

**B-24J #42-73235**

October 23, 1943

On the morning of October 23, 1943, B-24J #42-73235 took off from Mountain Home Army Air Field, Idaho, as the lead aircraft in a formation flying training mission. The aircraft was with the 470th Bomb Group, 800th Bomb Squadron. Another B-24 took off shortly afterward and approached #42-73235 at 3000 ft. to occupy the #2 position off its left wing. The pilot of the approaching aircraft misjudged his speed and distance from the lead aircraft and struck the B-24J on the trailing edge of the left wing and aft fuselage. #42-73235 continued flying a short distance until the left wing separated from the airframe and it crashed in rolling hill country several miles from the runway. All eight crewmen were killed. The other bomber, B-24E #42-7007, exploded after the mid-air collision and fell into a dry wash a quarter mile away. There were no survivors. Site visited on 4/8/20.

Crew:

|                  |                            |                        |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Instructor Pilot | Capt. William M. Semnacher | Boise, Idaho           |
| Pilot            | 2Lt. Theodore H. Franke    | Liberal, Kansas        |
| Co-Pilot         | 2Lt. James L. Heltemes     | Union, Montana         |
| Bombardier       | 2Lt. Jack C. Robinson      | Lafayette, Indiana     |
| Bombardier       | 2Lt. Alfred W. Hudson      | Peoria, Illinois       |
| Radio/Gunner     | Sgt. Robert J. Holley      | Dover, New Jersey      |
| Engineer/Gunner  | S/Sgt. Vernon V. Tippit    | Center Point, Arkansas |
| Engineer/Gunner  | Sgt. Raymond A. Bittner    | Fresno, California     |



A chunk of thick plexiglass



The noses of two practice bombs



A large geared piece of equipment



Two rocker arms from an engine





A hinged panel



Part of a control surface



Miscellaneous scraps of aluminum





A Lear Avia electric motor used for opening and closing landing gear doors



A handle



A lever from the cockpit





Part of a bomb sight



Overall view of the crash area





Capt. William M. Semnacher  
(Courtesy of Find-A-Grave.com)



Lt. James L. Heltemes with his mother, shortly before the accident

(Courtesy of Ancestry.com)





Lt. Alfred W. Hudson

(Courtesy of Find-A-Grave.com)



Lt. Jack C. Robinson  
(Courtesy of Ancestry.com)



Sgt. Robert J. Holley  
(Courtesy of Ancestry.com)