

www.bfrg.info

Recollections

of the

Burleson Family Research Group

*BFRG Face Book Page
COUSINING*

National
POW/MIA
RECOGNITION DAY

Honoring their **sacrifice.**
Earnestly **searching** for those still missing.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2024 | #OURPROMISE | WWW.DPAA.MIL

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

2024



The Burleson's Missing in Action

From 1941 – 1945 the world was aflame in global warfare. Twelve million American men and women were mobilized to extinguish the flame. Burlesons from across the United States answered the call, representing all branches of service. Their sacrifices were made on land, in the air and on the sea of both the European and Pacific battlefronts. Most served and survived the rigors of war. Many returned wounded, physically and mentally, from their wartime experiences. A far too many died in combat or later from their war injuries. And a small number of Burlesons were lost—still unaccounted for—never to return home.

Previous articles have focused on those Burlesons who fought, returned or died in conflict. They have included those wounded and prisoners of war. Not to be forgotten are the Burlesons who remain missing—all are from WWII—3 Army Air Forces and four Navy service members. They now join with the honored Burleson veterans who have been featured in the Burleson Family Research Group's *Recollections*.

The Missing in Action (MIAs) Burlesons are those recorded in the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's (DPAA) database. The DPAA is the U.S. government's agency responsible for providing the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation. The DPAA searches for missing personnel from recent conflicts.¹



At present, more than 81,500 Americans remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars/other conflicts. Out of the more than 81,500 missing, 75% of the losses are located in the Indo-Pacific, and over 41,000 of the missing are presumed lost at sea (i.e., ship losses, known aircraft water losses, etc.).²

The Burleson MIAs presented here represent six different states: Alabama, two from Texas, North Carolina, California, Arkansas and Florida. They ranged in age from 18 to 28 years old. All but two were single. Six fought in the Pacific theater and one in Europe, in some of the most historic, and significant battles of World War II including Guadalcanal and the Gulfs of Leyte and Luzon. One was part of the crew transporting the first nuclear bomb and another experienced the most destructive typhoon ever faced by the U. S. Navy. There is no proper or preferred method to

¹ Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), Vision, Mission and Values. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.dpaa.mil/About/Vision-Mission-Values/>.

² DPAA, Our Missing, Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaOurMissing>.

recognizes the order of the Burlasons MIAs—not by service, rank or age. They are honored here in the chronological order of the date they went missing.

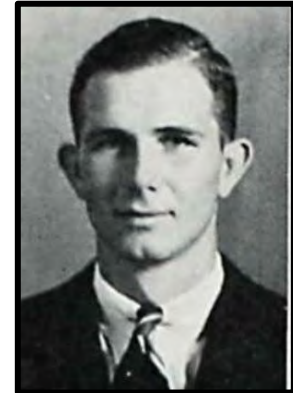


1942

Robert Bruce Burleson – 7 August 1942

Robert (also known as Bruce) was a native of Marion County, Alabama, and was born 11 December 1917, the son of Anderson Russell Burleson (1878-1959) and Clara Pearl Cash (1882-1943). After graduating high school in Ensley, he attended the Engineering School at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama.³

In May 1940, after two and a half years of study, Robert volunteered for the Army Air Service. He attended flight training in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and at Lowry Field near Denver, Colorado, where he received bombardier training. He was then transferred to Barksdale Field near Shreveport, Louisiana, where he served as a bombardier instructor. In March 1941 Robert received his wings and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Corps.⁴



*Robert B. Burleson -
Freshman year, Alabama
Polytechnic Institute,
1938*



Aviation Cadet Burleson



Cadets John R. Burke and Robert B. Burleson



Cadet Burleson

³ Newspapers.com, 1Lieut. Bruce Burleson Missing in Action. Marion County News, 20 August 1942. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/551914259/?match=1&terms=Robert%20Bruce%20Burleson>.

⁴ Ibid.



Cadet Burleson's Aviation Class 41-A



*93rd Bombardment Squadron Patch,
917th Wing Public Affairs Office 2009*

He was assigned to the 93rd Bombardment Squadron of 5th Air Force Division. 2LT Burleson arrived in the Dutch East Indies where the 93rd was fighting in defense of Java. They were forced to evacuate to Australia when the Japanese captured the island. In March 1942 he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant.⁵

⁵ Ibid.



They Fought With What They Had by John Shaw

John Shaw's painting, *They Fought With What They Had* is a representation of Captain Pease and the crew of the *Why Don't We Do This More Often*.

On 6 August 1942, Lieutenant Burluson, as the aircraft bombardier, and the crew took off from Port Moresby, Australia, on an early morning bombing mission against Lae, Papua New Guinea, but their aircraft lost an engine near Rabaul and were forced to return to Australia. What happened next is legendary. Though the crew was not scheduled to fly the next day, and there were no serviceable aircraft available, the aircraft commander, Captain Harl Pease, Lieutenant Burluson and the crew located a crippled, training aircraft that was no longer suitable for combat. The crew located missing parts and joined in the effort to make the bomber flight worthy. Captain Pease urged that his crew be allowed to join in the bombing of Rabaul in the support of U.S. Marine Corps amphibious landings in the Battle of Guadalcanal. The entire crew, including Lieutenant Burluson volunteered.⁶



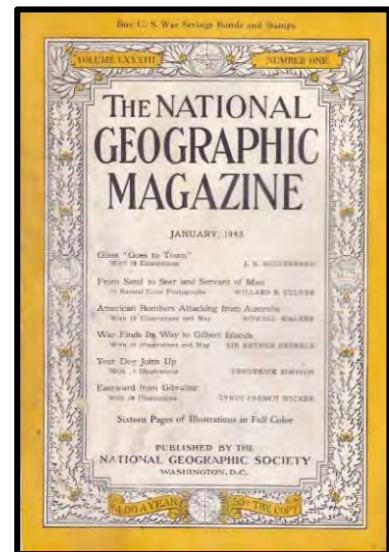
Photo of LT Burluson's aircraft near Port Moresby. Photo by Bruce Hoy USAAF 1942

⁶ B-17E, Why Don't We Do This More Often, Serial Number 41-2429, Pacific Wrecks. Retrieved on 8 July 2024 from <https://pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/b-17/41-2429.html>.

On 7 August 1942, with only three hours of rest, the crew took off from Charter Towers, Australia, flying as part of a larger formation on a bombing mission against enemy holdings at Vunakanau Airdrome in Rabaul, New Britain. One bomber crashed on takeoff and two more dropped out of the mission due to mechanical problems. With their “patched-up” B-17, the crew engaged Japanese Zeroes (several shot down by Pease’s crew) and released their bombs over the target. After departing the target area, this aircraft began to lag behind. The pilot steered toward cloud cover but before reaching the clouds, was intercepted by more enemy fighters. Fire ignited one of the bomber's bomb-bay tanks, which caused *Why Don't We Do This More Often* to unload its flaming tank but then crashed shortly thereafter. Despite other aircraft in the formation trying to escort them home, the crew was last seen burning and falling to the surface.⁷

The January 1943 issue of *The National Geographic Magazine* contained an article by Howell Walker, titled American Bombers Attacking from Australia. Howell, as an embedded journalist, lived, ate and flew with the American B-17 crews where Lieutenant Burleson was stationed. Walker flew with the crew of “*Tojo’s Physic*.” In concluding his article, Howell stated,

I lay awake for some time, thinking of those American airmen disappearing into the darkness and cold of early morning to—to what? I thought of how casually they had got up and dressed. They had made it look as if they were setting out on a harmless training flight. I never saw them again.



January 1943 article titled “American Bombers Attack from Australia”

The final paragraph was a Communique detailing LT Burleson’s final mission on 7 August 1942 and the lost crews.⁸

Lieutenant Burleson and six other crew members died in the crash:⁹

- David W. Brown – Gunner
- Chester M. Czechowski – Bombardier
- Alvar A. Liimatainen – Radio Operator
- Rex E. Matson – Engineer
- Fred W. Oettel – Gunner
- Hal Pease Jr. – Pilot
- Richard M. Wood - Navigator

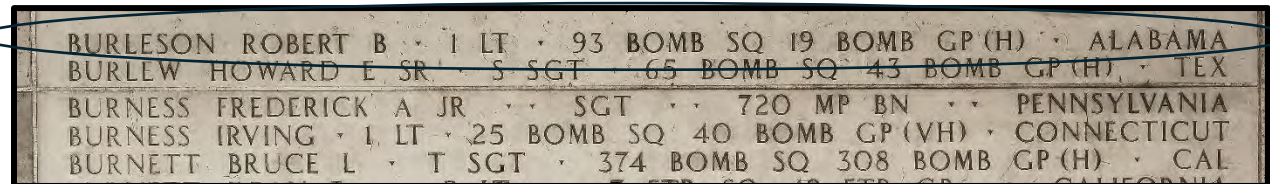
⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *The National Geographic Magazine*, January 1943, Volume LXXXIII, Number One. American Bombers Attacking from Australia, p. 70.

⁹ B-17E, Why Don't We Do This More Often, Serial Number 41-2429, Pacific Wrecks. Retrieved on 8 July 2024 from <https://pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/b-17/41-2429.html>.



A monitored Japanese radio broadcast indicated that two crew members survived the crash. Captain Pease and SGT Czechowski were able to successfully bail out; they were captured, imprisoned and subsequently executed. Lieutenant Burleson and the four crew members killed in the crash were discovered by a missionary and buried behind a kiln in a Christian mission. Their remains were located after the war and exhumed in 1946 for burial.¹⁰ First Lieutenant Burleson's remains could not be identified from among those collected from the wreckage and he was officially declared dead on December 12, 1945. Today, First Lieutenant Burleson is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.¹¹



Robert B. Burleson's name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines

Captain Harl Pease was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously and Pease Air Force Base, New Hampshire, is named for him.¹² All crew members of the *Why Don't We Do This More Often* were posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, reflecting their determination to voluntarily complete a mission facing innumerable odds.¹³

Lieutenant Robert B. Burleson died at age 28 in heroic service to his country, receiving the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest military award (2nd only to the Medal of Honor). A complete text of his Distinguished Service Cross award is below. His citation reads,

"The President of the United States of America authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to 1st Lieutenant (Air Corps) Robert Bruce Burleson (ASN:0-412726), United States Army Air Forces, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving as a Bombardier of a B-17 Heavy Bomber in the 93rd Bombing Squadron, 19th Bombardment Group (H) Fifth Air Force in action between Queensland, Australia and Rabaul, New Britain on 6-7 August

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ American Battle Monument Commission. Retrieved on 24 June 2024 from <https://www.abmc.gov/decedent-search/burleson%3Drobert>.

¹² Air Force Historical Support Division, <https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/639605/capt-harl-pease-jr.aspx>

¹³ Home of Heroes/Medal of Honor and Military History, <https://homeofheroes.com/heroes-stories/world-war-ii/harl-pease/>

1942. When an airplane in which he was an officer, returned to base in Australia from a bombing mission in Lae, New Guinea, because of a disabled engine, Lieutenant Burleson, knowing that his group was to execute on the following day a mission requiring every plane, volunteered to accompany his airplane commander in a plane that had been declared unserviceable for combat duty. Rejoining his squadron at Port Moresby, New Guinea after flown almost continuously for 19 hours, he took off after only three hours rest, in a mass attack by his group on an enemy occupied airdrome near Rabaul, New Britain. Despite interception by about 30 enemy fighters, as the target was approached, the group made a highly successful bombing attack. During the hostile fighter action, Lieutenant Burleson was on the wing which endured 25 minutes of brutal fire. His plane was observed to drop a blazing bomb-bay tank and fall behind the formation. The personal courage and zealous devotion to duty displayed by First Lieutenant Burleson, on this occasion, at the cost of his life, have upheld the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Fifth Air Force and the entire United Army Air Forces.”¹⁴

In addition to the Distinguished Service Cross, LT Burleson was also awarded: the Air Medal, Purple Heart, World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Army Good Conduct Medal, and Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal.¹⁵ 1LT Burleson remains the Burleson military family member with the highest individual award.

Notes:

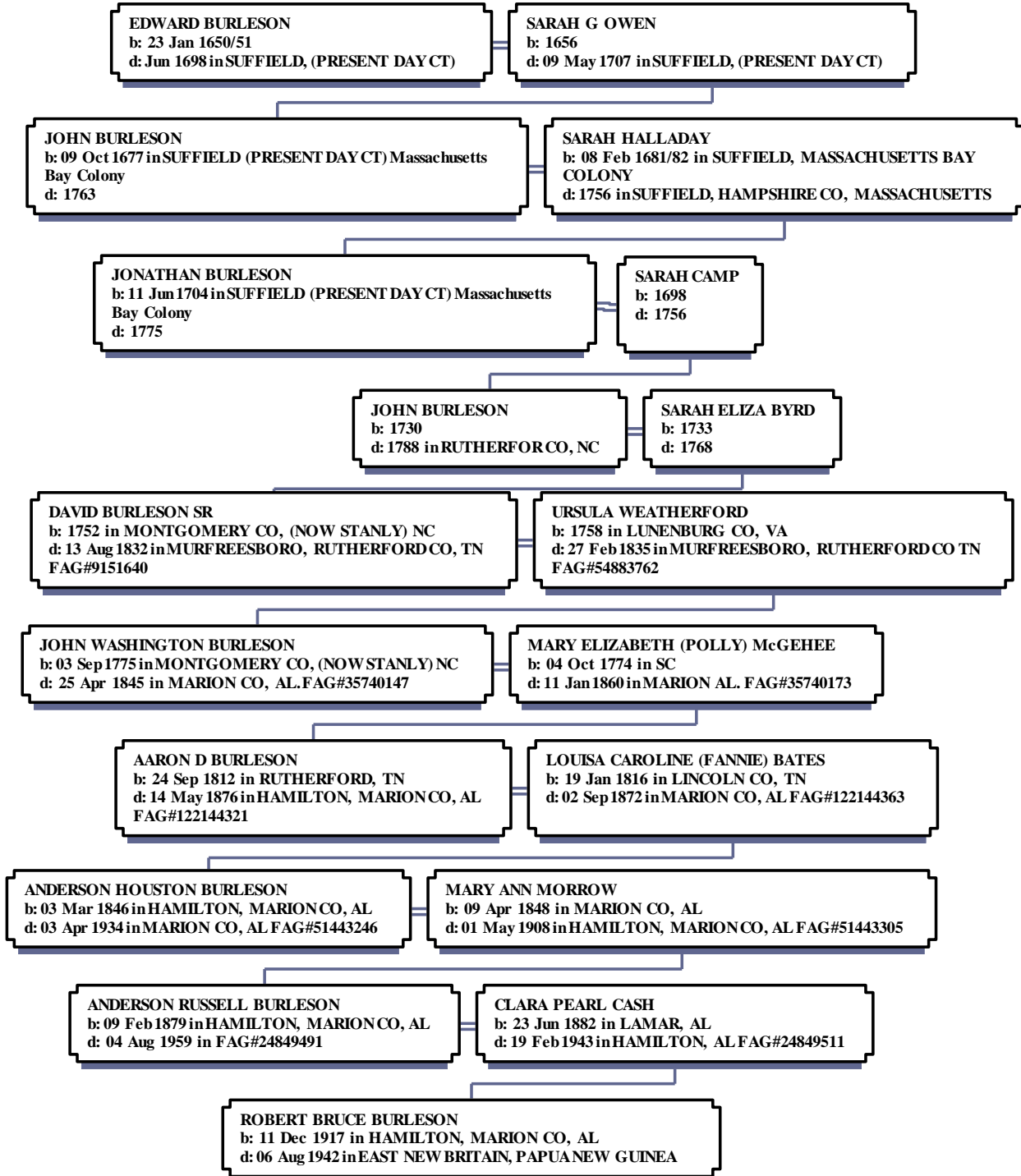
- Casualty date – 7 August 1942. Officially declared dead on 12 December 1945.
- The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has classified 1LT Burleson’s case as one of Active Pursuit which means the agency has assessed the case to have sufficient “information to justify research, investigation, or recovery operations in the field. These cases are the priority for operational planning and allocation of resources.”¹⁶
- This article, updated and edited, first appeared in the Burleson Family Association *Bulletin* in 2020.

¹⁴ The Wall of Valor Project, Robert Bruce Burleson, Distinguished Service Cross. Retrieved on 8 July 2024, from <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/6562>.

¹⁵ HonorStates.org. Robert Bruce Burleson, Gold Star Veteran from Alabama. Retrieved on 8 July 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/12876/>.

¹⁶ Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of the Army. Subject: Case Categorization of Unaccounted for Personnel from our Nation’s Past Conflicts. April 12, 2015. Accessed on 21 June 2024 from <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/resource/1492727229000/CaseCategorizationMemorandum>

Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON





James Meldon Burluson - 25 August 1944



Junior Yearbook Photo, 1941, University of Texas

James Meldon Burluson was born on 23 September 1918 in Anson, Texas, to Joseph Marcus Burluson (1893-1968) and Lucille Miller Burluson (1897-1984). After graduating from Meadow High School and attending the University of Texas for 3 years, this former farm hand from Terry County, Texas, enlisted in the Army Air Corps, two days after the bombings of Pearl Harbor (i.e., 9 December 1941).^{17 18}

James (Service No. 18037265) served as a Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on B-17G #43- 37547, 325th Bomber Squadron, 92nd Bomber Group, Heavy, U.S. Army Air Forces. Since his arrival in Europe on 3 June 1944, SSgt Burluson had logged 13 combat missions.¹⁹ Taking off early afternoon on 25 August 1944 from Army Air Force Station 109 (i.e., Royal Air Force Base Podington, Bedfordshire, England), SSgt Burluson and the crew headed to their target—Peenemünde, Germany, on the Baltic coast. The mission was part of *Operation Crossbow*, designed to disrupt German secret weapon development (i.e., V-1 and V-2 rockets), bombing storage, liquid-oxygen, and launch sites. Peenemünde was, at the time, the world's largest and most advanced rearmament facility.²⁰



Peenemünde, Germany, denoted by red dot.



German V-2 rocket at Peenemünde.

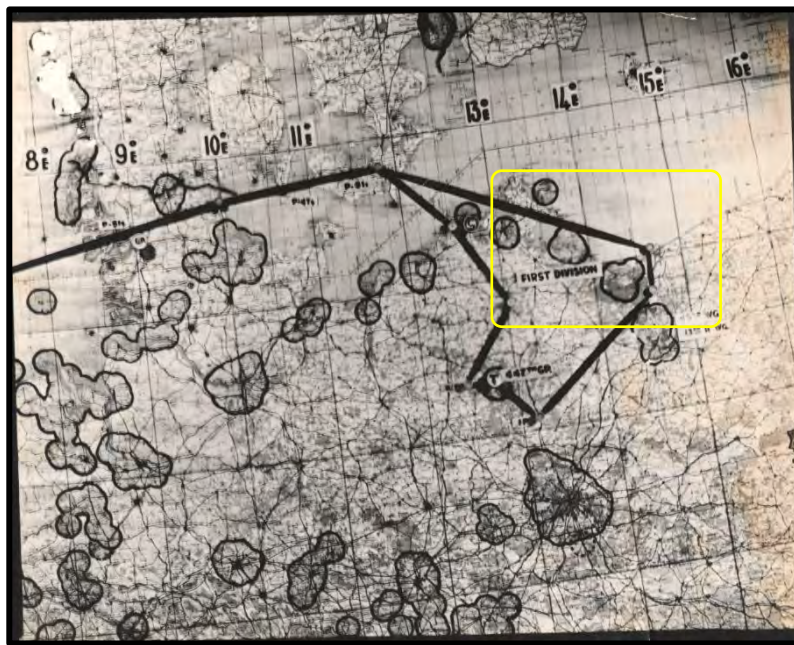
¹⁷ James Meldon Burluson in the U. S. Yearbooks, 1900-2016. "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012"; School Name: University of Texas; Year: 1941. Ancestry.com. U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-2016 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

¹⁸ National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *WWII Draft Registration Cards For Texas, 10/16/1940-03/31/1947*; Record Group: *Records of the Selective Service System, 147*; Box: 203. Ancestry.com. U.S., *World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁹ American Air Museum in Britain, Mission 570. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.americanairmuseum.com/archive/mission/570>.

²⁰ Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, Peenemünde Experimental Station. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from Peenemünde Experimental Station. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peenem%C3%BCnde_Army_Research_Center.

The mission, No. 570, was one of four launched on 25 August by Eight Air Force. 376 B-17s were launched to the Peenemünde Experimental Station, Neubrandenburg Airfield, and Anklam Airfield while 21 others hit Parow airfield and 5 hit targets of opportunity. James's aircraft experienced heavy anti-aircraft artillery near the target area and the aircraft and crew crashed into the Baltic Sea.²¹



Map of Mission 570. Primary target area in yellow box. The Baltic Sea, where the crew crashed, is located just above the target area.

Missing Air Crew Reports do not indicate any accompanying aircraft seeing parachutes deployed or a crash. In all, 5 B-17s were lost and 75 damaged in Mission No. 570.²² The human costs were high as well: 1 airman was killed in action, 9 were wounded and 45 were missing. Airmen who perished on B-17G #43-37547 were²³:

Boye, Richard E. - 1st Lt, Pilot, New York
Burluson, James M. - T/Sgt, Top Turret Gunner, Texas
Egan, Francis X. 1st - Lt, Navigator, New York
Elliott, Ronald B. - S/Sgt Ball Turret Gunner, Minnesota
Froelich, Rudolph E. - S/Sgt, Tail Gunner, Kansas
Holland, Carl C. - S/Sgt, Right Waist Gunner, Oklahoma
Modafferi, Louis D. - T/Sgt, Radio Operator, New York
Tracy, Eugene M. - 2nd Lt, Bombardier, Illinois
Wood, Leonard L. - 1st Lt, Co-Pilot, Alabama

²¹ American Air Museum in Britain, Mission 570. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.americanairmuseum.com/archive/mission/570>.

²² Missing Air Crew Report 8724. Fold3 retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.fold3.com/image/28719580/43-23445-page-2-us-missing-air-crew-reports-macrs-wwii-1942-1947>.

²³ Ibid.



Crew of B-17G 43-37547. TSgt James Burleson is pictured kneeling, far left.

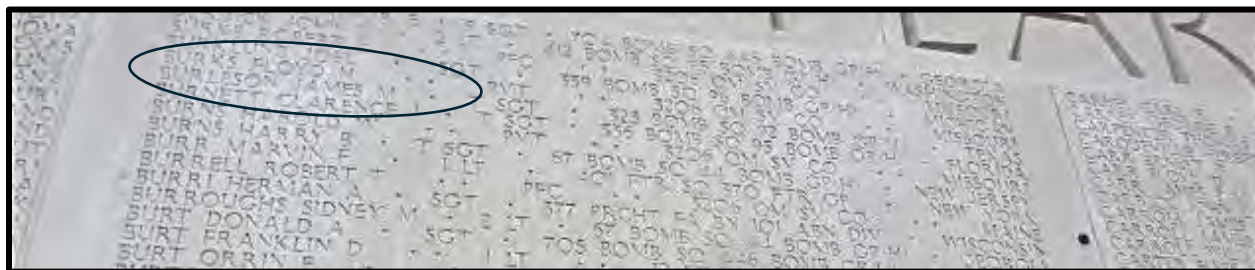
James and his crew were listed as Missing in Action or Lost at Sea following their crash. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency have classified their remains as Unrecoverable.²⁴

He achieved the rank of Technical Sergeant and was awarded: the Air Medal, Purple Heart, World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Army Good Conduct Medal and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign.²⁵

²⁴ Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Our Missing, James W. Burleson. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaOurMissing>.

²⁵ HonorStates.org. James M. Burleson Gold Star WWII Veteran from Texas. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/114052/>.

TSgt Burluson is memorialized at the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial in Coton, South Cambridgeshire District, Cambridgeshire, England.²⁶ He is also memorialized in a cenotaph in the Meadow Cemetery, Meadow, Terry County, Texas.²⁷



TSgt James M. Burluson (circled) memorialized at the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial



Cenotaph in memory of James M. Burluson - Meadow Cemetery, Meadow, Terry County, Texas

Notes:

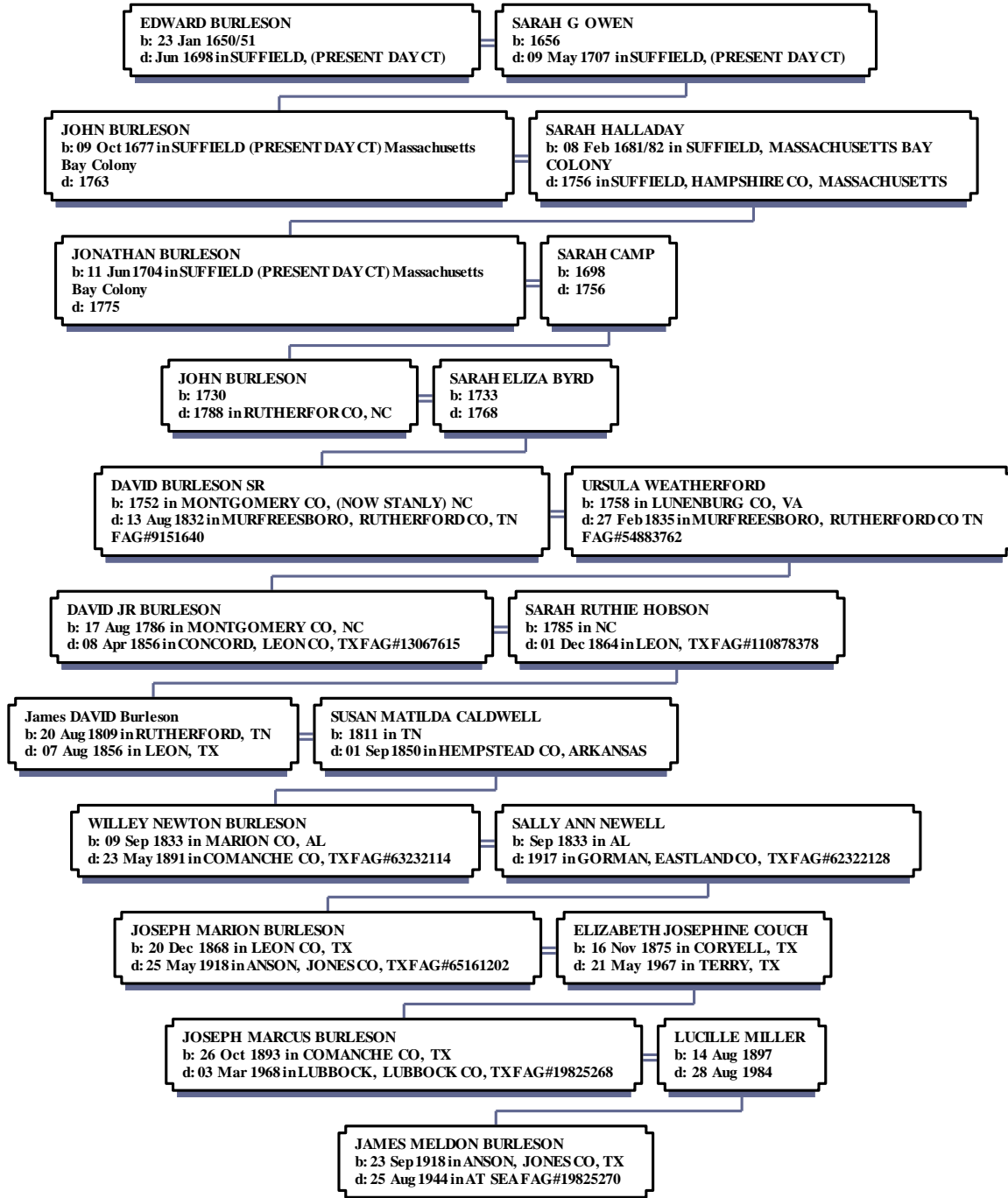
- Non-Recoverable cases are assessed to have negative potential for accounting, such as in cases in which the remains are lost at sea, or where the remains of an individual are cremated and/or systematically destroyed. The assessment will be based upon historical research, scientific analysis, and the limits of current technology. To deem a case as non-recoverable does not account for an unaccounted-for individual.²⁸

²⁶ American Battle Monument Commission, James M. Burluson. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/burleson%3Djames>.

²⁷ TSgt James Meldon Burluson in the UK and Ireland , Find a Grave Index, 1300-Current. Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Find a Grave® Index, 1300s-Current* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find a Grave. Find a Grave®. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

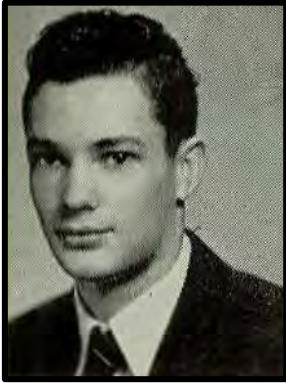
²⁸ Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of the Army. Subject: Case Categorization of Unaccounted for Personnel from our Nation's Past Conflicts. April 12, 2015. Accessed on 21 June 2024 from <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/resource/1492727229000/CaseCategorizationMemorandum>

Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON





George Edward Burleson – 25 October 1944



George E. Burleson Taft
High School Yearbook
Photo, 1943

George E. Burleson was born on 25 January 1925 in Prescott, Arizona, to Jess L. Burleson (1905-1988) and Grace Belle Sullivan (1904-1996).²⁹ After graduating from Taft Union High School in Taft, California, he left on his 18th birthday in 1943 for training at the U.S. Navy facility at Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago.^{30,31}

Seaman First Class Burleson (Service No. 3817857) was assigned as part of the crew of the “Fletcher-class” destroyer USS *Hoel* (DD-533). He was aboard and fought in the Battle of Leyte Gulf.³²

This battle “is generally considered to be the largest naval battle of World War II and, by some criteria, possibly the largest naval battle in history. It was fought in waters near the Philippine islands of Leyte, Samar and Luzon, from 23-26 October 1944, between combined American and Australian forces and the Imperial Japanese Navy. At the end, the losses in the battle of Leyte Gulf included more than 1,000 sailors and aircrewmembers of the Allied escort carrier units killed or missing.”³³

He went missing in action during the October 25, 1944, Battle of Samar, Philippine Islands, when his ship attacked a powerful Japanese naval force and helped to considerably delay that force until the USS *Hoel* was battered and sunk by Japanese gunfire. The battle including a shootout with the Japanese battleship *Yamato*, the heaviest and most powerful warship ever constructed. Interestingly, the only time the *Yamato* fired her Type 94 main guns (the largest ever mounted on a warship) at enemy surface targets was during the Battle of Samar and she was responsible for sinking or helping sink the carrier USS *Gambier Bay* and the destroyers USS *Johnston* and USS *Hoel*.³⁴

²⁹ George Edward Burleson in the Arizona, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1880-1935. Arizona Department of Health Services; Phoenix, AZ; *Arizona Genealogy Birth and Death Certificates/*

³⁰ The Bakersfield Californian, 22 November 1944. Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/233873/?match=1&terms=George%20Edward%20Burleson>.

³¹ The Fresno Bee, 22 November 1944. Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/701468324/?match=1&terms=George%20Edward%20Burleson>.

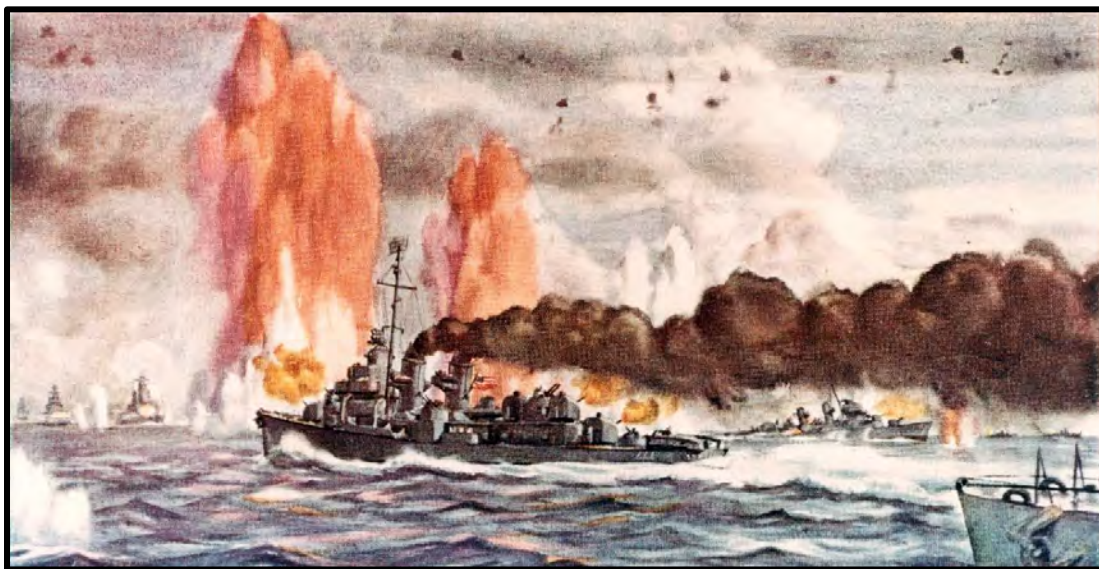
³² Honor States.org, George E. Burleson, World War II Gold Star Veteran from California. Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/18902/>.

³³ Naval History and Heritage Command, Hoel I(DD-533). Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/h/hoel-i.html>.

³⁴ The Battle Off Samar, Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_off_Samar.

The Naval History and Heritage Command provides the following account of the USS *Hoel's* last moments.

Around 0815, USS *Hoel* (DD-533) took a hit to her forward engine room from an eight-inch shell that disabled her starboard engine. By 0840, USS *Hoel* (DD-533) was dead in the water with a heavy 20° list to port, the sea lapping at her fantail. Kintberger (*sic.* ship captain) passed the word to abandon ship. Battered from having absorbed, in Kintberger's estimation, more than 40 direct hits from five-, eight-, and sixteen-inch shells, USS *Hoel* (DD-533) finally surrendered to the sea at 0855. All told, only 86 of *Hoel's* complement survived the Battle off Samar and the days floating in the ocean while 252 officers and men perished. USS *Hoel* (DD-533) was stricken from the Navy Register on 27 November 1944.³⁵



Battle of Samar, watercolor by Commander Dwight C. Shepler, USNR. USS Hoel is pictured sinking at right center.

It is not known if SEA1 Bursleson perished with the ship or in the surrounding waters. The tragedy of the sinking of the USS *Hoel* was made worse by the bungled rescue efforts. Commander Kintberger noted in his after-action report,

Many of *Hoel's* survivors questioned why it took so long for rescue ships to come for them. "The area in which this task unit was operating, and in which this vessel was sunk was small and definitely known," Kintberger wrote in his action report. "The rafts were sighted and recognized by at least three groups of our planes" yet it still took two days for help to arrive. He lamented the sailors who suffered and died on the rafts for lack of medical treatment as well as at least 43 of his crewmen known to have made it off the ship alive but whose whereabouts were now

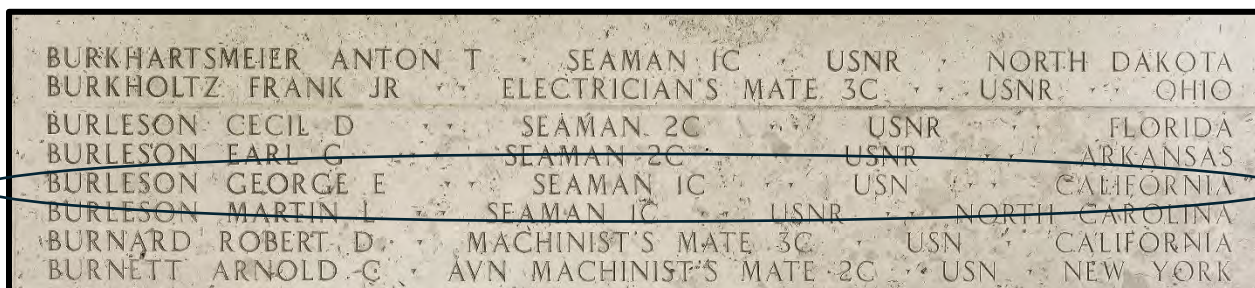
³⁵ Naval History and Heritage Command, USS *Hoel* (DD-533). Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-79000/nh-79033-kn-battle-off-samar--25-october-1944.html>.

unknown. "Many more of our men would have been alive today and safe home if some planes had been sent out, maybe a couple of fast destroyers to pick up survivors."³⁶

SEA1 Burluson at age 19, was one of the youngest of the Burluson MIAs. He was awarded the: World War II Victory Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, American Campaign Medal, Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the Navy Expeditionary Medal. For her part, the *USS Hoel* was awarded the United States Presidential Unit Citation, the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation and five battle stars for World War II service.³⁷



Based on all information available, DPAA assessed George E. Burluson's case to be in the analytical category of Non-recoverable.³⁸ George E Burluson is memorialized at Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery, Manila, Philippines.³⁹



George E. Burluson's name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines

He is also memorialized at the Kern County Veteran's World War II Memorial in Bakersfield, California.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ HonorStates.org, George E. Burluson, World War II Gold Star Veteran from California. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/18902/>.

³⁸ Defense Pow/Mia Accounting Agency; Washington DC; *Defense Pow/Mia Accounting Agency, Unaccounted-For Remains, Group B, 1941-1975*.

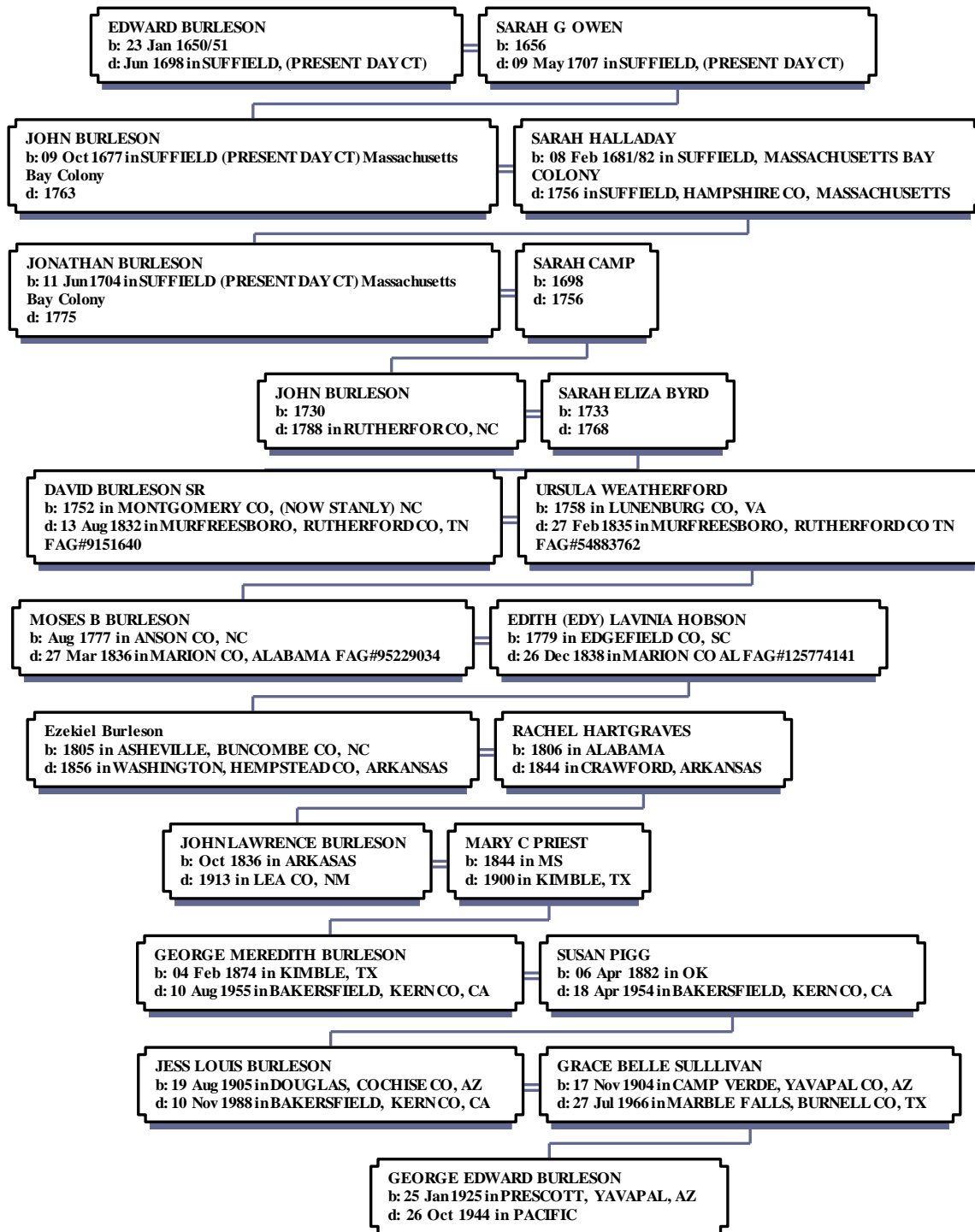
³⁹ American Battle Monument Commission. Retrieved on 24 June 2024 from <https://www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/burleson%3Dgeorge>.

⁴⁰ S1 George Edward Burluson in the Global, Find a Grave® Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300s-Current. Ancestry.com. *Global, Find a Grave® Index for Burials at Sea and other Select Burial Locations, 1300s-Current* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: *Find a Grave*. Find a Grave®. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.



*Kern County Veteran's World War II Memorial at left.
Inscription on the monument in George E. Burleson's name
above.*

Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON





Earl Gene Burleson – 18 December 1944

Earl Gene Burleson was the son of Webster Buell Burleson (1895-1961) and Sallie Williams (1903-1976). He was born on 25 November 1925 in Batesville, Arkansas⁴¹, from where he also entered the U. S. Navy. Seaman Second Class Burleson (Service No. 8450800) was assigned to the USS *Hull* (DD-350, Farragut-class destroyer).⁴² USS *Hull* and its crew were veterans of many Pacific operations, notably the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor where the crew responded with anti-aircraft fire. From 1942-1944, USS *Hull* conducted amphibious operations, bombardment and resupply of Guadalcanal, the Solomons, Kiska, Wake Islands, Truk, Marianas and Guam.⁴³

Following repairs in the states and a brief anchorage at her home station of Pearl Harbor, USS *Hull* was ordered to join a 3rd Fleet refueling group departing on 20 November 1944. The Naval History and Heritage Command provided the following description.

⁴¹ HonorStates.org, Earl G. Burleson, Gold Star WWII Veteran from Arkansas. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/14981/>.

⁴² Fold3. <https://www.fold3.com/sub-image/641561028/burleson-earl-g-us-rosters-of-world-war-ii-dead-1939-1945>.

⁴³ Naval History and Heritage Command, Hull III. Retrieved on 28 June 27, 2024, from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/h/hull-iii.html>

On 17 December 1944, the ships of Task Force 38, seven fleet and six light carriers, eight battleships, 15 cruisers, and about 50 destroyers were operating about 300 miles east of Luzon in the Philippine Sea. The carriers had just completed three days of heavy raids against Japanese airfields, suppressing enemy aircraft during the American amphibious operations against Mindoro in the Philippines. Although the sea had been becoming rougher all day, the nearby cyclonic disturbance gave relatively little warning of its approach. On 18 December, the small but violent typhoon overtook the Task Force while many of the ships were attempting to refuel. Many of the ships were caught near the center of the storm and buffeted by extreme seas and hurricane force winds. Three destroyers, *USS Hull*, *USS Spence*, and *USS Monaghan*, capsized and went down with practically all hands, while a cruiser, five aircraft carriers, and three destroyers suffered serious damage. Approximately 790 officers and men were lost or killed, with another 80 injured. Fires occurred in three carriers when planes broke loose in their hangars and some 146 planes on various ships were lost or damaged beyond economical repair by fires, impact damage, or by being swept overboard. This storm inflicted more damage on the Navy than any storm since the hurricane at Apia, Samoa in 1889. In the aftermath of this deadly storm, the Pacific Fleet established new weather stations in the Caroline Islands and, as they were secured, Manila, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. In addition, new weather central offices (for coordinating data) were established at Guam and Leyte.⁴⁴



An oiler struggles to maintain position, 17 December 1944

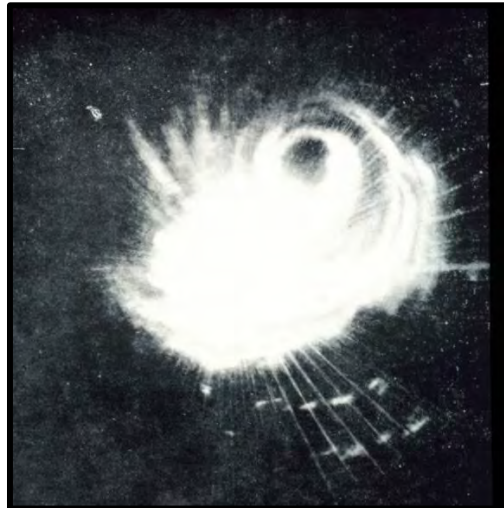


USS Langley (CVL-27) rolling sharply during Typhoon Cobra

The Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory article, “70th Anniversary of Halsey’s encounter with Typhoon “Cobra” added:

⁴⁴ Naval History and Heritage Command, Typhoons and Hurricanes: Pacific Typhoon, 18 December 1944. Retrieved on 28 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/p/pacific-typhoon-18-december-1944.html>

Although he was aware of the storm in his vicinity, Admiral William “Bull” Halsey thought the storm would pass to his east and ordered his fleet to hold course and continue refueling. One of the ships in the vanguard picked up the approaching storm on radar, but since the technology was new no one knew how to interpret the image.⁴⁵



Typhoon Cobra as represented on ship's radar Dec. 18, 1944

The *Hull* lost its ability to steer (“locked in irons”) amid the enormous waves and began taking on water. The *Hull* eventually took on too much water to stay afloat and rolled and sank shortly before noon, on December 18. Sixty-two crew members were rescued, but a little more than two-hundred crew members were lost in the sinking.⁴⁶

In an interesting twist to this tragedy, Wikipedia’s article on the USS *Hull* provides:

Reportedly, some time before *Hull* became locked "in irons," some officers had debated whether to remove captain Marks from his command in order to turn the ship to a safer course, but the executive officer, Greil Gerstley, refused to do so on the grounds that there had never been a mutiny on a US Navy ship. This incident provided novelist Herman Wouk with the inspiration for the climax of his

⁴⁵ Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, U. S. Department of Commerce, 70th Anniversary of Halsey’s encounter with Typhoon “Cobra”. Retrieved on 28 June 27, 2024 from https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/es/hurricane_blog/70th-anniversary-of-halseys-encounter-with-typhoon-cobra/.

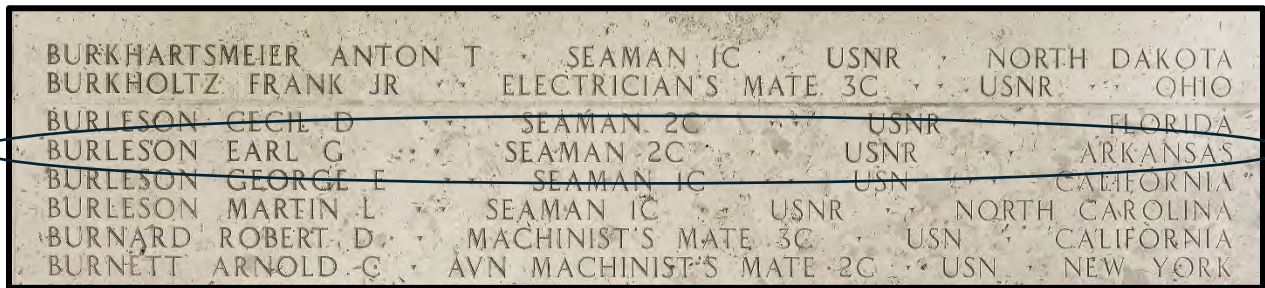
⁴⁶ Naval History and Heritage Command, Typhoons and Hurricanes: Pacific Typhoon, 18 December 1944. Retrieved on 28 June 27, 2024 from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/p/pacific-typhoon-18-december-1944.html>

novel *The Caine Mutiny*, in which a captain is actually relieved of his duties by his officers in the course of Typhoon Cobra.⁴⁷



Caine Mutiny movie poster

Seaman Second Class Earl G. Burleson, went down with the ship, and his remains were not recovered. Today, Seaman Second Class Burleson is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.⁴⁸ Based on all information available, DPAA assessed the Earl G. Burleson’s case to be in the analytical category of Non-recoverable.⁴⁹



Earl G. Burleson’s name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines

Seaman Second Class Burleson, who had recently turned 19-year-olds, was the youngest of the Burleson MIAs. He was awarded the: World War II Victory Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action

⁴⁷ Wikipedia, *USS Hull (DD-350)*. Retrieved on 28 June 28, 2024, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Hull_\(DD-350\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Hull_(DD-350)).

⁴⁸ American Battle Monument Commission. Retrieved on 24 June 2024 from <https://www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/burleson%3Dearl>.

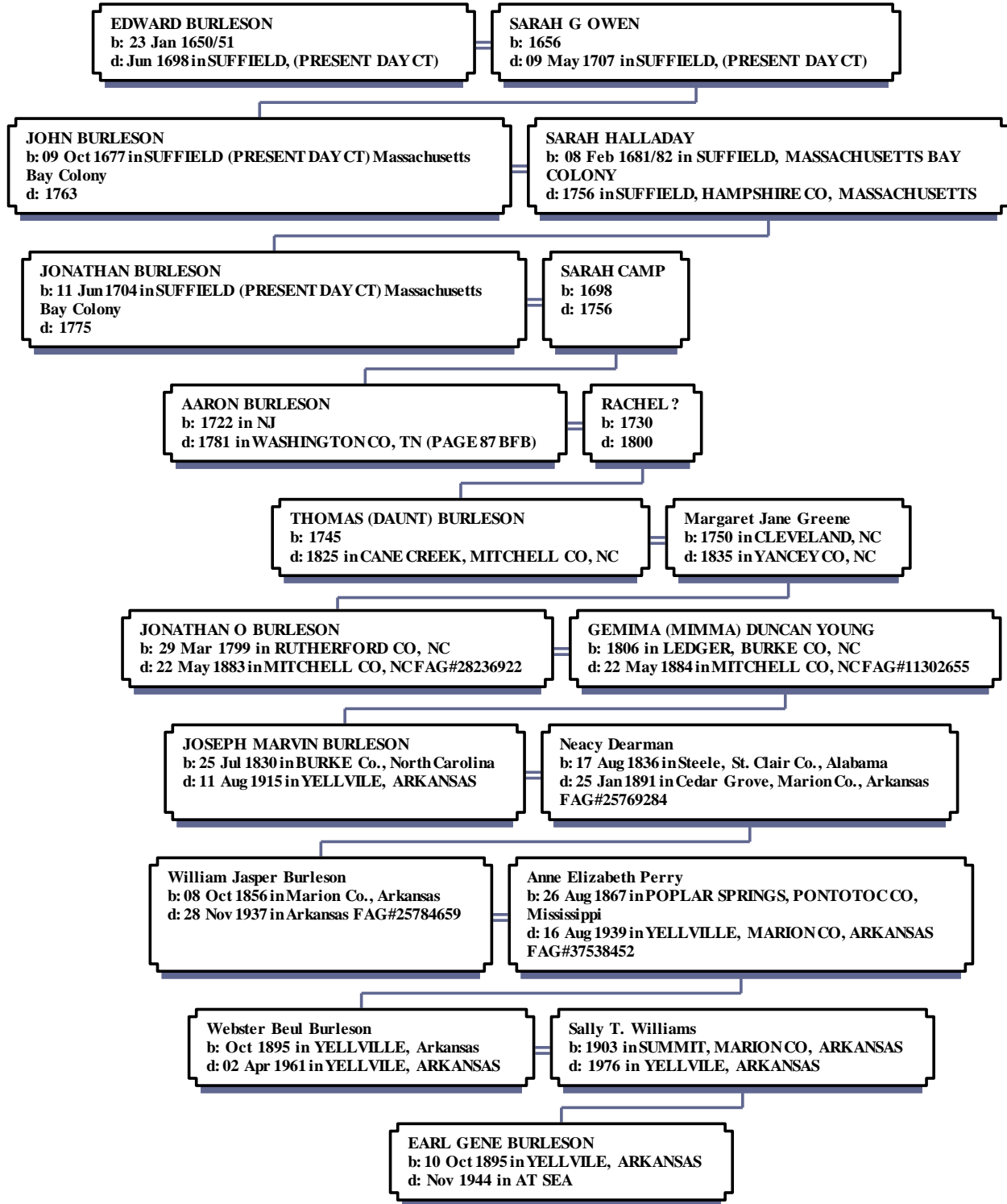
⁴⁹ Defense Pow/Mia Accounting Agency; Washington DC; *Defense Pow/Mia Accounting Agency, Unaccounted-For Remains, Group B, 1941-1975*

Ribbon, American Campaign Medal, Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the Navy Expeditionary Medal.⁵⁰

The *USS Hull* received 10 battle stars for World War II service, having sailed to Europe, and serving in the Pacific before and during the war in combat.



Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON



1945

John Edwin Burleson – 27 January 1945

John Edwin Burleson was born on 8 December 1916 in Dallas, Texas, to David Walter Burleson (1883-1954) and Elizabeth Meadows (1884-1930). John attended and graduated (1941) from Southwestern University where he was a star football player. He played from 1937-1940 on the Pirate football team and was known as John “Clock” Burleson.⁵¹ While in college, John registered for the draft in Fort Worth (16 October 1940).⁵² He was working for the Magnolia Pipeline Company after graduating and on 7 June 1941 at age 24 he married Beneva Geraldine Burrows (1922-1971) of Walnut Springs, Texas.⁵³

John E. Burleson was working for the pipeline company and living in Midland, Texas, when he enlisted in into the U.S. Army Air Corps (Service No. 18109568) at Tyler County, Texas, on 16 June 1942. He attended B-29 “Superfortress” training and was commissioned Second Lieutenant John E. Burleson (O-760722) U.S. Army Air Forces. 2LT Burleson was assigned to the 870th Bombardment Squadron, 497th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy). John was the co-pilot aboard B-29 42-24619 “*Shady Lady*.”⁵⁴



870th Bombardment Squadron
logo.

⁵⁰ Honor States.org, Earl G. Burleson, World War II Gold Star Veteran from Arkansas. Retrieved on 27 June 27, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/14981/>.

⁵¹ Southwestern University Pirates Football, All-Time Letter Winners. Retrieved on 29 June 29, 2024 from https://www.southwesternpirates.com/sports/m-footbl/Record_Book/Letter_Winners.

⁵² U.S. World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 for John Edwin Burleson. Retrieved on 28 June 28, 2024, from <https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/19284875:2238>.

⁵³ Burrows-Burleson, Waurika News-Democrat, Waurika, Oklahoma, Friday, 6 June 1941. Retrieved on 28 June 28, 2024 from <https://www.newspapers.com/image/789620691/?article=0005fd72-cd7e-449c-9ee7-4dac0b323c20&focus=0.2614139,0.32608408,0.3792555,0.439939&xid=3398>.

⁵⁴ Heart of Texas Veterans Memorial. Retrieved on 29 June 29, 2024, from <https://hotvetmem.com/ww2cas/ww2brown/hotww2hrbiobrown.html>



Crewmember adjusting
machinegun.

Captain Raymond O. Dauth, the pilot, 2LT Burlson and the remainder of the *Shady Lady* crew arrived in Saipan, Marianas Islands, on 21 October 1944. It was from here, almost 90 days later on 27 January 1945, that the crew of the *Shady Lady* flew their last combat bombing mission.

The mission, Number 22, targeted the Nakajima Aircraft plant in Tokyo with the urban area as the secondary. If the weather was bad the force was to bomb the Mitsubishi Engine Factory in Nagoya with the secondary being the urban area of that city.⁵⁵

The mission is well described in, *The Long Haul, The Story of the 497th Bomb Group (VH)*.

On January 27th, the peak in Jap fighter attacks against B-29's was reached. To bomb the dock area of Tokyo through a heavy undercast, sixty-two Superforts (*sic.* Superfortress) of the Wing ploughed through 984 Jap fighter plane attacks-554 of which were against the 497th. Of the more than 350 Jap planes which attacked, 60 were shot down (34 by the 497th) and 56 were probably shot down (32 by the 497th). Nearly one-tenth of all the fighters shot down by Marianas-based B-29's in approximately 300 missions were destroyed that day.

Nine B-29's were lost during the mission; the greatest number of planes the Wing ever lost on any mission; the greatest number any Wing lost to enemy aircraft on a single strike and five of these great ships and four of their gallant crews were stricken from the rolls of the 497th.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ USAF Serial Number Search Results. Retrieved on 29 June 29, 2024, from <http://cgibin.rcn.com/jeremy.k/cgi-bin/gzUsafSearch.pl?target=&content=B-29>.

⁵⁶ Stewart, Harry A. and John E. Power, *The Long Haul, The Story of the 497th Bomb Group (VH)*. Bangor Public Library, Bangor Community Digital Commons@BPL. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his/106/



*Okawa's Prize by Jim Lauier, Ki-44
engaging a B-29*

The official report states *Shady Lady* was knocked out by anti-aircraft flak. Other reports state that due to severe weather conditions they missed the target and were attacked by “*Tojo*” Ki-44 fighters and one *Tojo* rammed *Shady Lady*. Either way they crashed into the Kiku River near Mitsumata, Japan, and all of the crew were killed and not recovered. [Missing Air Crew Report (MACR) 11557]. Another report added *Shaddy Lady* was rammed by a Ki-44 west of Tokyo, Japan January 27, 1945, and crashed in a river at Oume City, Tokyo.⁵⁷

2LT John E. Burleson and the following crewmembers were lost:

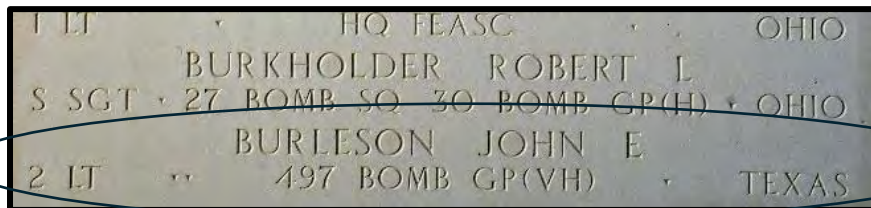
- 2LT Frederick W Baumann – Bombardier
- Pvt James L Burk- Tail Gunner
- 2LT John E Burleson- Co-Pilot
- SSgt Daniel J Carroll - Radio Operator
- 2LT Robert W Chapla - Flight Engineer
- Capt. Raymond O Dauth - Pilot
- Sgt Walter J Horowski - Left Gunner
- 2LT Ronald H King - Navigator
- Sgt Allan McClay Jr - Right Gunner
- Sgt Theodore D Northup - Radar Operator
- SSgt Quintin N Preble - CFC Gunner

⁵⁷ Missing Air Crew Report 11557, Fold3. Retrieved on 29 June 29, 2024 from <https://www.fold3.com/image/46708911/42-24619-page-6-us-missing-air-crew-reports-macrs-wwii-1942-1947>



Crew of the B-29, Shady Lady. 2LT Burlleson, kneeling second from left.

Having actually gone "Missing" on 27 January 1945, he was not officially declared by the military as being dead until January 28, 1946, 1 year and 1 day after he went missing as was the custom. 2Lt Burlleson was awarded the: Air Medal, Purple Heart, United States Aviator Badge Army, World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Army Good Conduct Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal. In addition, 2LT Burlleson's unit, the 870th Bombardment Squadron, 497th Bombardment Group, were awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for their performance on 27 January 1945.⁵⁸ He is remembered on the Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial in Hawaii.⁵⁹

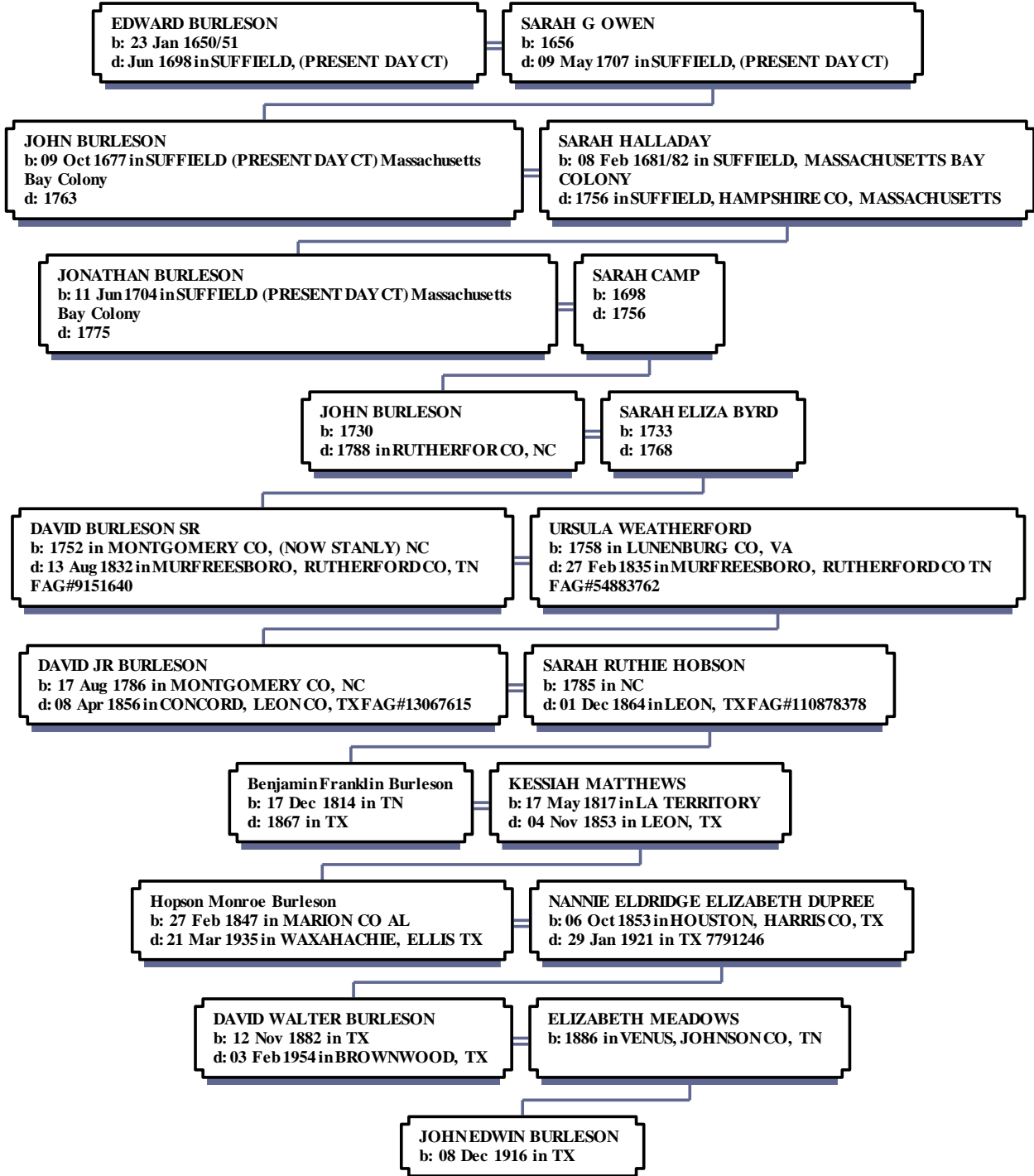


John E. Burlleson's name inscribed on the Tablet of the Missig, Honolulu Memorial.

⁵⁸ HonorStates.org, John Edward Burlleson, Gold Star Veteran from Texas. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/14981/>.

⁵⁹ American Battle Monuments Commission, John E. Burlleson. Retrieved on 8 July 8, 2024, from <https://www.abmc.gov/decendent-search/burleson%3Djohn>.

Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON





Cecil D. Burleson – 11 April 1945

Cecil Durant Burleson was born in Florida in 1926 to William Rushin Burleson (1880-1962) and Fannie D. Mason (1888-1986). Cecil joined the U. S. Navy on 19 November 1943 in Jacksonville, Florida where he had been a junior at Tate High School.⁶⁰

He was sent off for processing and basic training before being selected for amphibious duty. Afterwards, he was sent to the training facility at Camp Bradford in Norfolk, Virginia where he underwent preliminary indoctrination on LST's. Originally designed to train Seabee's, Camp Bradford was converted in 1943 to training crews for duty on LSTs. Upon completion, he was sent to the New Orleans replacement base and received orders to report to LST-577 as of July 15, 1944. However, the muster log stated he was to transfer to LST-620 as soon as possible.⁶¹

The Landing Ship, Tank (LST), according to the Naval History and Heritage Command, "is an ocean-going ship capable of shore-to-shore delivery of tanks, amphibious assault vehicles, and troops." The LST program,

was developed in response to a need for armored infantry divisions in invasions by sea. England's failed invasion at Dunkirk prompted Prime Minister Winston Churchill to request that the United States design a ship that was large enough to traverse an ocean, but with provisions to quickly and efficiently unload armored vehicles and personnel on an unimproved beach. The resulting ship design proved to be among the most successful in the history of the Navy.⁶²

LST 577 was commissioned into service on July 10th, 1944, and promptly sailed down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans where five days later Seaman Burleson joined a convoy bound for the Pacific. Naval History and Heritage Command produced a detailed account of the short life of LST 577 and her crew.

Following Amphibious exercises in the Hawaiian Islands, LST-577 sailed for Ulithi Atoll where an American and Allied fleet was massing for the Invasion of the

⁶⁰ Unique History of Pensacola, Pensacola's February Loss 2-11-45 WWII. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/100071289343242/posts/1099494307141358/>.

⁶¹ Enlisted Passengers, Report of Changes of USS LST 577, Muster Rolls of U.S. Navy Ships, Stations, and Other Naval Activities, 01/01/1939-01/01/1949. Fold3, Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.fold3.com/image/312830521/1945-page-6-us-world-war-ii-navy-muster-rolls-1938-1949?terms=navy,war,us,cecil,lst,world,d,burleson,ii,577>

⁶² Naval History and History Command, LST-577. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/l/lst-577.html>.

Philippine Islands. Arriving off the shores of Leyte in November 1944 with the US Amphibious Force, the crew of LST-577 got their first exposure to combat as Japanese aircraft made a concerted effort to disrupt the landings and got more of the same when they sailed further North to land forces at Lingayen Gulf in January 1945.⁶³

Hostile action pursued the convoy as it pressed towards Mindanao. On January 9, 1945, LST 577 participated in the landings at Lingayen Gulf, repelling two kamikaze attacks, and claimed a pair of KI-44 "Tojo" fighter shot down and assisted in the shoot down of another.⁶⁴

NHHC continued:

Withdrawing from Lingayen Gulf for Hollandia, New Guinea to reload both supplies and troops, LST-577 took aboard the men and material of the US Army's 279th Replacement Company, 21st Replacement Depot as well as a group of US Navy personnel and put to sea once again bound for the Philippines in convoy.

As her convoy proceeded through the open ocean South of the Palaus, it was sighted by the Japanese Submarine *RO-50* which immediately began to stalk the Allied formation. Observing the convoy to be steaming in a single file line and flanked by Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts, the Captain of the *RO-50* waited until dawn on February 11th and its foggy and rainy weather to make his attack, firing a blind four-torpedo spread into the convoys course and heading. With his sonar operator confirming the successful attack as the sound of an explosion rumbled through the sea, *RO-50's* crew had little time for celebration before they were pounced upon by the convoy's escorts and heavily depth charged for the next 13 hours.⁶⁵



Aboard LST-577, the crew had been permitted to sleep later than usual as they would likely be awake for the next several days and at battle stations while the ship was in the Philippines and under near-constant threat of air and sea attack. Steaming in the 21st position of the convoy through the foul weather, crew

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Pacific Wrecks, USS LST-577. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://pacificwrecks.com/ships/usn/LST-577.html>.

⁶⁵ Naval History and History Command, LST-577. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/l/lst-577.html>.

aboard the ship were likely unaware of any danger to their formation until a torpedo was spotted by lookouts as it passed ahead of the ship. With barely enough time to pass the sighting back to the bridge, crew located forward were thrown to the deck as a tremendous explosion on LST-577's Port Quarter shook through the ship. Wallowing to Starboard with the force of the impact, the heavily laden LST rolled back to an even keel as the weight of the intruding water combined with her cargo load and began to wrench her compromised hull apart. Only seconds had passed after the torpedo impact when LST-577's keel snapped and the ship split into two pieces, the Stern briefly floating free before it reared up and sank taking 166 Army, Navy and Crew with it to the bottom. Rescue efforts for those aboard the still-floating bow section began immediately, and within 20 minutes of the attack all of LST-577's remaining survivors were pulled off the bow by convoy escorts.⁶⁶

FROM: CTF 76 (BASE SHIP)	11 FEB 1945
ACTION: CTF 75 X 77	PRECEDENCE: URGENT
	CLASSIFICATION: SECRET
	REC/SEND VIA: RADIO
	DATE TIME 111833/2
SUBMARINE LST 8-6 NORTH	
LONG 130/-8 EAST LST 577 TORPEDO	
FROM: CTU 78.7.4	12 FEB 1945
ACTION: CTF 78	PRECEDENCE: OF
CTF 76	CLASSIFICATION: SECRET
	REC/SEND VIA: RADIO
	DATE TIME 110822
FURTHER MY URGENT DISPATCH 110100 X	
LST 577 SUNK BY OUR GUN FIRE FOLLOWING TORP ATAK X APPROXIMATELY 68 NAVY	
AND 102 ARMY MISSING X USS ISHERWOOD CARRYING OUT STANDARD SEARCH PLAN	
IN AREA UNTIL TEN HUNDRED ITEM 12 FEB X PROCEED GERBTEJJJ BUY - NTY MILE	
NORTH ASSIGNED ROUTE	
NOTE: THIS IS AN INTERCEPT MESSAGE	
After action report 2-11-1945	

Naval Report detailing the sinking of LST 577.

LST 577 earned two battle stars for World War II service and was officially stricken from the Naval Register on 30 March 1946. For her part, *RO-50*, the submarine responsible for sinking LST 577, was the only *Kaichu*-type submarine to survive World War II.

⁶⁶ Ibid.



Caption above reads: This picture shows the after section of LST 577 after a torpedo attack on February 11, 1945, broke the ship in two. The after section sank with heavy loss of life. This picture was taken from the front 44mm gun station on the LST 574



Seaman Second Class Cecil Durant Burleson's (Service No. 5571161) body was never recovered. LST 577's crew were officially declared dead on the day of the sinking.⁶⁷ All are memorialized on the tablets of the missing at Manila American Cemetery.⁶⁸ The DPAA lists Cecil D. Burleson as Unaccounted For with a casualty date of 11 April 1945.⁶⁹

Seaman Burleson, casualty of the Battle of Luzon, was awarded the: World War II Victory Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, American Campaign Medal, Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the Navy Expeditionary Medal.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cecil D Burleson in the U.S., World War II and Korean Conflict Veterans Interred Overseas. National Archives and Records Administration. *U.S., World War II and Korean Conflict Veterans Interred Overseas* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000.

⁶⁸ HonorStates.org. Cecil D Burleson World War II Gold Star Veteran from Florida. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/27508/>.

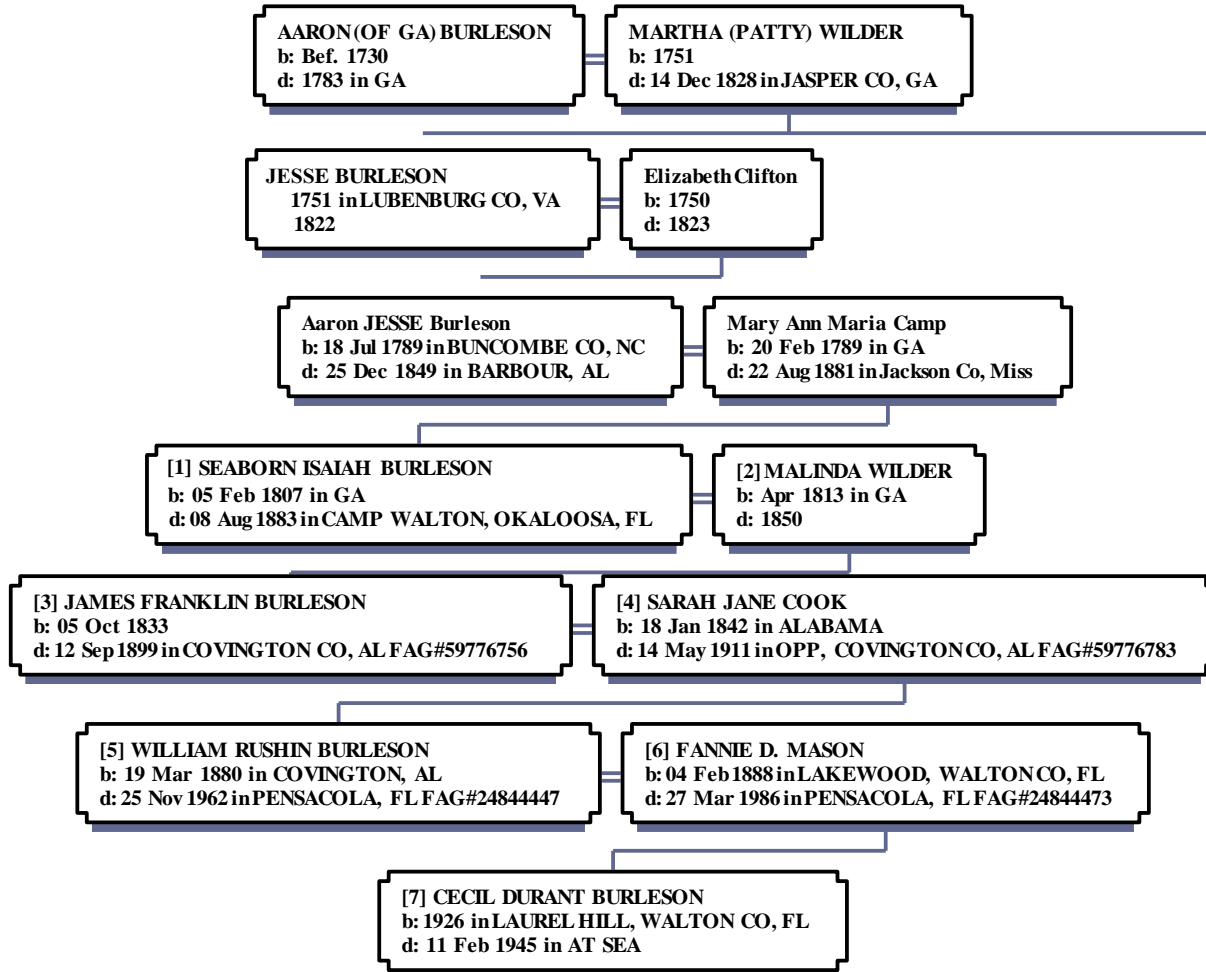
⁶⁹ Cecil D Burleson in the U.S., Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Unaccounted-for Remains, Group B (Unrecoverable), 1941-1975.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

BURKHARTSMEIER ANTON T	SEAMAN IC	USNR	NORTH DAKOTA
BURKHOLTZ FRANK JR	ELECTRICIAN'S MATE 3C	USNR	OHIO
BURLESON CECIL D	SEAMAN 2C	USNR	FLORIDA
BURLESON EARL G	SEAMAN 2C	USNR	ARKANSAS
BURLESON GEORGE E	SEAMAN IC	USN	CALIFORNIA
BURLESON MARTIN L	SEAMAN IC	USNR	NORTH CAROLINA

Cecil D. Burleson's name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines

Direct Descendants of AARON (OF GA) BURLESON





Martin Lafayette Burleson – 30 July 1945

Martin Lafayette Burleson, also known as Junior Lafayette Burleson, was born on 18 November 1921 in Pyatte, Avery County, North Carolina, to Euyless Edward Burleson (1898-1954) and Essie Taylor (1899-1926).⁷¹ Essie died at age 26, and records indicate that Martin and his siblings were raised in their grandparents' (Martin De Lafayette Taylor (1853-1935) and Thompsine Augusta Wiseman (1859-1940)) home.⁷²

Martin enlisted (Service No. 6406383) in North Carolina as a Seaman First Class in the U. S. Navy and reported to active duty on 29 July 1942.⁷³ He was attached to the USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35). While stationed in Oakland, California, Martin married Barbara Jean Asher (1928-1991) in October 1944.⁷⁴ Navy muster rolls, prepared quarterly, indicate Martin was first received aboard the USS *Indianapolis* on 18 November 1944, roughly one month after getting married.⁷⁵

⁷¹ North Carolina, Center for Health Statistics, Vital Records Unit, County Birth Records, 1913-1922, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:8MYR-H9ZM>: Sat Mar 09 16:20:54 UTC 2024), Entry for Martin L. Burleson and Ulysses E. Burleson, 18 Nov 1921.

⁷² "United States Census, 1930", , *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X392-1CV> :Sun Mar 10 06:48:31 UTC 2024), Entry for Lafayette Taylor and Thompsine Taylor, 1930.

⁷³ Martin Lafayette Burleson in the North Carolina, U.S., Discharge and Statement of Service Records, 1940-1948. Ancestry.com. *North Carolina, U.S., Discharge and Statement of Service Records, 1940-1948* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2019. Original data: *North Carolina, Discharge and Statement of Service Records, 1940-1948*. Salt Lake City, UT, USA: FamilySearch, 2019.

⁷⁴ Martin Burleson in the U.S., Newspapers.com™ Marriage Index, 1800s-current. *Oakland Tribune*; Publication Date: 15/ Oct/ 1944; Publication Place: *Oakland, California, USA*; URL: <https://www.newspapers.com/image/185507786/?article=244ee8e4-cbf4-4f69-83ec-e433af1d7b0e/2dc4fb63-2401-433b-b42a-4fc041827c40&focus=0.27606824,0.06756508,0.39380947,0.31260812&xid=3398>. License issued 15 Oct 1944. The *Oakland Tribune* (California) listed Martin as Missing and the husband of Barbara Jean Burleson of Oakland.

⁷⁵ U. S. Navy Muster Rolls, 1 July 1945. Fold 3. Retrieved on 7 July 2024, from <https://www.fold3.com/sub-image/273990255/burleson-martin-l-us-world-war-ii-navy-muster-rolls-1938-1949>

The USS *Indianapolis* was a veteran ship, laid down in 1930, and had served as ship of state for President Franklin D. Roosevelt and as the 5th Fleet flagship for Admiral Spruance in WWII. She had participated in a number of campaigns and had earned 10 battle stars.⁷⁶ The final mission for the USS *Indianapolis* and for Seaman First Class Burleson was her top-secret mission was to carry parts of the first atomic bomb used in combat to a U.S. airbase on Tinian.



President Franklin Roosevelt aboard the USS *Indianapolis*

Based on his first received date on the USS *Indianapolis*, SEA1 Burleson would have most likely participated in the ship's 1943 Aleutian operations.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1943, USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) operated in Aleutian waters escorting American convoys and covering amphibious assaults. In May the Navy took Attu, the first territory stolen by the Japanese to be reconquered by the United States. After Attu was proclaimed secure, the U.S. forces focused their attention on Kiska, the last enemy stronghold in the Aleutians.⁷⁷

Scores of articles and books have been authored on the sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*. The following extract from the Navy History and Heritage Command details her final mission.

After repairs and overhaul, USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) received orders to proceed at high speed to Tinian, carrying parts and nuclear material to be used in the atomic bombs which were soon to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Due to the urgency of her mission, USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) departed San Francisco on 16 July 1945, foregoing her post-repair shakedown period. Touching at Pearl Harbor on 19 July, she raced on unescorted and reached Tinian on 26 July, covering some 5,000 miles from San Francisco in only ten days.

Early in the morning, 15 minutes into the mid watch on 30 July 1945, two heavy explosions occurred against her starboard side forward, and she capsized and sank in 12 minutes, at 12-02°N, 134-48°E. USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) had been hit by two torpedoes from Japanese submarine I-58. Upon completion of rescue operations, 8 August 1945, a radius of 100 miles had been combed by day and by night, saving 316 of the crew of 1,195 men.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Naval History and Heritage Command, USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35). Retrieved on 7 July 2024, from <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhmc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/alphabetical-listing/i/uss-indianapolis--ca-35-0.html>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.



Artist's impression of the sinking of Indianapolis shows the warship engulfed in flames in the distance with Japanese submarine I-58 on the surface in the foreground.

Michael J. Hancock, archives technician at the National Archives, wrote the following in 2020 marking the 75th anniversary of the sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*, describing the terrible fate of the crew.

As fires raged below, the vessel began to list onto its side. Then, the order came to abandon ship. Approximately 900 sailors, survivors of the initial torpedo attack, were left drifting in groups in the expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Beneath them, a far more sinister danger was lurking. Hundreds of sharks, drawn by the carnage of the disaster, moved toward the survivors.

After feeding on the dead from the explosions, the sharks turned their attention toward those still alive, bobbing in the large swells of the ocean surface. Some of the men pounded the water, kicking and yelling when the sharks approached. Many decided that grouping together was their best defense but with each attack came clouds of blood in the water followed by more screaming and splashing which only encouraged more sharks to strike.

Desperate to survive, and with no drinking water and many hallucinating, survivors were finally spotted days later by a U.S. Navy plane. Shortly after 11 a.m. on the fourth day, the survivors were accidentally discovered by Lt. Wilbur C.

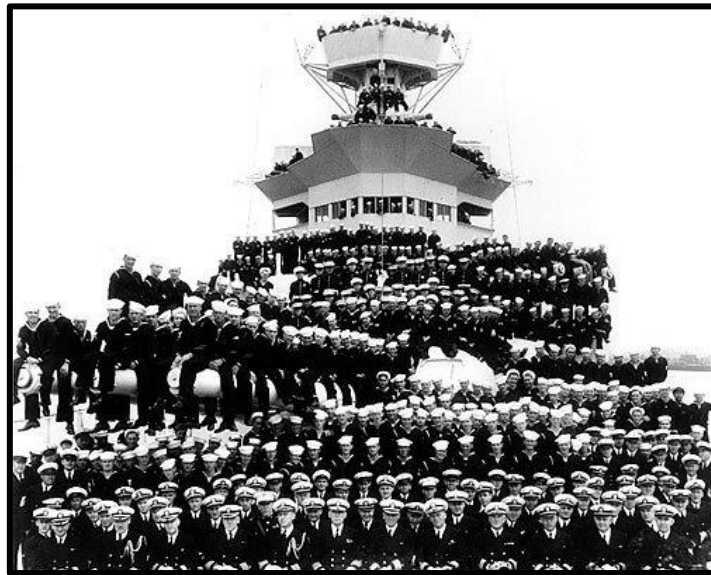
Gwinn, flying his PV-1 Ventura bomber on routine antisubmarine patrol. He radioed his base at Peleliu and sent out the alert, “many men in the water.”⁷⁹



Robert Shaw, left, as Quint and Richard Dreyfuss, right, as Matt Hooper in the film Jaws discussing the USS Indianapolis

The fate of the USS *Indianapolis* crew was highlighted in Stephen Spielberg’s film adaptation of Peter Benchley’s novel *Jaws* (dramatic addition not included in the novel). In the film, actor Robert Shaw regaled his story as a crewmember of USS *Indianapolis*.

In total, approximately 900 lost their lives as a result of the sinking, the greatest single loss of life at sea from a single ship in U.S. Navy history. SEA1 Burlleson and his crew’s loss came a short 34 days prior to Japan’s surrender on 2 September 1945. SEA1 Burlleson was the last recorded Burlleson MIA.

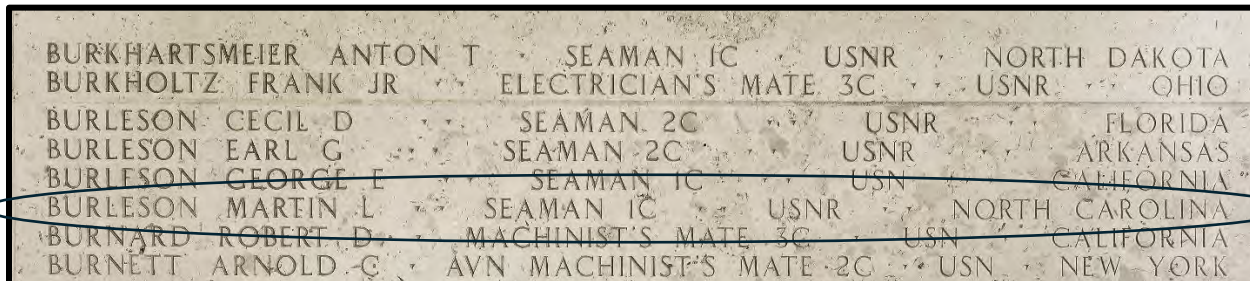


Crew of the USS Indianapolis

Seaman First Class Burlleson was lost during the incident and his remains were not recovered. He was declared dead on 30 July 1945 and his last listed status was Missing. Based on all information available, DPAA assessed the individual's case to be in the analytical category of Non-

⁷⁹ Hancock, Michael J. The Sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*, Pieces of History, National Archives. Retrieved on 7 July 2024, from <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2020/07/30/the-sinking-of-the-uss-indianapolis/>.

recoverable.⁸⁰ Seaman First Class Burleson was awarded the: Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Navy Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the Navy Expeditionary Medal.⁸¹ Today, he is memorialized on the Walls of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.⁸²



Martin L. Burleson's name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing, Manila American Cemetery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines



Cenotaph located in Avery County, North Carolina



USS Indianapolis National Memorial

He is also memorialized by a cenotaph at Buck Hill Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Newland, Avery County, North Carolina.⁸³ And finally, he is memorialized at the USS *Indianapolis* National Memorial, located in Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Martin L. Burleson in the U.S., Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, Unaccounted-for Remains, Group B (Unrecoverable), 1941-1975.

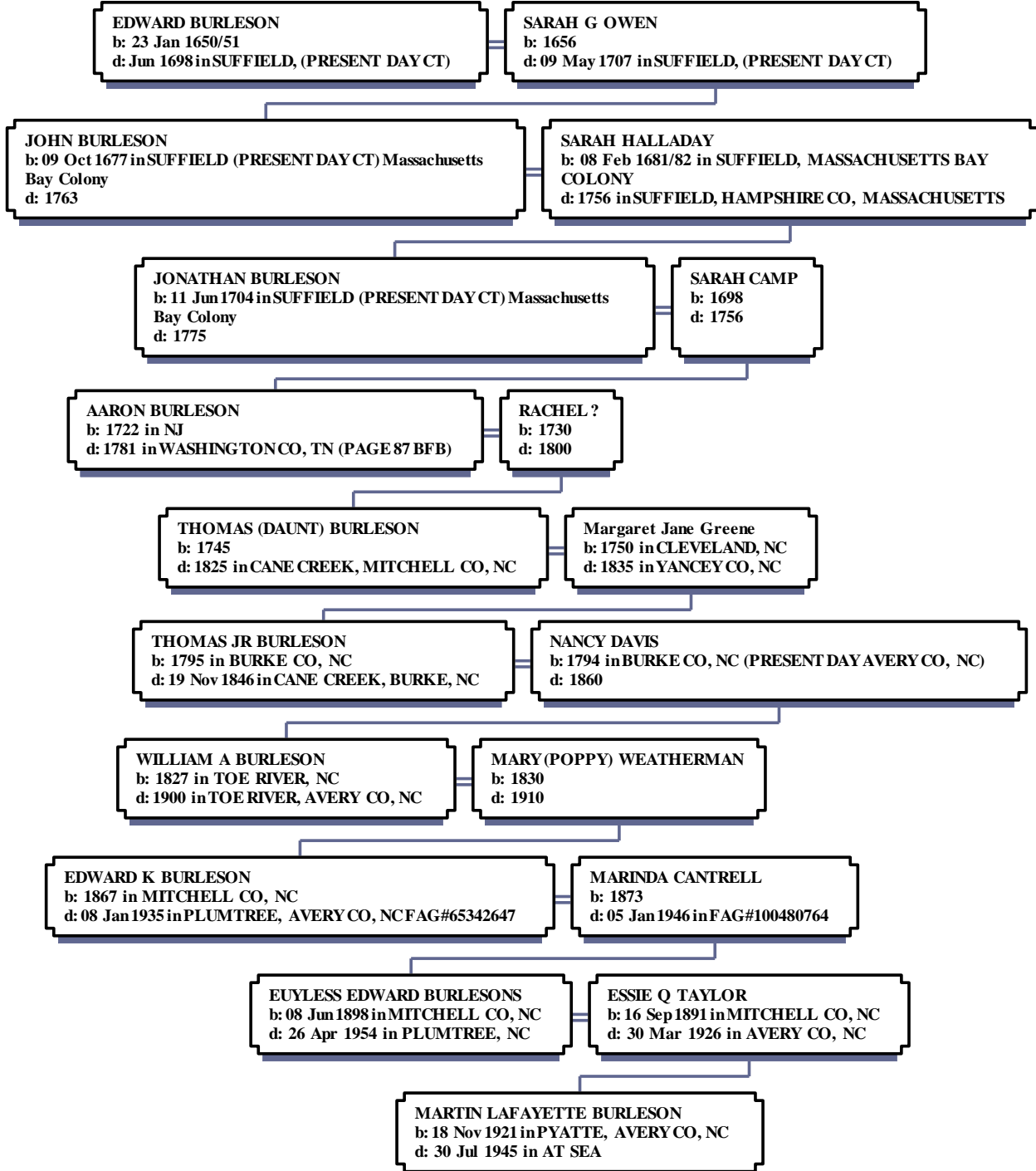
⁸¹ HonorStates.org. Martin L. Burleson World War II Gold Star Veteran from Florida. Retrieved on 30 June 30, 2024, from <https://www.honorstates.org/profiles/587186/>.

⁸² Martin L. Burleson in the U.S., Headstone and Interment Records for U.S., Military Cemeteries on Foreign Soil, 1942-1949. American Battle Monuments Commission; Arlington, VA; *Cemetery Records*. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Headstone and Interment Records for U.S., Military Cemeteries on Foreign Soil, 1942-1949* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.

⁸³ S1 Martin L. Burleson in the U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current. Retrieved on 4 July 4, 2024, from Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: *Find a Grave*. Find a Grave®. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

⁸⁴ Martin Lafayette Burleson in the U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current. USS *Indianapolis* National Memorial. Retrieved on 4 July 2024 from <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56747638/martin-lafayette-burleson>

Direct Descendants of EDWARD BURLESON





About the Author



David Burleson is a retired USAF Lieutenant Colonel, son of the late USAF Chief Master Sergeant Ned Garner Burleson, and father of the late USA Staff Sergeant Geoffrey Lance Burleson, USAF Major Jeremiah Burleson currently stationed in Anchorage, Alaska, and USAF Staff Sergeant Micah Burleson currently stationed in Tacoma, Washington. Pictured here from July 2016 is SSgt Micah Burleson and his nieces, Kat, Brylie, and Jacque—daughters of SSG Geoff L. Burleson