

Republic P-47D Thunderbolt #42-28210

July 5, 1944

2nd Lieutenant Theodore H. Norpoth, Jr., was assigned to the 216th Base Unit at Wendover Field, Utah. On the afternoon of July 5, 1944, he left the runway in P-47D #42-28210 for a high altitude acrobatic and combat training mission. He was in a flight of three aircraft which included an instructor pilot, another trainee, and himself. After climbing to 23,000 feet, the instructor pilot stated that Lt. Norpoth performed a slow roll to the left, a diving turn to the right, and then disappeared from view. The instructor momentarily turned his attention to the other student pilot. A short time later the instructor pilot tried to contact Lt. Norpoth by radio, but received no response. Another pilot waiting to land at Wendover spotted a column of smoke a few miles west of the runway, and a rescue team was sent to investigate. The team confirmed that Lt. Norpoth's Thunderbolt had impacted the ground at high speed, killing him instantly. An accident review board concluded that either a failure in the pilot's oxygen system or a high-altitude stall had caused the accident. Special thanks to Craig Fuller and Dave McCurry for help with locating this crash site. Site visited on 4/29/21.



Debris field with impact site on a small hill visible in the background



The impact site



Part of a hydraulic pump



The "89" part number prefix means this is wreckage from a P-47



An inspection cover from one of the wings



Part of an engine mount



Aluminum tubing with rubber hose and hose clamp



Part of a cylinder head from a Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engine



One of the larger pieces of wreckage



Sheet aluminum with lots of rivets in it



Ted Norpoth in a 1940 civilian photo. He was from Hollywood, California, and was only 20 years old at the time of the accident.

(Photo courtesy of Ancestry.com)



Republic P-47s at Wendover Field in December 1943

(Photo courtesy of Lt. Col (Ret.) Roland O. Byers, USAF, via Wendoverairbase.com)