



**Lt. Robert Neil Springfield, Jr**  
**World War II Pilot**

Robert Springfield, 2nd Lt.

Birth: Sep. 22, 1922 South Carolina, USA

Death: Aug. 24, 1944 Carlsbad, New Mexico, USA

Buried in Decatur Cemetery. Decatur, Georgia, Plot: Section 8; Block 12; Lot 11

Air Service Number: O-781439

3009 Base Unit

Class 44-13

Carlsbad Army Airfield, New Mexico

Killed in the line of duty, piloting U.S. Army Air Corps Beechcraft AT-11 #41-9511, in a crash into ground, seven miles south of the airfield. Lt. Springfield was on a night flight when his plane ran into a terrific electrical storm and as a result, crashed into the side of a mountain. Springfield was a former student at Decatur Boys High, the Georgia Military Academy and Georgia Tech. According to his obituary, a funeral service was held at Decatur First Baptist Church with internment in the Decatur Cemetery with full military honors.

Four other airmen were killed on the training flight:

Raymond F Chloupek

Vernon C Johnson

Billy B Lane

Casimir A Zielinski



Gravestone. Decatur Cemetery, Decatur, Georgia. (Plot: Section 8; Block 12; Lot 11)



Photos of 3 of the 4 others killed in the crash.

# Missing Air Crew Report

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Form No. 14  
(Revised May 15, 1942)

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Carlsbad Army Air Field  
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

ACCIDENT No. *bedis 063*  
*45-234-42*

## REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

*73-015*

(1) Place 7 Miles south of Carlsbad Army Air Field Date 24 August 1944 (2) Time 2144 MWT

AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model AT-11 C-91 (5) A. F. No. 41-9511 (6) Station Carlsbad, New Mexico  
Organization: (7) AAFWFTC (8) --- (9) 3009th AAF Base Unit, Sec. C  
(Command and Air Force) (Group) (Squadron)

PERSONNEL *9 PRT* *8316*

DUTY (10)	NAME (Last inside first) (11)	RATING (12)	SERIAL No. (13)	RANK (14)	PERSONNEL CLASS (15)	BRANCH (16)	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND (17)	RESULT TO PERSONNEL (18)	USE OF PARACHUTE (19)
<i>0</i>	P Springfield, Robert N.	P	0-781439	2nd Lt.	18	AC	AAFWFTC	Fatal	No
<i>87</i>	B Chloupek, Raymond F.	B	0-752315	2nd Lt.	18	AC	AAFWFTC	Fatal	No
<i>88</i>	SB Lane, Billy B.	---	33650954	A/C	62	AC	AAFWFTC	Fatal	No
<i>89</i>	SB Johnson, Vernon C.	---	36814592	A/C	62	AC	AAFWFTC	Fatal	No
<i>90</i>	SB Zielinski, Casimer A.	---	36871182	A/C	62	AC	AAFWFTC	Fatal	No

RECEIVED  
PERSONNEL  
OFFICE  
SEP 4 1944  
OFFICE OF THE  
SAFETY

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

(20) SPRINGFIELD, ROBERT (Last name) (First name) (21) N. (Middle initial) (22) 0-781439 (Serial number) (23) 2nd Lt. (Rank) (24) 18 (Personnel class) (25) AC (Branch)

Assigned (26) AAFWFTC (Command and Air Force) (27) 3009th AAF Base Unit (Squadron) (28) Carlsbad, New Mexico (Station)

Attached for flying (29) AAFWFTC (Command and Air Force) (30) --- (Group) (31) Pilot Group II (Squadron) (32) Carlsbad, New Mexico (Station)

Original rating (33) Pilot (Rating) (34) 6-27-44 (Date) Present rating (35) Pilot (Rating) (36) 6-27-44 (Date) Instrument rating (37) 8-10-44 (Date)

**PILOT HOURS:**  
(at the time of this accident)

(38) This type.....	93:20	(42) Instrument time last 6 months.....	31:55
(39) This model.....	53:20	(43) Instrument time last 30 days.....	3:50
(40) Last 90 days.....	53:20	(44) Night time last 6 months.....	22:25
(41) Total.....	287:10	(45) Night time last 30 days.....	6:15

AIRCRAFT DAMAGE *NF*

	L DAMAGE R		(48) LIST OF DAMAGED PARTS
	L	R	
(46) Aircraft.....	W	W	See attached damage report
(47) Engine(s).....	W	W	
(48) Propeller(s).....	W	W	

(49) Weather at the time of accident High broken 1500ft. scattered, distant lightning, wind 10 miles south-southwest

(51) Was the pilot flying on instruments at the time of accident No

(52) Cleared from Carlsbad, N. M. (53) To Carlsbad, New Mexico (54) Kind of clearance Local CFR

*7316* *7-16*

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

(Brief narrative of accident. Include statement of responsibility and recommendations for action to prevent repetition)

Pilot flew into mountain at night, completely wrecking the airplane. The flash of the explosion was seen from Group Operations, Control Tower, crew of one aircraft on the same mission and by other personnel on the ground. The airplane struck with more than normal speed as evidenced by wreckage scattered over 150 yards up the side of the mountain.

Unknown

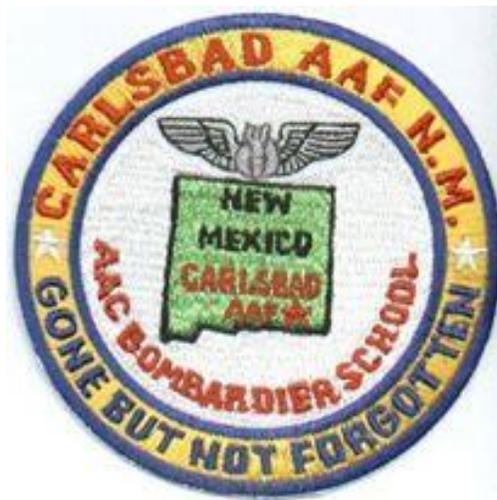
Since no one witnessed the accident and there were no survivors, the cause is unknown and no remedial action can be taken.

## Carlsbad Army Airfield Bombardier School

A Bombardier School was a United States Army Air Forces facility that used bombing ranges for training aircrew. After ground simulator training with the Norden bombsight, the 12-18 week course recorded each student's scores for approximately 160 practice bomb drops of "Bomb Dummy Units" (BDU), both in daytime and at night. The elimination rate was 12%, and graduates transferred to a Second or Third Air Force training unit to join a crew being trained for overseas duty. The bombardier trainer used was the Beech AT-11 Kansan. With the Bradley Plan increase in Eighth Air Force aircrews needed for the Combined Bomber Offensive, the 17 Army Air Forces Bombardier Schools graduated 47,236.



1943 AAF Bombardier School patch for Carlsbad Army Airfield.





General views of Carlsbad Army Airfield, New Mexico

## Beechcraft AT-11

The Army Air Force AT-11 and the U.S. Navy SNB-1 Kansan are advanced twin engine trainers that were used to train Bombardiers, Gunners and Navigators during and after WWII. Over 90% of all of the Bombardiers in WWII trained in this glass-nosed version of the famous Twin Beech.

In the bombardier training mode the AT-11 carried ten 100 pound M38A2 practice bombs or ten 100 pound general purpose high explosive bombs. The typical crew consisted of a pilot, the instructor and two students. Each student would take a turn in the nose behind the Norden or Sperry bombsight as the instructor looked on from his right side.

Each student would drop one bomb per run for five separate bombing runs and would then trade places with the other student. The student who was not at the bombsight would use a 35mm motion picture camera to film each bomb run through a hole in the floor to record the other students bombing scores. In the gunnery training mode either a single 30 caliber motor driven turret (Made by Beechcraft and used on early AT-11's) or a twin 30 caliber electrically powered turret (made by Crocker Wheeler and used on later AT-11's and all SNB-1's) was installed in the top of the rear fuselage. There was also a tunnel gun which consisted of a flexible mounted 30 caliber machine gun in the lower rear fuselage. Two student gunners would man the turret and the tunnel gun as an instructor watched over them.

The AT-11 was set up just like a miniature version of the B-17 Flying Fortress or the B-24 Liberator. The advanced trainer was supposed to simulate the same environment as the full sized bombers. Tied into the Norden bombsight was the same C-1 autopilot that was used on all of the bombers of WWII. It was through this autopilot that the Bombardier could fly the aircraft through the bombsight.

A Navigator's position was located in the right rear fuselage (in the AT-11 only) which allowed for crew coordination training between the Pilot, the Bombardier, the Gunner and the Navigator. 192 AT-11's were configured with the Navigators station at the factory. Beech also made a Navigators station kit so aircraft in the field could be modified should the operating authority choose to do so. Most all of the AT-11's that I have seen show signs of this modification either from the factory or the field mod. The AT-11 was equipped with an oxygen system to allow for high altitude missions. The AT-11 and the SNB-1 had an SCR-283 radio set for communication between the tower and other aircraft.

Although 1584 were made in WWII, the AT-11 is a bit rare today. The few that did survive were saved because of their post war uses. Many were pressed into an aerial photography role, while others were converted into miniature airliners. Several AT-11's became the first air tankers or Borate bombers in California.

There are a few AT-11's that are going through extensive restorations to their original factory configuration. There is one such restoration that was recently completed and stands

head and shoulders above the rest. Thanks to Ray Plote of Lake in the Hills, Illinois a beautiful AT-11 has emerged from the ashes. He and a dedicated crew restored a converted aerial photography AT-11 back to its factory fresh condition. Almost every skin has been replaced and this aircraft truly looks like she just rolled out of the factory doors.

