

The following Crash Narrative is based on the best available evidence from period documents. It is a "best guess" of what happened on the night mission of 7 July 1943 and the crash off Lunga Point, Guadalcanal. The yellow highlights in the Research and Documents section following the narrative are some of the original materials used to develop the narrative.

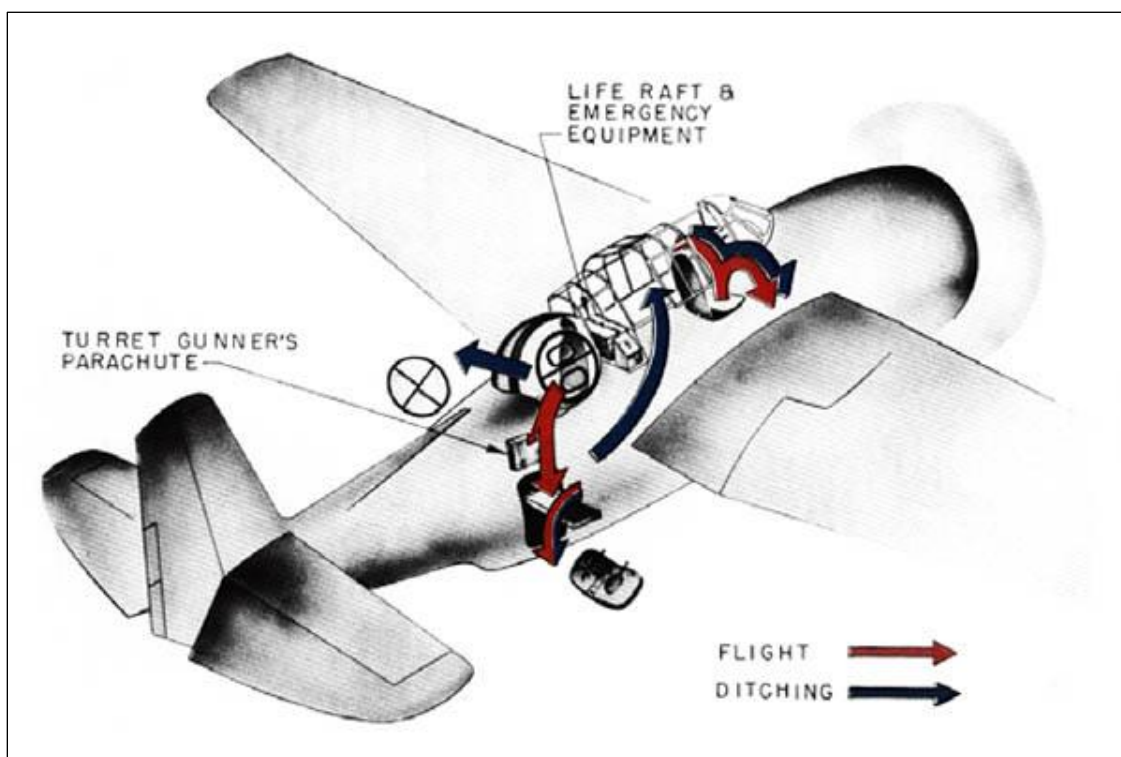
TBF #125's Crash

On Guadalcanal and throughout most the Solomon Islands on the night of July 7, 1943 there was no rain or fog, sparse cloud cover at 40%, visibility of 10-miles, a slight easterly breeze at 1-mile per hour and ocean temperature of 80-degrees. These weather conditions combined with the light provided by a quarter-moon made it a good night to attack Japanese shipping in their own backyard. Near sundown at 5:20-pm, one Lockheed A-29 Hudson PBO flare ship took-off from Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, followed 5-minutes later at 2-minute intervals by three Grumman TBF-1 Avenger bombers. They headed 300-miles northwest to the southern tip of enemy-held Bougainville Island to hunt in the Kahili anchorage just offshore. The PBO dropped twelve flares from Moila Point easterly toward Alasina Island, turning night into day for the three trailing TBFs that spotted an Imperial Japanese Navy destroyer cruising in the anchorage. The TBFs attacked her one at a time, each making their glide bombing run with a single AN-M66 2,000-pound bomb, the Avenger's maximum load. Antiaircraft fire from several Japanese ships and shore batteries was, as usual for Kahili, heavy and accurate. Chile attacked first, dropping his 1-ton bomb from 100-feet above the destroyer. It exploded 40-feet from the bow covering the entire ship with water. Chile's TBF #125 was hit by the destroyer's return fire. The second TBF's bomb hung-up and he aborted, suffering wing damage and a blown tire that caused him to ground-loop when he landed. Results for the third TBF are unknown but it returned safely to Henderson Field at 10:30-pm with the second TBF. As Chile turned southeast to head for Guadalcanal, his damaged flight controls made the Avenger difficult to fly. A few minutes later #125 was attacked by a twin-engine Japanese plane that killed his turret gunner, Jack Durner, who died instantly from multiple gunshot wounds. The attacker might have been the same J1N1 Gekko (Irving) twin-engine night fighter, piloted by Ace Ensign Shigetoshi Kudo, that had just shot down the mission's Hudson PBO flare ship, number NZ2033, killing all five New Zealand airmen aboard. Chile's TBF had received even more damage from the fighter. He lost his radio located below the turret, and lost his landing gear when their hydraulic lines below and aft of the turret were shot away. He was soon lagging 40-minutes behind his two TBF wingmen and working hard to keep #125 flying. Chile had flown missions to Kahili many times, and on this clear moonlit night, he could find his way home in a shot-up bird even without instruments. He flew #125 southeasterly down the middle of the Solomon's parallel chain of islands known as "the slot" until he spotted Savo Island, which he knew well because he had rendezvoused and loitered over Savo many times. He flew just off Savo's southern coast and aimed #125 about 2-miles off Lunga Point to replicate the standard Henderson Field approach bearing from the northwest of 122-degrees. With no landing gear and deteriorating flight control, Chile knew he and his radioman, Richard Thomas Dole's best chance for survival was a water landing off Lunga Point. At about the Russell Islands and over friendly territory, Chile instructed Dole to prepare to ditch. Ditching procedure for a TBF radioman was to crawl from the belly compartment through a tunnel into the middle seat, or second cockpit, behind the pilot. The middle seat was where survival gear and a 3-man life raft were stored, which Dole was trained to deploy. Dole was happy to receive the order because it took him out of the bloody belly of the TBF and out of sight of Jack's

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

lifeless body hanging in his harness in the open gun turret above him. Chile knew there would be US Navy warships patrolling from 6,000 to 8,000-yards off Lunga Point, forming the anti-submarine outer screen that protected the numerous Allied ships always scattered along Guadalcanal's north coast. He could clearly see Lunga Point defined by the gently breaking waves on the sandy beach and the rippling white water at the mouth of the Lunga River. Their VT-21 Squadron's camp was on the east side of the river in a grove of Mango trees and it was oddly comforting to know their friends were nearby. Chile saw a long, white wake trailing behind a patrol ship and he carefully flew slightly north towards her, planning to ditch as close as possible to the vessel. Chile and Richard had followed all standard procedures for a water landing, but in the last seconds Chile lost control and #125 went in nose first, instead of on its belly in a power stall like he had been trained. Chile was knocked unconscious and his legs were trapped when the nose collapsed back into an already tight cockpit. On impact, Richard Dole lurched forward and broke his right wrist when it slammed against the electrical circuit boxes mounted to the right bulkhead. In shock and feeling little pain, he unfastened his harness with his left hand and then reached across to lift the bi-fold, hinged canopy. It took only a few seconds for him to spill into the water, inflate his Mae West, and kick away from the TBF where he briefly passed out. When he awoke, TBF #125 and Chile and Jack were gone, leaving nothing but a greenish slick of aviation fuel and oil on the water and the acrid smell of a brief surface fire. Chile had done his job. He ditched at 11:10-pm about 1-mile from the minesweeper USS *Skylark* on outer screen patrol off Lunga Point. *Skylark* arrived at the crash site at 11:15-pm and rescued ARM2c Richard Thomas Dole within a remarkable 5-minutes after ditching, an extraordinarily short amount of time for any sea rescue. *Skylark* took Richard Dole to Lunga Beach where he was transported to the 52nd Field Hospital at Henderson Field. His right arm was put in a cast and he was debriefed by the VT-21 Commanding Officer, LtCdr Robert L. Savage, Jr. The only survivor of VT-21 TBF #125, Richard Thomas Dole, never flew another combat mission and lived to be 70 years old.



TBF crew exits for a water landing (ditching) and parachuting in flight. From the TBF Pilot's Manual.

Research Subjects and A Few of the Documents Reviewed:

USS Skylark (AM-63) was an *Auk*-class minesweeper with 2 depth charge tracks and a crew of 105 officers and enlisted men. She was 220 feet long and 32 feet abeam with a draft of 11 feet and a maximum speed of 18.1 knots and cruising speed of 9 to 12 knots. On June 23, 1943, while on escort duty, she rescued 193 survivors from 2 torpedoed ships southeast of Guadalcanal. On July 7, 1943, she rescued R.T. Dole off Lunga Point. After her service at Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands and while preparing for the April 1, 1945 invasion of Okinawa, the USS *Skylark* was sunk after striking two enemy mines off Hagushi beaches on March 28, 1945 with the loss of five crewmen. My father, QM2c Bill W. Hamrick, made three landings on Hagushi beaches aboard USS *LST-495* during the battle for Okinawa.

USS Skylark War Diary - The July 1943 War Diary of the USS *Skylark* was found on Fold-3 in January 2022. The War Diary describes the sea rescue of ARM3c Richard Thomas Dole, the radioman and sole survivor of TBF #125. Please see the verbatim transcription below of the July 5 through 8, 1943 *Skylark* War Diary.

USS Skylark Deck Log - After discovery of the War Diary, the July 1943 Deck Log (a typed document) of the *Skylark* was ordered and received from NARA College Park, MD in February 2022. Unfortunately, the Deck Log does not contain a single mention of ARM3c Dole, his rescue, or the TBF crash. Nor did it contain the columnar pages that record the ship's course and location coordinates for July 7 and 8, 1943. The columnar pages were then ordered but did not include any course or location coordinates. It did however include weather conditions during the July 7, 11:00 p.m. hour of the crash and rescue. The weather and seas were calm, the barometer was steady at 29.71, the wind was out of the east at 1 nautical mile per hour, the ambient and water temperature was 80°, cloud cover was sparse at 4 (out of 10) and visibility was 10 nautical miles.

USS Submarine Chaser 701 (SC-701) Deck Log - *SC-701*'s Deck Log was ordered from NARA College Park, MD. It was assumed that *Skylark* replaced *SC-701* on patrol and hoped that the *SC-701* log would provide her patrol distance from shore. It did not provide any patrol distances and seems likely that *SC-701* was patrolling on the inner screen, while *Skylark* usually patrolled the outer screen.

Deck Logs of Anchored and Screening Vessels on 7 Jul 1943 at 11:10pm - Many deck logs were reviewed to find anchored vessels and the position of screening vessels off Lunga Point at the time of the crash. Several were found that helped to establish that the outer anti-submarine screen off the north coast was 6,000-yds to 8,000-yds and the inner screen was usually directed at the protection of 1 or a few anchored vessels at a distance of 2,000-yds to 3,000-yds. No other vessel was found that recorded an airplane crash or surface fire, which served as clues to where the crash did not likely occur.

McKinney and Durner IDPF and McKinney, Dole and Durner OMPF - The Individual Deceased Personnel Files (IDPF) for Lt.(jg) Murray C. McKinney and ARM2c Jacob C. Durner and the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) for ARM2c Richard T. Dole, McKinney and Durner were requested in January 2022 from NARA St. Louis, MO by both email and snail-mailed SF-Forms-180. They were received in September and October 2023. No details of the crash and rescue were included. The only additional information gained was Dole's specific injury and medical condition. R.T. Dole suffered a compound fracture of his right wrist with no record of a concussion or head injury or any other injury, which may indicate he passed out from pain and/or shock rather than a head injury and concussion. J.C. Durner's records state he died from multiple gunshot wounds from an enemy aircraft, information that could only have been provided by R.T. Dole.

Period Letters to/from Individuals Involved – Three relevant letters mailed to Chile's parents or his wife from the Commanding Officer of Chile's VT-21 Squadron on Guadalcanal, Lt. Cmdr. Robert Lee Savage, Jr. and one letter from the Navy Department's Bureau of Personnel are transcribed in this document.

Period Military Records – Three relevant written military records found on Fold-3 or provided by Mr. Ewan Stevenson, Co-Director, Sealark Maritime Exploration Limited, New Zealand are transcribed in this document.

Period Maps – 1943 maps of the Guadalcanal, Henderson Field area were provided by Mr. Ewan Stevenson, including two line-drawn, scaled maps with a compass rose, showing coastal waters and depths, ship's berths, coastline, island interior to ~3 nautical miles, roads, rivers, and the locations of Beacons "A" through "H". They include the area between (map 1) Point Cruz to the Tenaru River and (map 2) Lunga Lagoon to the Metapona River. A set of three aerial image maps were also provided by Mr. Stevenson, each with an alpha-numeric (A-1) grid along the border and numbered campsite locations marked on the map; each one referenced in a typed key/legend with the camp number and grid location naming about 230 units. Unfortunately, only about one-third (~77) of those unit names and locations are legible. The 1944 "Anchorage Chart B.C. for the North Coast of Guadalcanal" and the "AAF Aeronautical Map" showing the standard aircraft approach bearings for Guadalcanal were downloaded from McMaster University digital archives. The 1943 "Anchorage Chart B.C. for the North Coast of Guadalcanal" was obtained by using screenshots from the University of Alabama, WW-II digital map collection.

Verbatim Skylark War Diary Transcription - *USS Skylark (AM-63) Confidential War Diary from July 1, 1943 to July 31, 1943. Original to Commander in Chief, United States Fleet. Copy to Commander Mine Squadron One.*

Monday 5 July, 1943

1600-2000 Steaming as before. 1700 Took screening position 6000 yards from Beacon "A" off Koli Point, Guadalcanal, Solomons.

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2010 Steering control lost. 2020 Steering control regained. 2050 Sounded General Quarters on red flare air alert warning from beach. 2106 Secured from General Quarters on green flare all clear from beach. 2354 Steering control lost. 2358 Steering control regained.

Tuesday 6 July, 1943

0000-0400 In accordance with ComTransGr 262133 of June to Commander Task Unit 32.4.9, patrolling station 7000 yards from Beacon "A" Koli Point, Guadalcanal, Solomons, turning on bearing 140°T and 220°T from "A".

0400-0800 Steaming as before. 0440 Unidentified craft sighted, changed course to identify. 0515 Discovered craft to be an unmanned LCT, stood by to put a crew aboard. 0700 Put crew aboard and proceeded back to Koli Point.

0800-1200 Steaming as before. 0919 Anchored in Berth #16 in 20 fathoms of water, 42 fathoms of chain at waters edge, starboard anchor in use, while effecting repairs to steering gear. 1043 Underway proceeding to patrol station 6000 yards from Beacon "A" on semi-circle limiting bearing 212°T and 140°T.

1200-1600 Steaming as before.

1600-2000 Steaming as before.

2000-2400 Steaming as before.

Wednesday 7 July, 1943

0000-0400 In accordance instructions ComTaskUnit 32.4.9 dispatch ComTransGr 262133 of June Patrolling sector off Koli Point, Guadalcanal, Beacon "A" distant 6000 yards.

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

0400-0800 Steaming as before. 0545 Observed LCT adrift, stood by until sufficient light to put crew aboard. Resumed patrol station.

0800-1200 Steaming as before.

1200-1600 Steaming as before.

1600-2000 Steaming as before.

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2310 Observed TBF plane crash into water and immediately disappear about 1 mile bearing 195°T from Beacon "G". 2311 Observed burning gasoline on water from crashed plane, changed speed to 10 knots on course 200°T. 2315 Stopped all engines rescued one man R.T. DOLE, ARM3c, VF-21 – TBF 125. 2320 Proceeding to Lunga beach at various courses and speeds to send injured man to Henderson Field. [arrived at crash in 5-minutes]

Thursday 8 July, 1943

0000-0400 Underway in compliance of orders of ComTransGr 262133 of June to Commander Task Unit 32.4.9. Proceeding at various courses and speeds toward Beacon Easy with injured man rescued from plane crash., 0040 Anchored in 28 fathoms of water with 48 fathoms of chain at waters edge to starboard anchor with the following bearings: Beacon Fox 249°T, [underlined indicate Berth 16 same as 6 July] Signal Tower 136°T, Mountain Peak 158°T. 0115 Boat from beach alongside with Doctor from Henderson Field for injured man. 0135 Boat from beach left ship with injured man.

0400-0800 Anchored as before. 0530 Prepared to get underway. 0545 Underway to resume patrol station from Beacon "E" to westward. [underlined, she resumed patrol from 'E' westward which is where Dole was rescued] 0741 Landing barge adrift, investigated. 0805 Landing barge in tow to Lunga Point.

0800-1200 0805 Landing barge in tow along starboard side. Proceeding on various courses and speeds returning boat to beach. 1026 Returned to former patrol.

1200-1600 Steaming as before. 1430 Upon arrival S.C. 701 ceased patrolling area off Lunga Point, proceeding to Koli Point at various courses, speed 10 knots. 1540 Commenced patrolling area off Koli Point, Beacon "A" approximately 6000 yards. [SC-701 deck log was procured & provided no information]

1600-2000 Steaming as before.

2000-2400 Steaming as before. 2230 Sounded General Quarters on red flare air raid alert from beach. 2241 Secured from General Quarters on green flare all clear from beach.

Letters to the McKinney Family

The following transcriptions are verbatim, but omit sentences that do not relate directly to the circumstances of Chile and Jack's last mission and deaths. Paragraph indents and spaces have been omitted to save space. They are in chronological order and referenced by the capital letter "L" and a sequential number.

L1). Letter provided by Andrew P. Hardin. A typed, censored letter on two-hole punch paper from Lt. Cmdr. Robert Lee Savage, Jr., Commanding Officer VT-21, to Chile's wife Ruth, dated July 18, 1943, eleven days after Chile's death, routed through Air Force Pacific Fleet Torpedo Squadron Twenty-One, c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

"...July 18, 1943. Mrs. Ruth Priest McKinney, 2500 Primrose, Fort Worth, Texas. My dear Ruth, It is with greatest sorrow that I must confirm the fact that Chile has been missing in action since July 7, 1943. He was on a night mission similar to ones of the same nature he had been on before. Although he was seen by several pilots in the target area and while attacking the target, the only information we have was learned from his radioman who was later returned to us. According to the radioman, Richard T. Dole, ARM2c, they believed their plane was hit several times while attacking the target. However no one was injured and Chile

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

flew the plane for sometime on his way back. A few minutes after attacking the target, and while still over enemy area, they were attacked by an enemy plane which killed the gunner. However, Chile and the radioman were uninjured, and he continued to fly the plane toward his destination having trouble controlling the damaged plane. Sometime later Chile told the radioman to prepare for a water landing. In the landing the radioman lost consciousness and came to floating in the water with a broken arm, and Chile and the plane were no where to be seen. He was picked up and returned to us, but numerous searches have been made and Chile is nowhere to be found yet. This landing happened close to us and I sincerely hope he will eventually turn up, as we have had such instances happen recently with other pilots in this squadron...You know Ruth, I have known you and Chile for some time..."

L2. Letter provided by Andrew P. Hardin. A typed, censored letter on two-hole punch paper from Lt. Cmdr. Robert Lee Savage, Jr., Commanding Officer VT-21, to Chile's parents, Charlie and Octo McKinney, dated July 20, 1943, thirteen days after Chile's death, routed through Air Force Pacific Fleet Torpedo Squadron Twenty-One, c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

"July 20, 1943. Mr. & Mrs. C.P. McKinney, 135 Garrison Ave., Sulphur Springs, Texas. My dear Mr. & Mrs. McKinney: It is with sincere regret that I must confirm the fact that your son, Murray, has been missing in action since July 7, 1943. He was engaged in a night mission in the front area similar to those he had been on previously and failed to return with others on the same mission. We do have this information that the plane was forced to land in the water and sank as the radioman was later picked up and stated that he found himself floating in the water with no sign of Murray nor the plane. For this reason we all sincerely hope that Murray was able to reach shore safely and will eventually show up, though numerous searches have revealed nothing to date. However, other pilots who have been reported missing for some time, have later turned up and there is reason to feel that such an eventuality might happen in the case of your son. I have known Murray for a good many months and have flown with him often, so he was far from being a stranger to me..."

L3. Letter provided by Andrew P. Hardin. A typed letter on Navy Department stationary dated 11 October 1943 from the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Head of Casualties and Allotments Section, Washington, D.C. to Mr. and Mrs. McKinney in response to three of their letters dated: one unknown date, 29 September 1943 and 2 October 1943.

"11 October 1943. Mr. and Mrs. C.P. McKinney, A death certificate received from the Medical Officer of the Squadron to which your son was attached was the basis for the conclusion that Lieutenant (junior grade) Murray Charlton McKinney, United States Naval Reserve, died as the result of drowning following an airplane crash on 7 July 1943. This death certificate stated that the aircraft sunk into the water, the radioman recovered consciousness after the plane had sunk, and that Lieutenant (junior grade) McKinney was not seen after the crash. Your son's body has not been recovered."

L4. Letter provided by Andrew P. Hardin. A three-page, handwritten, uncensored letter on common paper from Lt. Cmdr. Robert Lee Savage, Jr., Commanding Officer VT-21, to Chile's parents, dated October 18, 1943, written and mailed from within the United States where Savage has been since late August.

"18 October 1943. Dear Mr. McKinney, Thank you for your nice letter, however, it took some time to reach me as I have been running around considerably since returning to the U.S. late in August. I have just answered Ruth's letter, answering some things she wanted to know, and giving her all the details I knew about the night Chile was lost. No doubt by now you have seen W.C. Smith [William Carmack Smith was a

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

distant cousin and next door neighbor in Sulphur Springs. Carmack or W.C. was a VGS-12 fighter pilot who served with Chile on Guadalcanal where they visited often] *and he gave you a good account of what happened... On that night Chile had attacked an enemy destroyer at low altitude. And he badly damaged and probably sunk that destroyer. However, his plane was badly damaged by AA fire, and was later attacked by an enemy plane which further damaged the plane and killed Chile's gunner. In spite of this Chile very skillfully flew his plane, and at night, nearly 300 miles back to Guadalcanal. Neither Chile nor his radioman were injured as yet. However, his plane was so badly damaged he could not lower his wheels to land at the field so he attempted a water landing just off the beach from our camp. In the water landing the radioman was knocked out, and was surprised to find himself floating in the water, but Chile and the plane were gone. A boat picked up the radioman about 10 minutes later but no trace could be found of Chile and the plane. Yes Chile's plane was equipped with a three man rubber boat and Chile had on a life preserver. I had rather tell you anything but this – but I sincerely feel that Chile was knocked out or killed when the plane hit the water and that he went down with the plane. When it got daylight the area was again searched as well as the shore. If Chile had survived that landing we certainly would have found him within a week, for it was just off shore from our camp... Chile and I were very good friends. He always did a magnificent job in combat, and he fought hard and long and willingly with the main thought of destroying the enemy completely to end this terrible conflict. We all thought the world of Chile...his loss was unbelievable, and was a terrible blow to us..."*

P.S. Have just received a very nice letter from the mother of Chile's gunner who was killed that night by the enemy plane. She is very much heart broken, and told me he was the only boy she had. I am wondering if Chile had any brothers. She wants to write you and Mrs. McKinney and also to Ruth. I am sending her your address. The boys name was Jack C. Durner. His mother is Mrs. J. Durner. 21 Seaview Ave., East Norwalk, Conn. I'm sure she would be glad to hear from you. Chile's radioman came through here, and I obtained his address only a moment ago. His name is Richard T. Dole and he will be home until Oct. 29th at: 3821 Cottage Grove, Des Moines, Iowa. After the 29th he will be at U.S. Naval Hospital, Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Ill. I am writing him to give him your address.

In a 3-page recollection of Chile dated January 18, 2009, written by his sister Martha McKinney Hardin, she states that "...*Richard Dole visited Ruth and my parents after he returned home*..." Her recollection is part of a 64-page tribute to Chile, that includes these letters and much more "Chile" childhood and military ephemera, compiled in 2009 by Martha's son and Chile's nephew, Andrew Paul "Andy" Hardin.

Last Mission Military Records

The following military records describe Chile and Jack's last mission, or circumstances and events before, during or after the mission. The transcriptions are verbatim, but without the original formatting (indents, line spacing, etc.). They are in chronological order and referenced by the capital letter "R" and a sequential number.

R1. Document provided by Ewan Stevenson.

Strike Command Daily Intelligence Summary To 0800 July 8, 1943

Shipping Attack. *An attack on enemy shipping by 3 TBFs with a PBO flare plane (1720-2230) ended with the loss of 1 Avenger, in the water off Point Cruz, a crash landing by another on the Henderson strip, and the disappearance of the Hudson which was not seen by either of the reporting planes after dropping its flares over the target. Following an excellent job with flares which were dropped from Moila Point toward*

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

Alasina Island, the TBFs saw a DD on which the 1st plane made a run, dropped from 100', 40' ahead of the ship. The 2000 lb bomb (4-5 sec. fuse) covered the ship with water and may have damaged her. The 2nd plane attempted to release from 175' but the bomb hung up and released near Shortland. AA from the ship blew out a tire and damaged the wing, narrowly missing the gunner. The results of the 3rd plane were not seen by the 2 that returned. AA may have damaged the 3rd bomber resulting in engine failure which forced the water landing. A crash boat rescued only the radioman, the pilot and rear gunner having gone down with the plane. The crew of the plane which ground looped as a result of the blown out tire was not injured. Kihili. 15 Liberators from the 307th Group bombed the Kihili airfield from 1930 to 2125, during the TBF attack, with 92 x 50 GP bombs and 90 fragmentation clusters.

Bombs were laid in a pattern on and along both sides of the strip, starting a few fires.

1 plane which communicated with Base Radio after midnight [NOT CHILE. Crashed at 11:10pm], asked for a fix on his position. After a considerable delay, a doubtful bearing was obtained, however, the plane could not again be contacted. A blip showing IFF appeared on the radar screen on an approximate bearing of 2930, 13 miles but faded almost immediately. One plane failed to return.

R2. Document provided by Ewan Stevenson.

Strike Command Daily Intelligence Summaries 6 May – 29 Jun 1943

July 8. A TBF was damaged and another one lost together with a PBO flare plane on a mission against shipping at Kahili. AA, which blew out a tire of an Avenger causing it to ground loop on returning, may also have accounted for the loss of the other two planes which were not seen following the attack on a DD. Ninety two 50 lb. G.P. bombs and 90 fragmentation clusters were laid in a pattern on and along both sides of the Kahili strip by 15 Liberators in a night attack.

July 9. A large oil slick in Kahili Harbor seen by an F5A on photo run indicates that the TBF strike the night before may have done considerable damage to the DD.

R3. Document provided by Ewan Stevenson.

Air Command Solomon Islands Intelligence Section

Strikes, Targets and Interceptions – Week Ended July 9 [1943]

7/7; TOT 1940; TARGET Kahili shipping; PLANES USED 3TBFs, 1 PBO flare ship; BOMBS DROPPED 3 2000lb 4/5 sec. delay fuses. RESULTS Attacked DD, 3 misses but 1 close, 1 TBF hit in attack by twin engine bomber crashed off Pt. Cruz. 1 hit by AA crash landed at Henderson, PBO missing

7/8; TOT 1705-2330; TARGET Ships; PLANES USED 4 TBFs; BOMBS DROPPED 1-2000lb bombs RESULTS Found no ships; 1 TBF dropped on Vila; 1 TBF landed in water off Pt. Cruz.

Note: It's apparent from the Skylark's deck log and other documents that the crash of TBF #125 occurred off Lunga Point and not Point Cruz as named above. It may be that the first incorrect report was simply repeated or that Point Cruz was referring to the larger general area that included Lunga Point.

Distinguished Flying Cross Citation

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumously) to Lieutenant, Junior Grade Murray Charlton McKinney (NSN: 0-114265), United States Navy, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight during action against Japanese forces off Kahili, 7 July 1943. Lieutenant, Junior Grade, McKinney scored a direct hit with a 2,000-pound bomb and probably sank a Japanese destroyer. Although an enemy plane subsequently killed his turret

TBF #125's Crash

Lt.(jg) Murray Charlton "Chile" McKinney and ARM2c Jacob Casper "Jack" Durner, USNR

gunner and shot away his radio and controls, he flew 300 miles to his home base and crash landed in the sea.

Pilots Handbook, Model TBF-1 Model TBM-1, AVENGER 1

Second cockpit (middle seat) information. Standard ditching procedure information.

Other Files and Information

Over 1,300 digital files of various types have been collected for this research totaling 4.5GB.