



Personal info

Full name

HIBBS, Leo Robert

Date of birth

31 August, 1925

Age

unknown

Place of birth

Wheatland, Hillsdale County, Michigan

Hometown

Corydon, Harrison County, Indiana

Military service

Service number

35809558

Rank

Sergeant

Unit

**506th Bombardment Squadron,
44th Bombardment Group, Heavy**

Awards

**Purple Heart,
Air Medal**

Death & Grave

Status

Killed in Action

Date of death

7 October 1944

Cemetery

American War Cemetery Margraten

Plot	Row	Grave
F	17	16

Immediate family

Members

Herbert O. Hibbs (father)
Nellie A. (Stafford) Hibbs (mother)
Orlo W. Hibbs (brother)
Verlo A. Hibbs (brother)
Rollo D. Hibbs (brother)
Deville J. Hibbs (brother)
Milo G. Hibbs (brother)

Plane data

Serial number

42-40167

Data

Type: B-24J
Nickname: Sierra Blanca
Destination: Kassel, Germany
MACR: 9342

More information

Leo R. Hibbs worked on a farm before he enlisted on 12 November 1943 in Louisville, Kentucky.

"Our plane was hit by flak and set on fire. seven of us bailed out. The plane broke into pieces soon afterwards. I met the other six men who had bailed out safely, but none of us ever again saw Sgt Hibbs. Later, a German Major told me that three bodies were found in the crashed plane. He had correct list of names of the missing crewmembers."

Radio Operator John Lord sent a tape of his experiences.

"September 1st was our first mission as a crew. The pilot, Still, and co-pilot Welborn had flown one other combat mission prior to this. But on our first mission, the tail hit a white fence at end of the runway-I could see pieces of the fence fly! we (later) dropped our 1,000 pound bombs through the bomb bay doors. Not a very good way to start. On the 7 October mission to Kassels, being the newest crew, we got one of the oldest planes to fly. It was patched up, my radio table was broken off, no place to write. (Editor's note: Aircraft received from the 492nd Bomb Group when that Group was deactivated.) When we opened the bomb bay doors, I could see the flash of flak guns shooting at us. We had trouble with one engine losing power, finally had to feather it. Not then being able to keep up with the formation, we began to fall behind. Our pilot, Homer Still, asked John Wilson Navigator, for a heading to fly back over France. Another engine on the right side was lost, making two of them feathered on that side of the wing, and we were in deep trouble. About that time I heard a loud POP and then saw our co-pilot, Welborn, open the top hatch and climb out!. When I turned around and looked into the bomb bay, I saw the reason for that exit. it was full of flames. How was I to get out? Normally i could have climbed up on the radio table and pulled myself up though that same top hatch, but the table was broken. i had my chest pack chute on but in a dilemma as what to do when the plane made my decision for me- it turned upside down. i then fell out of that open top hatch-well, almost out. My heated suit and intercom plugs were holding me tight. I quickly broke or tore them loose and fell free. I found myself in a head first position and slowly spinning so that I had little sense of falling. I guess that my altitude at that time to be about 17,000 feet. Slowly I saw the ground getting closer, pulled my rip and thankfully saw my chute blossom out. looking down, I could see a round, burning area of incendiaries, so I pulled on some shroud lines and missed the fire, and landed in an open field. then a large piece of the aircraft-the waist area-came down close to me. I suspect that the plane had exploded for that piece to hit like that. i burns on my left hand and around my eyes. A young German lad of about 8 to 10 years old, helped me with my chute. Then German soldiers came running up, holding pistols on me. I had landed close to a Signal Corps practicing in the woods, unfortunately, with no possibility of evasion. They took me to a dispensary where I was bandaged on my hand and face. While I was there several teen-aged boys, who had been manning a flak gun nearby, came in to see me. They thought they had us shot down. Both Dahlin and Wyant had been shot at as they were coming down. I also learned that Welborn hit his head something when he left through the top hatch, severely damaging his eye. I later got gangrene in my burned left hand, was treated by some British doctors who had been captured earlier, but suffered no permanent damage-thanks to them."

Photos



Source of information: Michel Beckers, Astrid van Erp, Roger Fenton VP/Historian 44th BGVA, www.ancestry.com - Family Trees, Enlistment Record

Photo source: Peter Schouteten, Stan Derkx