

# Kittyhawk Plane Crash Site



Plane Crash site 1949. Image courtesy of Alan Burrage.



**Captain Joseph Potter McLaughlin**  
**0396289 United States Army Air Force**  
**20th Pursuit Squadron, Philippines – 4th Air Depot Group. Laverton, Victoria, Australia.**  
**P40E Warhawk 41-5526**  
**Crashed 10th March 1942.**

Captain McLaughlin was one of seventeen United States pilots sent to Australia during World War 2 to pick up new P-40 aircraft and fly them back to the Philippines. The Australian National Aviation Museum website indicates that in all, around 838 examples of the Kittyhawk served with the RAAF in the South West Pacific area, making it one of the most numerous single types contributing to the defence of Australia in World War 2. Before the aircraft could be assembled and made ready, the Japanese forces had occupied the islands between Australia and the Philippines.

Captain McLaughlin went missing in stormy weather on a return flight from Canberra to Laverton. He was listed as MIA – Missing in Action.

The P-40 aircraft wreckage was found at this location some six years later on the 30th Dec 1948, by a man from a fishing party who was walking his dog. Remains were sent back to Hawaii and classified 'Unknown' because no identification was found at the time. Captain McLaughlin's remains were buried in an unknown grave in Punchbowl National Cemetery, Hawaii in 1949.

In 2002 the case was reopened through the Pentagon with the help of Lieutenant-General Joseph Moore United States Air Force (retired) and local aircraft historian Rick Hanning. Lieutenant-General Moore was Captain McLaughlin's Commanding Officer at Clark Field Philippines 1941-42.

In March 2004 a US Army team from JPAC (Joint Prisoner of War- Missing in Action Accounting Command) Hawaii excavated the crash site and found the pilot's wings and other evidence specifically identifying Captain McLaughlin. Captain McLaughlin's remains were interred shortly after and he was taken off the (Missing in Action) list on the 8th Oct 2004.

On the 10th April 2006 Captain McLaughlin was buried with a full Military Funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, Washington DC. The funeral was attended by Lieutenant-General Moore, Rick Hanning from Churchill, Gippsland, Victoria, family and friends.



Captain Joseph P. McLaughlin



Arlington National Cemetery,  
Section 60 Grave 749 (2006)

## References and Acknowledgements:

Information and photographs supplied by Rick Hanning and Terry Lowater.

"The Walhalla P-40", by Rick Hanning: (2005) 32 page paperback .

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