

...reports, with details regarding Bill's plane crash, dated 12/04/1945. Page 1 of 4.

December 4, 1945

APPENDICE 27

Footnote 32 Letter from Lt. Cm
Morton VC-81 confirms James
description of Billie Peelers Dea

My dear Mrs. Peeler:

I cannot tell you how shocked I was to get your letter. No apology from me could atone for your year of doubt. I simply did not know that you had not received all the facts about Billie.

There is no chance that he could have gotten out of the crash. A pilot from another base saw the accident and eiked the scene.

At that time we were temporarily living on Pitylen Island on the north side of Seadler Harbor at Manus in the Admiralty Islands. Several squadrons were brought there after the invasion of Leyte and the battle for Leyte Gulf for a rest. We had had a rough two weeks of operations and all needed some relaxation.

We were doing very little flying. Our days were spent in swimming, playing a little

baseball, and just general loafing.

One afternoon Bill and a good friend of his, Floyd Holton, decided they would like to go flying. They went to another outfit at the same base and borrowed an SB. They took off for a flight in that local area. Just before dark we got a message by radio saying that a report of a crash had come in. This report turned out to be Bill's plane.

We sent a crash boat to the scene, about five miles north of Pityler. The boat reached the spot after dark. There was nothing there but some floating wreckage.

The next day I talked to the pilot who saw the accident. He said that he was flying along fairly high and had looked down to see the SB spinning at an altitude of about 2500 feet. He saw the plane recover from this spin and then go into another spin. The recovery from this second spin was just started when the plane struck the water and sank almost immediately. No one came to the

This is a letter from William B. Morton, Lt. Cmdr, Staff/ Com1st Carrier Task Forces. It is addressed to Bill Peeler's parents, with details regarding Bill's plane crash, dated 12/04/1945. Page 3 of 4.

surface. This pilot made the radio report and then remained to circle the spot and direct the crash boat.

Another search went out the next morning. Nothing was found but an oil slick.

There is no sure explanation of the cause of the accident since the plane was not seen before it was spinning. Apparently the plane went into a progressive spin after recovering from the first spin. And there was not enough air space to recover the second time.

All of us felt Bill's loss very heavily. He was a stout-hearted gentleman whom we all respected as a fine man and admired as a good fellow. His record in the invasion of Leyte and in the Battle for Leyte Gulf was a credit to himself and to the squadron. You have every reason to be proud of your son.

The squadron returned to the States last March. We were scattered to the

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four words then. I think most of the pilots returned to civilian life though about twenty elected to stay in the services.

Lloyd Holton was not a pilot. He was attached to the squadron as engineering maintenance officer. Lloyd and Bill were close friends though they had known each other only a few months. Lloyd's parents live in Toledo, Ohio, I am sorry that I do not have the exact address to give you.

Please do not hesitate to call on me if there is anything I can do. You can always reach me through my home address.

Very sincerely yours,
Bill Morton

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