

## Fields of Honor Memorial

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Fields of Honor  
Foundation



### Personal info

Full name

**CONVERSE, William**

Date of birth

**28 April 1919**

Age

**24**

Place of birth

**Modesto, Stanislaus County, California**

Hometown

**Modesto, Stanislaus County, California**

### Military service

Service number

**O-725585**

Rank

**Captain**

Unit

**452nd Bombardment Squadron,  
322nd Bombardment Group, Medium**

Awards

**Purple Heart**

### Death & Grave

Status

**Killed in Action**

Date of death

**17 May 1943**

Cemetery

**American War Cemetery Margraten**

Plot	Row	Grave
A	8	29

## Immediate family

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### Members

**John H. Converse (father)**

**Ruth G. (Boweresh) Converse (mother)**

**Wilda Converse (wife)**

## Plane data

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### Serial number

**41-18080**

### Data

**Type: B-26B-4-MA**

**Destination: IJmuiden, the Netherlands**

**Mission: Bombing of the power plant**

## More information

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Capt William Converse graduated from Modesto Junior College in 1939 and attended Chapman College.

He enlisted in the Air Corps of the Regular Army as an aviation cadet at Stockton Field, California on 3 November 1941. He trained at Minter Field for basic flight school, followed by advanced air school at Williams Field, Arizona. He trained last at MacDill Field, a B-17 heavy bomber training base. The following January he was promoted to captain and then deployed to England.

The field order for the mission called for 12 aircraft, of which six would break off the formation and bomb the generation station and gas works at Haarlem, when they would reach the coast and the other six would continue their route to bomb the power plant of IJmuiden. However, only eleven planes were serviceable, because many were still under flak damage repair from the mission the day before. Every crew knew this mission would be one they would not survive.

After taking off, they soon nosed over to 50 feet to get under the German radar. A little later, approximately 30 miles from the Dutch coast, one of the aircraft experienced electrical problems and headed back to England. When they turned, they climbed to 1,000 feet what would be considered common sense with a lame aircraft. However, by climbing, the aircraft placed itself within German radar coverage thus alerting German defenses. As the remaining aircraft approached the coast, several sea vessels appeared ahead in the flight path. The formation changed course to avoid surface fire from these vessels, with the result they reached the coast at a point with one of the most heavily defended areas in the Netherlands. In very little time, five aircraft were shot down. The remaining aircraft believed they were close to there targets but they were still miles away. After 10 minutes without recognizing any landmarks, they thought they saw the Haarlem works, but it was a gas holder on the west side of Amsterdam. They dropped their bombs but all bombs fell short and caused no damage. Unknown to the crews, the heading taken from this target headed them directly for the heavily defended port area near IJmuiden. Also all remaining aircraft were shot down.

From the moment the flight reached the Dutch coast, several planes were shot down. The surviving B-26's headed between Delft and

Rotterdam with B-26 #41-18080 leading the first flight. Near Bodegraven, while carrying out violent evasive action, it collided with B-26 #41-17991 was leading the second element. Both B-26's crashed in flames with only two survivors.

B-26 #41-17999, severely damaged by debris from the two colliding aircraft, belly landed his unmanageable B-26 into a field at Meije.

## Photos



Source of information: Peter Schouteten, Terry Hirsch, [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov), [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), [www.b26.com](http://www.b26.com), California Birth Index, 1905-1995; Converse Family History

Photosource: [www.findsgrave.com](http://www.findsgrave.com) - Des Philippet, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) - Chapman College - 1941, Stanislaus County Heroes