

The crash of B-24 '41-28822'
at Sint-Jans-Molenbeek on 23th of June 1944



Mario Baudewyns, 2020.

Prologue : The story according to the eyewitnesses.

The story of the eyewitnesses starts on a Friday-evening in June 1944. In an occupied village called Dilbeek, west of Brussels, a group of teenager-boys including my father at the age of 14, witness a big airplane going down in fire a few miles from the church where they are hanging around. They assume it's a 'Flying Fortress' and hurry towards the crash-site. On arriving two kilometres north, at the Moortebeekstraat in Dilbeek, they are chased away by German soldiers. According to my father and another eyewitness, following event took place just moments before their arrival : one airman had bailed out with his parachute and was lying in the middle of the street in front of Café Bij Crabbe, a local pub. All of a sudden, Germans arrive on the spot, coming from the other side, from Molenbeek. They have ordered the local doctor Constant De Vos to assist them. What happens afterwards with the airman is unknown to the eyewitnesses. The Missing Air Crew Report 6263 mentions that all nine crew-members were killed that Friday 23th of June 1944, at 2040 h, KIA.

My father, Jaak Baudewyns and his friend Albert Sterckx, confirmed this story, being the last witnesses alive. (note: my father died February 6th, 2023). Another witness, Marcel Leys, remembers following : *"I remember walking into the Sleutelplasstreet with my mother. A bit down the road, might have been the Kasterlindenstreet or the Palokestreet, we finally saw the airplane. Germans were evacuating a body and we were chased away immediately. I remember the wreckage was hanging in low trees. When I check on Google Earth, than I presume it was on the corner of Palokestraat/Berchemstraat/Kasterlindenstraat. We didn't really walk that far and certainly not into open field."*

One fact stands : all three witnesses indicate the same spot being the crash-site.

For decades this story was told and told again and supposing that these testimonials are correct concerning the surviving airman, who was he and what was his fate ? I decided it was time to unravel this mystery and document the dramatic fate of these young aviators as accurate as possible.



The crash-site according to the eyewitnesses: Molenbeek-Saint-Jean on the right (Brussels), the curved street being the border with Dilbeek on the left (Flanders).

Part 1 : The plane, the heavy bomber B-24 Liberator.



A B-24H Liberator in 'olive drab', camouflage colour up an grey below. This plane shows no ensignes, leaving factory on a test flight and not assigned yet.

The crashed plane was not, as my father and his friends thought, a B-17 Flying Fortress but a B-24H Liberator designed by Consolidated Aircraft and built by Douglas at Tulsa with production number B-24H-15-DT.

The bomber had serial number 41-28822 of the 836th Bomb Squadron (insigne '2G'), stationed at the 487th Bomb Group Heavy (insigne 'P' on tail wings) at Lavenham Station 137, Suffolk, United Kingdom. The 487th Bomb Group consisted of four squadrons (836, 837, 838 and 839), each squadron having 12 bombers. In total the Group consisted of 48 airplanes (B-24 and B-17), 294 officers and 1487 enlisted men.

Aircraft Name	Aircraft Type	Aircraft Number	Aircraft Squadron	Squadron Code	Squadron Callsign	Aircraft Callsign	Aircraft Notes
41-28822	B-24H	41-28822	836	2G	Winner	Q	In original deployment, Shot down 23-Jun-44, Flak hit, aircraft disintegrated mid-air May have been named "Hitler's Gremlin"

According to the 487th Bomb Group Association (<http://www.487thbg.org/>) the plane bore the nickname 'Hitler's Gremlin', called after a Bugs Bunny movie in which the rabbit duels with a gremlin, an airplane saboteur-creature. According to my father the crashed plane was unpainted aluminium but that is far from sure, seen the fact 41-28822 was an early B-24, still painted olive and grey. Later 'replacement-planes' in the bomb group were left unpainted.



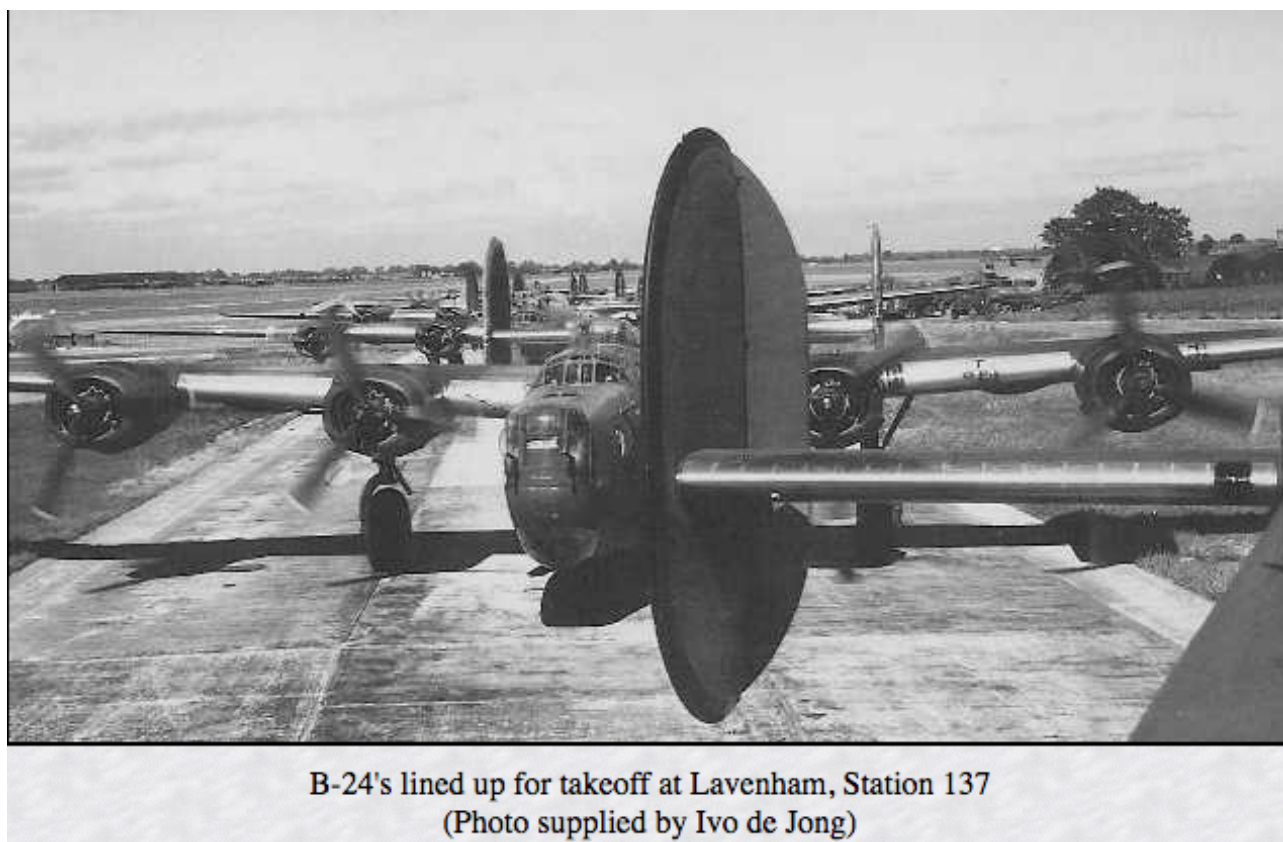
Ford B-24H-15-FO Liberator Bomber 42-52431 , 487th Bomb Group 836th Bomb Squadron 8th AF, NOSE ART "SOLID SENDER"

The B-24 42-52431 'Solid Sender' (an armoured plate under the cockpit window partially covers the nose art painting) was also stationed at Lavenham and made part of the same Bomb Squadron 836; Possibly they flew together with the unfortunate crew of the 41-28822 that Friday 23th of June 1944...

A list of B-24s belonging to the 836 Bomb Squadron totals 18 planes, not taking in account the losses of planes.

serienr.	type	plane's name	crew
41-28822	B-24H-15-DT		Van Dyke-crew
41-29528		Ole Andy of Kansas	
42-52431		Solid Sender	
42-52444		Lazy Lady	
42-52452		Cold Turkey	
42-52572		The Spook	
42-52578		Lumbering Lizzy	
42-52580		Tail Wind	
42-52609		Murph's Mighty Mob	
42-52625		Mac's Mighty Midgets	
42-52636			Wiley-crew
42-52653		Sleepless Knights	
42-52657		Dreamboat	
42-52708			Davis-crew
42-52736		Mountain Time	
42-52761		Miss Bea Havin	
42-52766		Sammy's Niece	Peyton-crew (later to the 838th BS)
42-52767		My Gal Eileen	

As from september 1944 the squadron is consisting of only B-17-bombers.



B-24's lined up for takeoff at Lavenham, Station 137
(Photo supplied by Ivo de Jong)

Part two : the crew

The crew was always referred to by the name of the pilot : 'the crew of Second Lieutenant Joseph Semes Van Dyke'.



The crew from left to right: Sgt William H. Spindler (tail gunner), S/Sgt Charles H. Crossley (assistant engineer), 2nd Lt Rudolph J. Zebora (bombardier), Sgt Bradford A. Rupe (nose turret gunner), S/Sgt Leslie E. Kraus (radio operator), 2nd Lt Elliot L. Katz (navigator), 2nd Lt Merle J. Thies (co-pilot), 2nd Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke (pilot).

This picture shows the Van Dyke-crew during training in Alamogordo Army Air Base in New Mexico with the exception of Sgt. James R. Glenn (ball-turret-gunner) and Sgt. John E. Snead (engineer).

Lt. Elliot L. Katz, third of the right with his hands in his pockets, didn't take part to the fatal mission.

This totals nine crew-members on that last mission. The crew-roster on that 23th of June 1944 was as follows (source : https://nl.findagrave.com/memorial/56361392/joseph-semmes-van_dyke) :

- Van Dyke, Joseph S - 2/Lt - Pilot - KIA (Killed in action)
- Thies, Merle J - 2/Lt - Copilot - KIA
- Zebora, Rudolph J - 2/Lt - Navigator - KIA
- Kraus, Leslie E - S/Sgt - Radio Operator - KIA
- Glenn, James R - Sgt - Ball Turret - KIA
- Crossley, Charles H - S/Sgt - Top Turret - KIA
- Spindler, William H - Sgt - Tail Turret - KIA
- Rupe, Bradford A - Sgt - Nose Turret - KIA
- Snead, John E - T/Sgt - Engineer - KIA



Joseph Semmes Van Dyke, pilot, born 1921 in Detroit, Michigan. He completed his 'high school' and worked as an office-clerk. For months after the death of his mother, he enlisted on 28th of April 1942 and starts the pilot-training at the U.S. Army Air Corps, Detroit. He receives his 'wings' and the grade of Second Lieutenant on 28th of July 1943.

He was assigned a crew, and by December 1943 began B-24 crew training at Davis-Monthan Field near Tucson, Arizona. In January 1944 the Van Dyke crew was assigned to the 836th Bomb Squadron of the 487th Bomb Group at Alamogordo Army Air Base, New Mexico. There they completed B-24 crew training, and deployed with the Group to England in March 1944. They flew B-24H 41-28822 from Alamogordo, New Mexico to Lavenham, England via the southern Atlantic ferry route—a journey of about 10,000 miles—and arrived at Lavenham by mid-April 1944. The 487th Bomb Group was based at Army Air Forces Station 137 near Lavenham, Suffolk, England, and was part of the 8th U.S. Army Air Force in Europe.

Two months later he and his crew were killed. He was buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. After the war his remains were reinterred at Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium, in Plot B, Row 40, Grave 11. He leaves behind his father, brother and sister. He was only 23 years old.



Merle John Thies, co-pilot, born 1st April 1916 in Moody County, South Dakota, married to Pearl Rislov on 8th August 1941. He graduated Pipestone High School and worked at his father's farm until he enlisted at Camp Riley, Kansas on 7th October 1942. He entered active service at Camp Riley, Kansas, on October 7, 1942, and was eventually selected for Army Air Forces pilot training. He graduated and received his wings and commission at Freeman Field on November 3, 1943. His next stop was the Army Air Base at Camp Kearns near Salt Lake City, Utah, where he was assigned as copilot on the heavy bomber crew of 2/Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke. Lt Thies and his eight crewmates were killed in action on June 23, 1944, when their aircraft, B-24H 41-28822, was shot down near Brussels, Belgium. He died one month before his son was born. He was buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. After the war, his remains were reinterred at Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium, in Plot D, Row 32, Grave 1.



Rudolph James 'Rudy' Zebora, navigator, was born at Meriden, New Haven County, Connecticut on March 27, 1919. He completed four years of college and worked as a general industry clerk. He was single when he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps at Hartford, Connecticut on July 18, 1942. He completed Army Air Forces bombardier training in Class 43-14 at Midland Army Air Field, Texas, and was commissioned there on October 7, 1943. He was assigned to the heavy bomber crew of Second Lieutenant Joseph S. Van Dyke.

Lt Zebora and his eight crewmates were killed in action on June 23, 1944, at the age of 25. He was buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. His remains were returned to the United States and reinterred at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Meriden, Connecticut in 1949, next to his parents and his brother Joseph Zebora, who served in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II.

Staff Sergeant Leslie Earl Kraus, radio operator, was born at Covington, Kenton County, Kentucky on March 7, 1923. He worked as a machine operator (gear cutter) at Wright Aeronautical Corporation in Lockland, Ohio, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army at Cincinnati, Ohio on January 19, 1943.

He completed Army Air Forces basic training at Saint Petersburg, Florida; radio operator training at Scott Field, Illinois; and aerial gunnery training at Tyndall Field, Florida. He was then assigned as radio operator on the heavy bomber crew of Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke.

S/Sgt Kraus and his eight crewmates were killed in action on June 23, 1944, at the age of 21. He was buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. His remains were returned to the United States and reinterred at Saint John's Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, Kentucky in 1949.





Sergeant James Robinson 'Jim' Glenn, was born at York County, South Carolina on September 3, 1919. He completed three years of high school at Gastonia High School and works at his father's farm when in 1940 his mother dies. He was single, without dependents, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on March 14, 1941. He married after enlisting. His wife was Rebecca Livingston (Wilson) Glenn. They had a son, James Wilson Glenn (30 Apr 1941 - 10 Nov 1952) who died of polio at age 11.

He was assigned to the Van Dyke crew after mid-April 1944, when the crew arrived in England, which explains his absence on the crew-photo during training in the U.S.

Sgt Glenn and his eight crewmates were killed in action on June 23, 1944 and buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. After the war his remains were reinterred at Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium, in Plot D, Row 33, Grave 7.

He was only 25 years of age.

A ball turret gunner squeezes himself in or out position. Photo taken in the Pacific (Air Ministry Second World War Official Collection_CI1028.jpg).



Charles H. Crossley, Staff Sgt, (top turret gunner), born in Montour Township, Columbia County, Pennsylvania on april 20, 1923. He graduated college and worked as a driver. He was single when he enlisted the U.S. Army at Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania on february 1th, 1943. He is 'killed in action' on june 23th, 1944, is buried in Evere and is reinterred at hte Ardennes American Cemetery in Neuville-en-Condroz. He has a cenotaph at Elan Memorial Park in Lime Ridge, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, where his brothers Joel and Paul are buried. He was only 21 years of age.





William Howard Spindler, Sgt, (tail turret gunner) was born at Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, on February 15, 1924. He was the oldest of three children, his parents both graduated from university and was accepted to attend Colgate University in the Fall, but gave that up to serve his country. He was single, without dependents, when he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps at New York City, New York on June 27, 1942. He completed Army Air Forces aerial gunnery training, and was assigned as tail turret gunner on the heavy bomber crew of 2/Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke. In December 1943 the Van Dyke crew began B-24 crew training at Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona. In January 1944 the Van Dyke crew was assigned to the 836th Bomb Squadron of the 487th Bomb Group at Alamogordo Army Air Base, New Mexico. There they completed B-24 crew training, and deployed with the

Group to England in March 1944. It is my belief he wasn't 'killed in action' on that same moment of the crash that 23th of June, 1944. (see later findings). He too was buried at Evere and reinterred after the war at the Ardennes American Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condroy in Plot B, row 40, grave 10. He has a cenotaph on his mother's grave marker at Greenwood Cemetery in Brielle, Monmouth County, New Jersey.



Bradford Asa 'Brad' Rupe, Sergeant, was born at Rock Port, Atchison County, Missouri on December 30, 1911 and married to Jayne I. (Taylor) Rupe. They have a daughter Theresa Jayne Rupe. He was a car-mecanic and a truckdriver when he enlisted in the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on April 15, 1943, and went to Atlantic City, New Jersey for basic training. He completed Army Air Forces aerial gunnery training at Tyndall Field in Panama City, Florida; and armament training at Lowry Field, Colorado. He was then assigned as nose turret gunner on the heavy bomber crew of 2nd Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke. He was killed in action in the crash on June 23, 1944. He was buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, then reinterred at the U.S. Military Cemetery Neuville-en-Condroy, in Plot B, Row 5, Grave 119 on March 18, 1945. His remains were returned to the United States for reinterment in June 1949 at Green Hill Cemetery in Rock Port, Missouri, next to his parents.



John Edward Snead II, Technical Sgt, was born at Guntersville, Marshall County, Alabama, on January 2, 1920, married to Mary Ethel (Morgan) Snead. He enlisted on November 12, 1941 the U.S. Army Air Corps at Fort McPherson, Georgia, after having worked as a semiskilled mining machine operator. After his training, he was first assigned to the antisubmarine patrol in the Antisubmarine Squadron, flying from from bases at Florida, Cuba, Puerto Rico, British Guyana, Suriname, Brazil. On October 1, 1943 the 8th Antisubmarine Squadron was designated the 839th Bomb Squadron, and was assigned to the newly formed 487th Bomb Group. T/Sgt Snead, then a rated aerial gunner and flight engineer, was assigned to the heavy bomber crew of Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke.

He is killed in action on June 23, 1944 and buried initially at Evere Cemetery in Brussels, Belgium. After the war, his remains were reinterred at Ardennes American Cemetery, Belgium, in Plot B, Row 40, Grave 1. Five months after his sudden death, his son John Edward Snead III (12 Nov 1944 - 9 Mar 1971) is born. His widow remarried after the war.



The Ardennes American Cemetery, Neuville-en-Condroz. Front left and right : the graves of Joseph Van Dycke and William Spindler.

Part 3 : The mission and the crash.



A picture of a K20-camera on board one of the planes. It shows the bombardments on the German military airfield of Coulommiers; 261 ton of bombs were dropped that day on the Coulommiers airfield.

According to the American Airforce Museum (<https://www.americanairmuseum.com/mission/143>) the operation on June 23, 1944 was called 'Mission 436'. It consisted of two bombardments on German strategic military airfields in occupied France at Coulommiers and Juvin-court. These bombardments supported the allied forces after the Operation Overlord (D-day) on Tuesday June 6th, 1944, the landing at Normandy. Two bomb-divisions took part at this mission : the 2nd Bomb Division and the 3th Bomb Division, each consisting of several Bomb Groups and each Bomb Group of several Bomb Squadrons. The Van Dyke-crew was part of the 836 Bombs Squadron of the 487th Bomb Group, on his turn part of the 3th Bomb Division.

The crews only got their briefing of the mission and the destination at the very last moment. Many of the men considered it an easy mission, a 'milk-run', despite the duration of more than two hours flight above enemy lines. The 37 B-24's were escorted by 155 P-47 fighter-planes and 83 P-51's for their safety. Each B-24 had to drop approx. 3 tons of bombs on the airfields. In total 61 tons of bombs were dropped on Juvin-court and 261 tons on Coulommiers.

From the diaries of a few captains :

(#28) June 23. Coulommiers and Juvin-court Airfields, France

Major George M. Richmond (flying the B-17G #44-8808) was the Air Leader of thirty-seven B-24s, which took off at 1615 to bomb the Coulommiers Airfield. One B-24 aborted because its pilot had severe



The empty 'bomb-bay' of a B-24. Note the small walking bridge in the middle...the men were carrying oxigen-masks and heavy proctecting clothes.

stomach cramps. The formation crossed the French coast in good order at 1855, and a small break in the clouds enabled the leader to verify that he was one minute late. The navigator used dead reckoning from the coast to the target. The target was obscured by clouds, and the lead and low Squadrons did not drop their bombs. The high Squadron was flying a little to the right and found a small break in the clouds. It dropped its 624 100-pound bombs on the primary target at 1945. The Group then proceeded to the secondary target, the airfield at Juvincourt, where the other two Squadrons dropped 1248 100-pound bombs with good effect. About eight planes, probably JU 88s were seen on the field, and one was burning. The Group rallied and passed through the Mons-Charleroi flak corridor, where meager but very accurate flak appeared. The Germans probably moved a mobile flak battery to this area, and fired on the 487th Bomb Group at 19,000 feet. The B-24 piloted by Lt Van Dyke took direct hits and disintegrated. The crew did not have a chance to bail out. Those who witnessed the sudden demise of Van Dyke's crew realized that even an evening run on a relatively low risk French target could mean a swift and cruel death. The planes landed at Lavenham at 2200. Fourteen of them had received minor damage from flak. (Flak stands for 'Flugzeug Abwehr Kanonen').

According to my father this anti-aircraft battery was mounted on train wagons at the West Station (Gare de l'Ouest) in Anderlecht, only 3 kms to the east. These batteries fired 88mm granates that exploded at the planes altitude, perforating the light aluminium bodies of the planes with their deadly shrapnel and causing a lot of casualties amongst the crews. Because of these flak holes in the planes and the difficult evaction, the men called the B-24 a gas leaking coffin...



The 41-28822 of the Van Dyke-crew was hit twice directly in the open bomb-bay at high altitude, 19 000 feet or 5,8 kms. A quick evacuation must have been impossible, the plane exploded almost immediately. It was the only B-24 of 36 that was shot down that evening...

From the diary of S/Sgt Bruce MacFarland (ball-turret gunner, 'Picadilly Lilley', #43-38044 - B-17 of the 837th Squadron) :

'MacFarland had witnessed the tragic loss of Van Dyke and his crew: (#18) Briefing at 0200 for a target at Jauvin

Court near Paris. Today we ran into some good flak in the target area - an airfield which was successfully bombed. On the way back we got off course and wandered over Bruxelles and smack into heavy flak. A plane in the high Squadron, Lt Van Dyke, received two direct bursts in his open bomb-bay. He immediately burst on fire then exploded. The tail section went up, the left wing went straight out and up, then spiraled down. The rest went off in another direction, all three parts on fire. We got a couple of flak holes, one through the nose turret again.'

According to another eyewitness report from the MACR *'packed shutes and other flying equipment were seen to fall out of the plane as it exploded. One shute was seen to open but was enveloped in flames.'* (Fields of Honor database; Spindler, William H.)

With the help of Ivo de Jong, I received the German file KU 2356 (B) *'Meldung über den Abschuss eines US-amerikanischen Flugzeuges'* , 'Report of the shooting down of a US plane' (A below). It states seven identified men; Van Dyke, Zebora, Crossley, Kraus, Rupe, Snead and Glenn, and adds *'2 unbekannte Tote'*, two unknown death. This can only refer to Merle Thies (co-pilot) and William Spindler (tail turret gunner).

Another German register of the casualties of the shooting down KU 2356 states the seven identified men and *'ein unbekannter Tote (verbrannt)'* -one unknown death (burned)- and *'ein unbekannter Tote (im Lw. Lazarett Brüssel-St.Gilles gestorben (Kopfverletzung)'* -one unknown death (in military hospital Brussels Saint-Gilles deceased (head injury). Recent communication (May 2020) with Martha Spindler Brown, the sister of William Spindler, confirms the cause of death of her brother being a head injury.

A final German file called *'Angaben bei Bergung von Toten'*, information concerning the recovery of the death (C), mentions an unknown person being transported by a (German) captain by means of a Belgian

car to the Luftwaffe Lazarett St.Gilles.

This must have been undoubtedly William Spindler, the tail gunner, the boy my father saw lying down with his shute, still alive, 1 km south from the crash-site in the Moortebeekstraat. The hospital they took him was named *'Luftwaffen Lazarett (o) 10/XI Brüssel St.Gilles'* by the Germans but was the *'Hôpital Civil de Saint-Gilles'* at the avenue Molire at Forest (Vorst), south of Brussels. In August 1944 it was abandoned by the Germans, fleeing from the advancing allied troops.



A

Abschuss einer Liberator am 23.6.44 20.41 Uhr bei Brüssel-Molenbeek							
9	USA	T. Sergt. Jehn	Snead	34163143	?	?	
10	"	Charles H.	Grossley	33462202	?	?	
11	"	Leslie E.	Kraus	35683235	?	?	
12	"	Josef S.	van Dyke	808614	?	?	
13	KW (Mulatte)	Bradford A	Rupe	37522348	?	?	
14	?	Rudolf J	Zehara	0 694997	?	?	
15	?	"	ein unbekannter Toter (verbrannt)		?	?	
16	?	?	ein unbekannter Toter (im Lw. Lazarett Brüssel-St. G1)				
17	?	James R.	Glenn	34051257	?	?	

*) Abkürzungen: K. = Kopf, H. = Hals, Br. = Brust, Ba. = Bauch, R. = Rücken, l. A. = linker Arm, (S. = Fußkammf. H. = Hiftura)

A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 10
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 11
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 12
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 13
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 14
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 15
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 16
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	engl. Ehrenfriedhof
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Brüssel Grab 17
A	-	-	-	-	-	-	Parz. 10 Reihe 21

gestorben (Kopfverletzung)

S. G. = Infanterie-Geschoss, H. Gr. = Handgranatenverletzung, Gs. V. = Kampfstoffvergiftung, Brüssel Artilleriegeschoss

erhöhtung ufw.

Oberstleutnant u. Kommandant.

**Meldung über den Abschluß eines
US-amerikanischen Flugzeuges**

Abschuß-Nr. KU 2356

Abschußtag und Zeit: 23.6.44 - 20.41
 Abschußort: Brüssel
 Flugzeugtyp: Liberator
 Meldende Dienststelle: Lg. Belgien

Besatzung:

Name und Vornamen: Geburts- und -ort:	Dienst- grad	Erk.- Marke:	gef.: verw.: tot:	Verbleib: welches Lager Art d. Verwundung Grablage
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VAN DYKE ^{34/16} Joseph S.	Offr.	0-808640	tot	beig. Engl. Ehrenfr Brüssel Gr. 12
ZEBORA ^{34/18} Rudolph J.	Offr.	0-694997	tot	dito, Gr. 14
CROSSLEY ^{34/14} Charles H.	Sgt.	636402202	tot	dito, Gr. 10
KRAUS ^{34/15} Leslie B.	Sgt.	35683235	tot	dito, Gr. 11
KUPE ^{34/17} Bradford A.	Sgt.	39522348	tot	dito, Gr. 13
SNEAD ^{34/13} John	T/Sgt.	34163143	tot	dito, Gr. 9
GLENN ^{34/21} James R.	Sgt.	34031257	tot	dito, Gr. 17
2 UNBESANNTE TOTE ^{34/19-20}				dito, Gr. 15, 16

Bemerkungen:

DULAG-LUFT, den 3.8.44 Vo.

Angaben über Gefangennahme oder Bergung von feindlichen Luftwaffenangehörigen

Dulag-Luft, Wetzlar

Meldung wird erstattet durch:

Dienststelle:

Fl. Herstkommantur (v) 210/XI

Ort:

Brüssel-Evere

Zeit:

23.6.44

Verteiler:

Eingang 5 JULI 1944

E. Lg. Kdo. **Zentralkart u. Meldest.**

Auswertestelle West, Oberursel i/Ta.
(über Kgf.-Auffangstelle).

Betr.: Abschuss

~~XXXXXX~~

~~Abschuss~~

~~XXXXXX~~

bei

einer **Liberator**

am **23.6.44**

um **20.41** Uhr.

Brüssel-Molenbeek

Personalien des Angehörigen der feindlichen Luftwaffe

Familiennamen („Surname“)
„Last Name“

?

Vornamen („Christian Names“)
„First Names“

?

Dienststrang („Rank“)

?

Erkennungsnummer („Service-
Serial-Number“)

?

Nationalität

(RAF, RCAF, RNZAF, RAAF, Rhodesier, Pole, usw.— USA Air Corps)

Angaben bei Gefangennahme

Zeitpunkt der Gefangennahme

Genaue Ortsangabe der Gefangennahme

Gefangennahme erfolgte durch

Der Gefangene trug Uniform
Zivilkleidung

Etwas: Unterstellung unter Dienststellen der GFP oder
des SD zur Ermittlung der Feindbegünstigung

Lazarettlieferung:

Zeitpunkt der Überführung zur Kgf.-Auffangstelle.

Sonstige Angaben (Fluchtversuch, Besonderheiten im Ver-
halten des Kgf. usw.):

Angaben bei Bergung von Toten

Zeitpunkt der Auffindung **im Lazarett verstorben**

Ort der Auffindung **(Lw. Lazarett Brüssel-
St. Gilles)**

Zustand der Leiche **Kopfverletzung**

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke

**(wurde durch einen Hptm. der Lw.
mittels eines belg. Kraftwagens nach
dem Lazarett verbracht)**

Wodurch wurden die Personalien des Toten festgestellt?

Funktionsabzeichen:

Ort und Zeitpunkt der Beisetzung (Grablage):

folgt

Major u. Offz. z. b. V.

Rückseite beachten!

Part 4 : The crash site today.

The site of the crash is nowadays practically unchanged (exceptional for Belgium) since it has become a protected 50 ha nature park called Scheutbos at Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Brussels. The meadow over which 41-28822 exploded and crashed is rented to a local farmer for his cows and lies on the border with Dilbeek, a Flemish community in Flanders. The rest of the parc consists of bushes and trees.



The crash site today, as indicated by the three remaining eyewitnesses, most accurately in the corner of the Kasterlindenstraat and the Palokestraat.

Thanks to the efforts of the president of Scheutbos, Mr. Jean Leveque, a memorial will be erected in the beginning of 2021, an information panel and installation in the centre of the parc. After 76 years of oblivion and confusion the story of the nine young men who lost their lives in seconds can finally be told and given a place. I am very thankful to a number of dedicated people who gave me excellent and detailed information; Benny Ceulaers of the Planehunters, Ivo de Jong, Paul Webber, the eyewitnesses Jaak Baudewyns, Albert Sterckx and Marcel Leys, Martha Brown Spindler and many more to come...

Mario Baudewyns
Dilbeek, May 21th, 2020.



The crash site, 23th of June 2020. In the background Brussels and Anderlecht.



On this site an American B-24 Liberator (41-28822) was shot down and crashed on 23 June 1944. It was assigned to the 487th Bomb Group (Heavy), stationed at Army Air Forces Station 137 near Lavenham, England. All nine crew members were killed.

Hier stortte op 23 juni 1944 een Amerikaanse B-24 Liberator (41-28822) neer van de 487th Bomb Group (Heavy), gestationeerd in het Army Air Forces Station 137 nabij Lavenham, Engeland. Alle negen bemanningsleden kwamen om.

Ici, le 23 juin 1944, un bombardier Américain B-24 Liberator (41-28822) a été abattu, attaché au 487th Bomb Group (Heavy), stationné à l'Army Air Forces Station 137 à Lavenham, Angleterre. Les neuf membres de l'équipage sont décédés.



2Lt Joseph S. Van Dyke,
pilot
1921 - 1944



2Lt Merle J. Thies,
co-pilot
1916 - 1944



2Lt Rudolph J. Zebora,
navigator
1919 - 1944



T/Sgt John E. Sneed,
engineer
1920 - 1944



Sgt Bradford A. Rupe,
nose turret gunner
1911 - 1944



Sgt James R. Glenn,
ball turret gunner
1919 - 1944



Sgt Leslie E. Kraus,
radio-operator
1923 - 1944

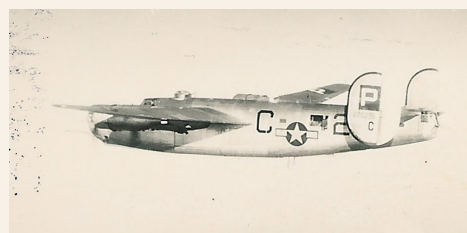


S/Sgt Charles H. Crossley,
top turret gunner
1923 - 1944



Sgt William H. Spindler,
tail turret gunner
1924 - 1944

That 23rd of June 1944, after the Normandy landings, on the 6th of June 1944, 36 B-24's of the 487th Bomb Group dropped their bombs on two German airfields in Coulommiers and Juvincourt in Northern-France. On the flight back over Brussels, they were hit by flak, probably fired from the West Station in Anderlecht. The aircraft 41-28822 of the Van Dyke-crew was hit twice by granates in the open bomb-bay and disintegrated. All crew-members were killed, one airman was seen to have bailed out with his parachute but died afterwards of his injuries. They were buried initially at Evere Cemetery, Brussels. After the war, six of the men were re-buried in the Ardennes American Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condroz, three men were repatriated to the United States.



Après le débarquement en Normandie du 6 juin 1944, trente-six bombardiers B-24 du 487th Bomb Group revenaient d'une mission de bombardement des aérodromes de Coulommiers et Juvincourt, près de Laon. Pendant leur retour vers l'Angleterre, ils sont pris sous le tir de la FLAK allemande (Flugzeug Abwehr Kanone). Deux obus de FLAK tirés depuis la gare de l'ouest ont touché l'appareil de l'équipage Van Dyke de plein fouet, dont un au moins a explosé dans la soute à bombes restée ouverte ; l'avion s'est désintégré au-dessus du Scheutbos. Les neuf membres de l'équipage sont tués sur le coup. Seul un des 9 membres de l'équipage a pu sauter en parachute, mais il n'a pas survécu à ses blessures. Tous ont été initialement enterrés au cimetière d'Evere. Après la guerre, six aviateurs ont été réenterrés au Ardennes American Cemetery à Neuville-en-Condroz, trois ont été rapatriés aux Etats-Unis.

Na de landing te Normandie op 6 juni 1944, voerden zesendertig B-24's van de 487th Bomb Group op 23 juni 1944 bombardementen uit op twee Duitse vliegvelden te Coulommiers en Juvincourt in Noord-Frankrijk. Op hun terugvlucht naar Engeland over Brussel kwamen ze terecht in Duitse flak-beschietingen (Flugzeug Abwehr Kanone), waarschijnlijk vanaf het Weststation te Anderlecht. Het toestel 41-28822 van de Van Dyke-bemanning werd daarbij fataal geraakt door twee granaatslagen in de geopende bommenruimte. Het toestel ontplotte en scheurde in drie stukken die in de bomen van Scheutbos terecht kwamen. Alle vliegeniers kwamen daarbij om, één bemanningslid kon met zijn parachute ontkomen maar bezweek kort daarna aan zijn verwondingen. Alle negen werden ze eerst begraven op het kerkhof van Evere. Na de oorlog werden zes van hen herbegraven op het Ardennes American Cemetery te Neuville-en-Condroz, drie lichamen werden gerepatrieerd naar de Verenigde Staten.

*I remember you, my young brothers,
as we were, as it was.
This is the resting place of our memory,
as it always will be.*

487th crew member, 1996.

We wish to thank the 487th Bomb Group (H) Association and asbl Scheutbos vzw.



The Memorial Van Dyke, June 2021.



Inauguration of the Memorial, June 23th, 2021, author Mario Baudewyns in the middle.