

B-24 Bomber Crashes Near Cedar City During World War II Training Flight

By Jay M. Jones



*Crew 41, Assigned to the 754th Squadron, October 1943. (Photo: Air Force Historical Research Agency)
Standing: Tony DeGennaro - Navigator, Peter Zenas - Co-Pilot, Valin Woodward - Pilot, Bill Cain - Bombardier
Kneeling: James Fraley - Radio Operator, Harold Lamar - Flight Engineer, Jerry Weisberg - Flight Engineer,
John Picoulas - Gunner. Not pictured: George Snyder - Gunner, Raymond Peters - Gunner*

On the night of Tuesday, 4 January 1944, a B-24 bomber approached Cedar City from the west. Before it could make final preparations for an emergency landing at the Cedar City airport, all four engines stopped from lack of fuel. The pilot and co-pilot bailed out and the plane soon crashed on a mountainside south of Cedar City.

On Thursday 6 January, *The Iron County Record* reported: "The bomber had been on a test run out of the Tonapah, Nevada Air Base and was running low on fuel as it returned to the Tonapah area, and when the pilot could not locate the field because of bad weather he turned back toward Cedar City hoping to reach a landing field before his fuel supply ran out.

"As the plane passed over Panaca, the pilot, Captain V. R. Woodward, ordered his crew to parachute to safety and make their way to the Nevada town. Captain Woodward and Lt. P. A. Zcaks [Peter Zenas], the co-pilot, remained with the ship in an attempt to bring it into Cedar City. However, they were forced to jump when the last bit of fuel had been used up as they were circling toward the Cedar field. They jumped from a height of 19,000 feet."

The paper also indicated that two of the crew members that parachuted over Panaca had not yet been located. It turned out that one of them showed up in Ely, Nevada several days later after a 70 mile walk. The other, Sergeant Jerry Weisberg of Kings County, New York did not survive after his parachute failed to open.

A week later, *The Iron County Record* posted an update:

"The four-motored army bomber from the Tonapah, Nevada Air Base, which was lost in the Cedar mountains last week when its crew was forced to abandon the ship because of lack of fuel, has been located by members of the Cedar City Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, and Army Officials are enroute to the scene of the crash today to determine extent of salvage that might be made.

"Lieutenant Harold Frith, commanding officer of the Cedar City Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, and Lt. Arthur Higbee, Communications Officer of the Squadron, located the crashed ship late Saturday afternoon, but the find was not made public until Army Officials could be notified and an investigation made. Officials arrived here last night and started for the plane early this morning.

“The bomber crashed into the rough mountain side at the head of Shurtz Canyon, not far from the place the pilot and co-pilot landed after parachuting from the machine.”

During World War II, there was an extremely high number of fatal aviation training accidents. On 29 December 1943, a week before the B-24 crash near Cedar City, two B-24 bombers out of Wendover Field collided over the desert in Box Elder County, resulting in 25 fatalities. On 3 January 1944, six men were killed when a B-17 crashed near Delle, Tooele County. Seven more fatalities occurred 5 January 1944 in another crash in Box Elder County. The B-17 had stopped for refueling at Wendover Field on its way back to base in Iowa.

Zion	Exploring	Natives	Pioneers	Towns	Resources	Arts	History	Photos	Maps
----------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------	------------------------	----------------------