



Personal info

Full name

MARTIN, William James

Date of birth

16 August 1920

Age

23

Place of birth

Denver, Denver County, Colorado

Hometown

Paducah, McCracken County, Kentucky

Military service

Service number

O-683279

Rank

Second Lieutenant

Unit

**364th Bombardment Squadron,
305th Bombardment Group, Heavy**

Awards

**Purple Heart,
Air Medal**

Death & Grave

Status

Killed in Action

Date of death

14 October 1943

Cemetery

American War Cemetery Margraten

Plot	Row	Grave
B	15	19

Immediate family

Members

Josephine Davenport (mother)
Gus Davenport (stepfather)
John F. Martin (brother)
J. Robert Martin (brother)
June Martin (sister)

Plane data

Serial number

42-3436

Data

Type: B-17F
Destination: Schweinfurt, Germany
Mission: Bombing of the KugelFischer ball bearings plant
MACR: 1034

Biography

<http://home.kpn.nl/slang075/breeden-crew-members-42-3436.html>

More information

2nd Lt William J. Martin was born in Denver, Colorado and had lived in Paducah since 1939. He was employed at the Columbia theater during vacation periods. He applied for cadet training while a student at Murray State Teachers College and was ordered to report for duty in December, 1942, at Kelley Field, San Antonio, Texas. He graduated June 24, 1943 at the aerial navigation training base in San Marcos, Tex., and received his wings and commission there before he left for England in September.

The airplane sustained rocket- or bullet damage in nr 2 engine caused by Obfw. Anton-Rudolf Piffer in Focke Wulf 190A of 2.JG 1. There were three German fighter planes involved of which one was certainly shot down by the gunners of this crew: the Me-109 of Feldwebel Brinkmann that crashed in a field in Chevremont killing him.

The tail and left wing crashed in Eygelshoven (NL) and the nose in Finkenrath (G).

Eye witness statement of Heinz Wilms: As a boy he witnessed the crash. He heard the noise of the aerial battle and saw the burning plane at a height of about 200 meters (600 ft) coming from the direction of the Dutch village Chevremont and making a left turn over his head and after that heard the explosion. He mentions it was so low he saw some crewmembers still in the plane. Curious as he was he walked towards the crash place – about a 15 minutes walk on his (than) short legs from Wurm to Finkenrath along the road next to the railroad track. As far as he remembers he was alone at the crash site. There he picked up a piece of metal and saw a flying cap lying under it. As he picked it up he saw the goggles attached to the cap. One glass was OK and one was broken. The cap felt heavy and than to his horror he saw that a part of a head still was in it. He dropped the cap and ran off.

Eye witness statement of Heinz Michels: "We saw a big bomber coming from the west and much lower than the others. Smoke coming from its tail end. a German fighter flew past the boys and took a shot at the belly of the bomber. Then flames came out of the bomber and it fell apart. From the tail crew bailed out and bombs fell out of the fuselage. The tail end

crashed down on the other side of the Wurm, the bombs very close to my parental house. Then it became hot as in hell. The front part passed so close above us that we could almost touch it. It was ablaze and gave a lot of heat. It started to spin. Will it fall on Finkenrath or my house? I got very scared but it staggered past us with a howling sound and crashed into the meadow before us with a horrible detonation. The impact was deafening. There must have been bombs still in the plane. A huge stinging flame went up from the crash site some 100 meters from us. As a lightning we were out of the trees and ran to the farm of the Hübben family. In the air dirt and metal parts we swaying around making scary noises."

Statement of Mrs. Klara Wauters-Martini: She was on her way back from school in Herzogenrath on the road from Nivelstein towards her parental home - Café Martini - as first heard the bombers flying high but then also the air raid alert and the rattling machine guns close by. As she heard very frightening noise right above her, she dropped her bike and lay down and at that moment the burning plane crossed her village and crashed right after that in a meadow in front of her parental house. "What I saw there was terrible: dead bodies - 2 or 3 - and everywhere parts of corpses (hands, legs....). The adults there moved us away quickly. Also on the other side of the Wurm a part of the plane did crash. Wing of Tail? I do not know."

Statement of Mr. Sjir Handels: "I heard the machine guns rattle both from the three German planes and from the B-17 crew. The German planes circled around the B-17 trying to shoot it down. But the B-17 crew fought back because at one moment we saw that a German 109 was hit and passed over us with a smoke trail in the direction of Chevremont. My dad said: 'Richtig zoe' (All right). That was the 109 of Sgt. Brinkmann. Shortly after that we saw six parachutes and the wing braking off. The six parachutes first were together, but at a certain moment one drifted away in a SE-direction towards Haanrade - in the direction of the 'Gasfabriek' (then Spoorstraat - now Wijngaardsberg). Then this parachute disappeared from our view because of the houses on the Spoorstraat and the Julianalaan (now Mirbachstraat). I think it must have landed in the 'beemden' where I often went to collect fresh rabbit feed like wild clover. There where meadows there but also a lot of mud, marsh-land and pools. And very small trails to keep your feet dry if you knew them. If Breeden did fall into this 'wilderness' of water and marsh he could have drowned."

Statement Mrs. Leni Lataster(-van Dijk): "Over us was a hellish noise. An aerial battle was going on right above us. We saw parachutes coming down. My dad said: 'This plane is going to crash. When it falls down we will all die.' But because of the left wing tearing off, the plane made a turn to the artificial boating lake behind the coal mine. We heard a big bang. We were relieved ourselves."

Five crew members were taken prisoner, five were killed.

Lt Martin was initially buried at the Forest Cemetery in Merkstein, Germany.

On 13 October 2018 a monument in honor of the crew of plane 42-3436 was inaugurated at the cemetery of Eygelshoven.

Five street names at the U.S. Army Base at Eygelshoven are named after the killed crew members.

Photos



Source of information: Raf Dyckmans, Wim Slangen, Mr. Matt Jaeger - Local and Family History Department at the McCracken County Public Library, www.scottnelsonart.com, www.fold3.com - MACR, www.ancestry.com - 1940 Census, The Paducah Sun-Democrat - 1 November 1943

Photo source: Peter Schouteten, The Paducah Sun-Democrat - 1 November 1943 / 8 May 1945, Arie-Jan van Hees, Navigator Class Book 43-9 San Marcos, Texas