

CD-LEH

R<sup>3</sup>

United States Pacific Fleet  
Air Force  
FIGHTING SQUADRON TWENTY

Dead

**DECEASED**  
**FILE IN JACKET**

19 June 1944

To: The Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery,  
Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

Via: The Commanding Officer.

Subject: Personnel Casualties Occuring in the Line of Duty,  
Report of.

Reference: Pacific Fleet Letter 91-44.

1. Date: June 15, 1944.  
Place: Western slopes of a mountain top bearing  
242° True from U.S. Naval Air Station,  
Kaneohe Bay, T.H., distance four (4) miles.  
Nature: Missing.  
Cause: Pilot of F6F-3 airplane, disappeared from  
the Kaneohe Bay, T.H., area at about 0850  
on June 15, 1944.
2. Name: WARNKE, Harry (none)
3. Rank: Ensign, A-7(N), USNR.
4. Diagnosis: Missing.
5. Disposition of Remains: Piece of left leg was buried at  
scene of crash.

*H.R. Bierman*  
H.R. BIERMAN  
Lieut. Comdr., MC., USNR

FIRST ENDORSEMENT:

19 June 1944

From: The Commanding Officer.  
To: The Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

1. Forwarded.

*F.E. Bakutis*  
F.E. BAKUTIS  
Commander, U.S. Navy

VF-20/R6

Serial: 104

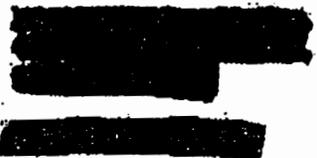
ashed File, Casualties  
and Allowments Section

*W. W. ...*

*315341*

*W. W. ...*

s/o Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, California,  
20 June 1944.



Since I last wrote you we have obtained some additional information about Harry which I am forwarding to you as promised. Unfortunately, it proves rather definitely our worst fear, namely that Harry was killed.

Four days ago the wreckage of Harry's plane was found on the top of a mountain approximately four miles from the area in which Harry and the other pilots in his flight were conducting their training. As soon as I received this information I proceeded with a salvage party to the scene of the accident to check the identity of the plane and attempt to find what I could about Harry himself. The plane itself was badly broken up and scattered over a large area. Many of the parts were buried deep in the ground. All evidence pointed to the conclusion that the plane struck the mountain with terrific force. We searched carefully through the wreckage for Harry but were able to find only enough to satisfy ourselves that he was in the plane when it crashed.

Inasmuch as no positive identification of Harry was possible, the Navy probably will continue to carry him on its records as missing until his case is reviewed by the proper Naval authorities. However, from a purely practical standpoint, I am afraid you must consider him as having been killed. There is no question about it in my mind.

We shall probably never know just how the accident occurred but I can help you to have my personal opinion. The planes were making individual runs on a fixed target on the ground. After the four planes of a division completed their runs, they would climb and prepare to make another series of individual runs. There were broken clouds at the time which made the visibility very poor especially at the altitude from which the runs were initiated. Most of the mountain tops in the vicinity were completely obscured by these clouds. In all probability when Harry completed one of his runs, he climbed into the clouds while looking for the other planes of his division, temporarily lost his way, and flew toward the mountain. Since the wreckage was on the mountain top, I believe he must have flown toward the mountain side which he saw just in time to pull up steeply in an effort to avoid it. The climb must have been so steep that the plane stalled and fell from considerable altitude, striking the top of the mountain.

VF-20/P6

Serial: 104

a/c Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, California,  
20 June 1944.

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It is with some hesitations and great sorrow that I write you this but I believe you would prefer to have all the details that I am able to give you. The only fact that may afford you some consolation is that Harry must of necessity have died instantly and, therefore, experienced no suffering.

This morning all members of the squadron attended a simple but very beautiful and moving Memorial Service to pay tribute to Harry's memory. We only wish you could have been there with us.

If I have omitted any details you would like to know or if I can help you in some way please let me know. This has been an agonizing time for all of us in the squadron and I know that your sorrow must be hard to endure.

Very sincerely yours,

F. E. BARTIS, Commander, USN,  
Commanding Officer.

*Forwarded 7/6/44  
WR*

M 2308681  
COMFIGHTRON 20 SECNAV 20 JUNE 1944 162330 NCF 122

**FILE IN JUNE**

HARRY (N) WARNKE ENSIGN AVN USNR ACTIVE DUTY

MISSING DURING TRAINING FLIGHT IN VICINITY OF NAS KANEOHE, 5 JUNE 1944 ABOUT 0850 LOCAL TIME, F6F-3 PLANE, BUREAU NUMBER 41424, ENGINE NUMBER E-14006, PILOT WAS NOT HEARD FROM OR SEEN AFTER THE NEXT TO THE LAST OF A SERIES OF INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE DIVES FOR 20 DEGREES DIVE ANGLE CALIBRATION BY 8 PLANES. CEILING WAS 1200 FEET 8/10 BROKEN WITH TOPS OF CLOUDS TO 7000 FEET. PRESUMED TO HAVE CRASHED IN MOUNTAIN AREA BACK OF KANEOHE WHILE UNDER INSTRUMENT CONDITIONS AND WHILE CLIMBING TO REGAIN ALTITUDE FOR LAST DIVE. NORMAL OVERCAST CONDITION OF MOUNTAIN TOPS PRECLUDES IMMEDIATE THOROUGH SEARCH OF THIS AREA BY PLANE. SEARCH OF ALL ACCESSIBLE AREAS CONTINUES.

LINE OF DUTY NOT MISCONDUCT NEXT OF KIN FATHER HARRY WARNKE 616 CAROLINA STREET GARY INDIANA MISSING

ing angle calibration by 3 planes. Presumed to have crashed in mountain area back of Kaneche while under instrument conditions and while climbing to regain altitude for last dive.

Line of duty - not misconduct.

Only signs of the pilot that were recovered were a shoe and a small piece of the left leg which was buried at scene of crash.

15 June 1944

AA 15178

NAME AND GRADE OF PILOT: **WARKE, Harry (a) Pns** *CV*

SERVICE AND GROUP: **AV(X) USMC**

ORGANIZATION: **VF-20** *CV*

DATE OF PILOT DUTY: \_\_\_\_\_ FLYING EXPERIENCE YEARS: \_\_\_\_\_

HRS. THIS MODEL LAST 30 D: **111.3** TOTAL HOURS: **579.4**

PREVIOUS ACCIDENT RECORD: \_\_\_\_\_

INJURIES: **[None]**

NAME AND GRADE OF OTHER PERSONNEL: \_\_\_\_\_

M.A. \_\_\_\_\_

None

0850  
LOCATION: **Kaunapou Pt. Koolau Range, Oahu, T. H.**  
PURPOSE OF FLIGHT: **Dive calibration - dry rocket runs.**  
FLYING OR LANDING CONDITIONS: **No factor**

1. *Bad red visibility - clouds.*
  2. *Wrote fly - instruments properly.*
- 1944.*

Warke, with a flight of eight planes for dive calibration and dry rocket runs on a target in the Kaneohe Bay Area, took off from NAS, Barber's Pt. Oahu, T.H. The exercise commenced at 0815 with planes making individual runs at approximately 15 second intervals. All dives were 20° and started from 3000' with pull-outs at 300'. After each dive, the target announced each plane's dive angle thus enabling the flight leader to keep check on all planes. Warke made four (4) runs and is believed to have crashed while climbing through an overcast to regain position for the next runs. The crash occurred approximately at 0850 on Kawaipou Peak which rises 2800' and bears 242° T, 4 miles from Kaneohe. The weather was six to seven tenths (6 to 7/10) broken cumulus with bases at 1200' extending to 7000'. It is the opinion of the trouble board that Warke, due to difficult cloud conditions, lost sight contact of the plane ahead and crashed while climbing on instruments.

ADDRESS: **Room VI**

MODEL AND NUMBER: **PG-3 #1525**

ENGINE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
AIRPLANE	X							
ENG. 1								
ENG. 2								
ENG. 3								
ENG. 4								
ENG. 5								
ENG. 6								

REMARKS  
Aircraft totally demolished.  
Recommend striking.

NATURE OF ACCIDENT

*X D*

PERCENTAGE EACH CAUSE

100% PE. (100% judge.)

Adm. R. Opinions:

(a) That on his recovery from his fourth (4) dive, Ensign WARKE headed roughly about 280° True from the vicinity of the target for his last two runs and while on this heading he entered the overcast.

U.S. NAVY BUREAU OF AERONAUTICS AIRCRAFT TROUBLE ANALYSIS FORM NO. 1, FEB. 1934

(b) That while in the overcast Ensign WANKKE kept a straight heading under instrument conditions and climbed to about 2600 feet when the tops of the mountains suddenly appeared at close range.

(c) That in order to avoid hitting these mountain tops Ensign WANKKE pulled up sharply and while doing so cleared the mountain top but inadvertently put his plane in a spin and struck the other side of the mountain in a steep dive on his back.

Serial: 012

FIGHTING SQUADRON TWENTY

**DECLASSIFIED**

c/o Fleet Post Office,  
San Francisco, California,  
7 July 1944.

From: Commander, Fighting Squadron TWENTY.  
To : Commander-in-Chief, UNITED STATES FLEET.  
Via : Commander, Air Group TWENTY.

Subject: War Diary - submission of.

Reference: (a) Cominch ltr. FF1/AL2-1/AL6-3, Serial 7152 of 29 October 1943.  
(b) PacFlt Conf. ltr. 2CL-44 of 1 January 1944.

1. In compliance with reference (a) and reference (b), the following War Diary for the period 1 June 1944 through 30 June 1944 is submitted:

Unit:	Fighting Squadron TWENTY
Composition:	Thirty-six (36) F6F
Fleet:	U.S. Pacific Fleet
Next Higher Echelon:	Air Group TWENTY

10 June 1944:

All pilots of the squadron qualified in daylight carrier landings aboard the BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

15 June 1944:

At 0755 VW Ensign Harry (n) WARNKE, A-V(N), USNR, (315341), took off from U.S. Naval Air Station, Barbers' Point, Oahu, T. H. in an F6F-3 plane on a routine training flight. He was part of an eight (8) plane flight which was making dry runs on a truck in order to check dive angles as a part of the syllabus in rocket training. The exercise was being conducted at Kapaho Point, just south of U. S. Naval Air Station, Kaneohe. There was a six to seven-tenths (6 to 7/10) broken overcast at the time, the bottom of which was 1200 feet and the top ranging from 3500 to 6000 feet.

Ensign WARNKE completed four dives successfully but failed to make his rendezvous after the fourth dive. The flight leader, Lieutenant J.D. PETERSEN, returned to base with the remaining planes of the flight and reported the missing plane. Thereupon a number of searches were made in the vicinity and on 17 June 1944 the wreckage of Ensign WARNKE's plane, together with a small piece of flesh and one shoe, was found on a mountain top bearing 242° True from U.S. Naval Air Station, Kaneohe, at a distance of four (4) miles. Positive identification of Ensign WARNKE was impossible. The scattered pieces of the plane wreckage were collected and buried on the mountain top.

79857

**FILMED**

Headquarters Squadron  
Fleet Air Wing TWO  
Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco, Calif.  
21 October 1944

Mr. Harry A. Warnke  
610 Caroline Street  
Gary, Indiana

Dear Mr. Warnke:

This letter is not written to reopen an old hurt but to express my own sympathy in the loss of your son, Ensign Harry A. WARKE, Jr. Since it was I who conducted the memorial service held for him, I also write to acquaint you with those details. It has not, for security's sake, been possible for me to write until this time.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of 20 June, the officers and men of his Squadron met in the Theater that also serves here for a chapel. Against the dark blue curtains the white altar stood central. On it were the customary ligens, the great brass cross, the candlesticks, and the flowers. On either side were the two beautiful sprays that had been given by the Squadron. Tall potted palms completed the setting. The service itself was a simple one, and in order that you may know the spirit of it, I am enclosing the manuscript exactly as it was used.

Ensign Warnke was highly regarded by those who knew him, and you may certainly feel proud of so fine a son. I pray that God shall make up in love to you and to those others who were dear to him for the loved one that you have lost.

Sincerely yours,

*John S. Brown*

John S. Brown  
Chaplain, USNR.

JSB/ars



MEMORIALIZATION OF NON-RECOVERABLE  
REMAINS OF WORLD WAR II

THIS FILE HAS BEEN AUDITED FOR NON-RECOVERABILITY

NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)

WARNKE, HARRY

RANK

ENS

SERIAL NUMBER

315341

ARMY OF SERVICE

USNR

DATE OF DEATH

15 JUNE 44

AREA OF DEATH PACIFIC

HAWAII

NAME OF AUDITOR

DATE

MCCRAY 7 MAY 51

NAME OF REVIEWER

DATE

TARMAN 8 MAY 51

REMARKS