **Los Negros** Island in his honor as "Cass Field." The field is still there today.

<sup>6</sup> The staggering overall cost of the WWII air war is summarized in Appendix IV.

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION	
	<a href="#">Anthony J. Goode</a>
	Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army Air Forces
	Service # O-814295
	72nd Bomber Squadron, Heavy, 5th Bomber Group, 13 <sup>th</sup> Air Force
	Entered the Service from: Massachusetts Died: 5-May-1944 Missing in Action or Buried at Sea Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery Manila, Philippines
Awards: Air Medal, Purple Heart	
	
<b>72<sup>nd</sup> Bombardment Squadron - 1944</b>	

The Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in the Philippines occupies 152 acres on a prominent plateau, visible at a distance from the east, south and west. It contains the largest number of graves of our military dead of World War II, a total of 17,202, most of whom lost their lives in operations in New Guinea and the Philippines. The headstones are aligned in 11 plots forming a generally circular pattern, set among masses of a wide variety of tropical trees and shrubbery.



The chapel, a white masonry building enriched with sculpture and mosaic, stands near the center of the cemetery. In front of it on a wide terrace are two large hemicycles. Twenty-five mosaic maps recall the achievements of the American armed forces in the Pacific, China, India and Burma. On rectangular Trani limestone piers within the hemicycles are inscribed the Tablets of the Missing containing 36,285 names. Rosettes mark the names of those since recovered and identified. Carved in the floors are the seals of the American states and its territories. From the memorial and other points within the cemetery there are impressive views over the lowlands to Laguna de Bay and towards the distant mountains.



