

# DELANDINGS



DeLand Naval Air Station Museum, DeLand, Florida *SPECIAL EDITION* October 2015

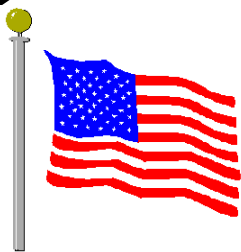
## **OSTEEN WWII SBD-5 CRASH SITE U.S. NAVY PILOT IDENTIFIED**

### **ENSIGN WILLIAM T. BELLMIRE**

After almost a year of searching for information about a WWII plane crash site discovered in Osteen Florida, and who the Navy Pilot may have been, the information has been determined. The DeLand Naval Air Station Museum Volunteers and Osteen Resident Rodney Thomas have been notified by the Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington, D.C. that they have completed their extensive investigation of the WWII plane crash site.

Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) Archaeologist Dr. George Schwarz, who personally visited the Osteen Florida crash site, conducted an extensive search of available WWII records and has concluded the crash site is consistent with the wreck of an SBD -5 Dauntless Bomber assigned to the DeLand Naval Air Station in 1944. The Navy Pilot, Ensign William T. Bellmire, died in that crash on February 1, 1944, 16 miles south of the DeLand Naval Air Station during a training mission.





## **U.S. NAVY ENSIGN WILLIAM T. BELLMIRE**

**BORN: 1919—DIED FEBRUARY 1, 1944 IN DeLAND FLORIDA**

**ENSIGN BELLMIRE IS BURIED NEXT TO HIS PARENTS  
IN THE DELTA CEMETERY IN DELTA COUNTY COLORADO**

**PARENTS: CLARENCE L. BELLMIRE (1899-1957)  
SHIRLEY MAY ROADY BELLMIRE (1896-1981)**

**ENSIGN BELLMIRE WAS 25 YEARS OLD, AN ONLY CHILD  
AND UNMARRIED AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH.**

**NO KNOW RELATIVES HAVE BEEN LOCATED TO DATE BUT THE SEARCH WILL CONTINUE.**



## NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND



# News Release

**805 Kidder Breese St SE  
Washington, D.C. 20374  
(202) 433-7880**

**For Immediate Release  
Release No. 150930-001**

**Sept. 30, 2015  
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## **Navy Completes Review of Florida WW II Bomber Crash Site**

*From Naval History and Heritage Command, Communication and Outreach Division*

OSTEEN, Fla. (NNS) -- The Navy released its findings Sept. 21 in the investigation of a World War II era aircraft wreck site in Osteen Fla.

Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) Archaeologist Dr. George Schwarz personally [visited the site](#), examined recovered artifacts and helped organize an ongoing survey of the site to document additional wreckage.

His investigation determined that the evidence from the site, informed by research conducted at NHHC of the 25 recorded aircraft losses in the area, is consistent with the wreck of an SBD-5 Dauntless bomber piloted by Ensign William T. Bellmire, who died in the crash. While confident of the determination, 100 percent confirmation is impossible without specific airframe identification evidence, which was not available. The crash occurred 16 miles south of DeLand Naval Air Station on Feb. 1, 1944 during a training mission.

"The accident history card for Ensign Bellmire's plane indicates high-speed impact and demolition of the aircraft which is consistent with findings at the site," said Schwarz. "Still, there has been no conclusive evidence from the wreck site that directly links it to Bellmire's aircraft."

Additionally, during Schwarz's visit to Osteen, a search of the site with dogs specially trained to detect human remains turned up nothing. News reports from the time of the accident indicate Bellmire's body was returned home and buried with military honors at the Delta Cemetery in Delta, Colo.

Those reports also indicate that that Bellmire, 25, was the only child of Clarence L. Bellmire and Shirley May Roady Bellmire who were from Delta, but living in California at the time of the crash.

The investigation began in December 2014 when NHHC was notified that what appeared to be aircraft wreckage had been turning up on the property of Osteen resident Rodney Thomas. He contacted Scott Storz, a volunteer at the DeLand Naval Air Station Museum (DNASM), who then reached out to NHHC.

Schwarz visited the site Feb. 18-20 and worked with Thomas, Storz, and 45 volunteers from nearly a dozen organizations to wade through dense vegetation and sift through the Florida sand in search of more clues. More than 240 objects associated with the SBD-5 were excavated and documented, a site map of finds was developed, and a protocol for recording future finds was developed for local volunteers who intend to assist with continuing the search for aircraft remains under NHHC guidance.

## NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

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Schwarz says identifying wreckage and sites like this is important work.

"In addition to a better understanding of our history and heritage, site investigations are part of our obligation to those who choose to serve, we will not forget their service and their sacrifice," said Schwarz.

"Normally a site investigation like this one will provide a grieving family with some sense of closure," he added, "but in this case, with the body of the pilot recovered and returned to the family, the investigation is really being driven by the people we worked with in Osteen who are very interested in honoring the life and service of an American Sailor who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to his country. I was proud to join them in that effort."

In accordance with federal law, the aircraft parts remain property of the government. Final disposition of the collected artifacts will be determined by NHHHC after they are fully inventoried and assessed. However, in keeping with NHHHC's mission to share naval history, it is likely most of the recovered objects will be loaned to the DeLand Naval Air Station Museum to display for their visitors.

Thousands of pilots trained for war at DeLand Naval Air Station, which the Navy operated from 1942-1946. The site was returned to the city of DeLand after the war, and is still in operation today with one 4,300 foot-long runway and a longer one that is 6,000 feet.

The Naval History and Heritage Command, located at the Washington Navy Yard, is responsible for the preservation, analysis, and dissemination of U.S. naval history and heritage. It provides the knowledge foundation for the Navy by maintaining historically relevant resources and products that reflect the Navy's unique and enduring contributions through our nation's history, and supports the fleet by assisting with and delivering professional research, analysis, and interpretive services. NHHHC is composed of many activities including the Navy Department Library, the Navy Operational Archives, the Navy art and artifact collections, underwater archeology, Navy histories, nine museums, USS Constitution repair facility and the historic ship Nautilus.

**--NHHHC--**

**NOTE TO MEDIA:** For additional information about naval history, please contact the Naval History and Heritage Command's Communication and Outreach division at 202-433-7880 or via email at [NHHCPublicAffairs@navy.mil](mailto:NHHCPublicAffairs@navy.mil)





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[http://www.history.navy.mil/bin/imageDownload?image=/content/dam/nhhc/news-and-events/news/2015/02 February/150218-N-ZZ999-003.JPG](http://www.history.navy.mil/bin/imageDownload?image=/content/dam/nhhc/news-and-events/news/2015/02_Feb-ruary/150218-N-ZZ999-003.JPG)

OSTEEN, Fla. (Feb. 18, 2015) - Naval History and Heritage Command archaeologist Dr. George Schwarz explains the proper methods for documenting artifacts from a World War II Navy aircraft found on a property in Osteen, Fla., Feb. 18. The orange flag designates an area of interest found by members of the Central Florida Metal Detecting Club. (U.S. Navy photograph by Lt. Cmdr. Heidi Lenzini/Released)



[150219-N-ZZ999-127](http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=192737&t=1)

[http://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=192737&t=1](http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=192737&t=1)

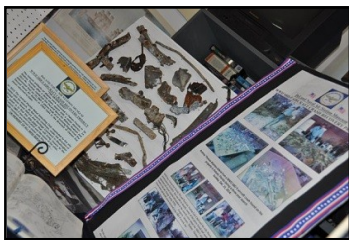
DELAND, Fla. (Feb. 19, 2015) Naval History and Heritage Command archaeologist Dr. George Schwarz, right, and University of West Florida graduate student Nicole Mauro clean artifacts recovered from the crash site of a World War II Navy aircraft as Maddeline Voas, center, also a graduate student from UWF, photographs the artifacts at DeLand Naval Air Station Museum. The aircraft is being recovered from a property in Osteen, Fla. (U.S. Navy photograph by Lt. Cmdr. Heidi Lenzini/Released)



[150219-N-ZZ999-126](http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=192737&t=1)

[http://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=192737&t=1](http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=192737&t=1)

OSTEEN, Fla. (Feb. 19, 2015) More than 45 volunteers converged on a property in Osteen, Fla., to help assess, evaluate, and document artifacts from a World War II Navy aircraft discovered on a local property. Orange flags designate areas of interest found by members of the Central Florida Metal Detecting Club. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. C



Lt. Cmdr. Heidi Lenzini/Released)150218-N-ZZ999-125

[http://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=192734&t=1](http://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=192734&t=1)

DELAND, Fla. (Feb. 18, 2015) More than 300 pieces from a downed World War II Navy aircraft that were discovered on private properties in Osteen, Fla., are on display at the DeLand Naval Air Station Museum, across the street from the DeLand Municipal Airport. The museum occupies the former master-at-arms quarters and is a historic landmark. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Cmdr. Heidi Lenzini/Released)



**OSTEEN RESIDENT, RODNEY THOMAS DISCOVERED AIRCRAFT DEBRIS FOUR YEARS AGO AND AFTER FINDING A PLANE ID PLATE, CONTINUES TO FIND HUNDREDS OF PARTS OF THE SBD-5 WWII PLANE ON HIS PROPERTY.**



**WWII NAS DELAND FLIGHT LINE CHIEF KEN TORBETT ASSISTED RODNEY THOMAS WITH PLANE DEBRIS IDENTIFICATION**



**Central Florida Metal Detecting Club  
[www.thecfmdc.com](http://www.thecfmdc.com)  
&  
K-9 Search & Rescue of Orange City  
[www.k9saroc.com](http://www.k9saroc.com)  
Continue To Assist**



**SOME OF THE CRASH SITE SBD-5 DEBRIS IS RESPECTFULLY DISPLAYED AT THE DeLAND NAVAL AIR STATION MUSEUM. MANY VISITORS HAVE VIEWED THE DISPLAY AND LEARNED ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE YOUNG PILOTS WHO TRAINED DURING WWII AT NAS DELAND 1942-1946.**

**([www.delandnavalairmuseum.org](http://www.delandnavalairmuseum.org))**



**The DeLand Naval Air Station Museum Board of Directors and Volunteers thank Rodney Thomas, Ken Torbett, the Central Florida Metal Detecting Club, the K-9 Search & Rescue of Orange City, the Volusia County**

**Sheriffs Office, the West Volusia Historical Society, Lt. Cmdr. Heidi Lenzini, Public Affairs Officer and Dr. George Schwarz, Ph.D-Archaeologist of the Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington D.C., Saul Saenz of My News 13, Tom Johnson of FOX 35 Orlando, Dave McDaniel WESH Channel 2, Kendra Lee and Darrell Hill of County of Volusia-Volusia Magazine, CNN News, The Daytona Beach News Journal and other news affiliates and publications who ran the Osteen story.**

**When Rodney Thomas started to find parts of a vintage aircraft on his property he set out on a mission to find out what type of plane had crashed, when it crashed and most important to him, who the pilot was. He remains committed to honoring the young WWII Pilot who died in the crash by placing a memorial plaque in his honor on the Osteen property as a reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by William T. Bellmire and so many others who served or died to protect our freedom.**



# **DeLand Naval Air Station 1942-1946**

## **Fatalities Due to Flight Training Accidents**

### **Incomplete List—Over 100 Pilots and Crew died at DeLand NAS During WWII.**

**Alger, S1s J. H.**  
**Bacon, Ens. W. B.**  
**Barcalow, Lt. J. B.**  
**Bell, 2nd Lt. J. B.**



**Bellmire, Ensign W. T.**

**Bickerton, S1cA.**  
**Bogard, Ens. B. R.**  
**Boggs, S1s C.**  
**Brumely, 2nd Lt. C.A.**  
**Caldwell, 2nd Lt. E. J.**  
**Cook, Ens. A. H.**  
**Fletcher, Ens. L. H.**  
**Geroy, S1C J. H.**  
**Harrell, Jr., 2nd Lt. E.C.**  
**Holderman, Ens. J.E.**  
**Jensen, S1c R. E.**  
**Jones, S1c R. N.**  
**Judd, Jr., Capt. H. G.**  
**Knowlton, Ens. S. A.**  
**Ledford AMM3c W. J.**  
**Sapp, S1c T. R.**  
**Smith, 2nd Lt. R. I.**  
**Smithers, 2nd Lt. G. Y.**  
**Spisak, 2nd Lt. L.**  
**Stein, Ens. 1944**  
**Stonehouse, Ens. W. L.**  
**Straub, Ens. R. E.**  
**Walsh, S1c M. F.**  
**Wells, Ens. A. G.**  
**White, Ens. L. A.**  
**Ziegler, Ens. D.R.**





# IN MEMORY OF ALL WHO SERVED

**DeLand Naval Air Station Museum**

910 Biscayne Boulevard  
DeLand, FL 32724

[www.delandnavalairmuseum.org](http://www.delandnavalairmuseum.org)  
[dnas.museum.org@gmail.com](mailto:dnas.museum.org@gmail.com)  
(386) 738-4149

*For Information on the Osteen WWII  
SBD-5 Crash Site contact:*

*Scott Storz—Promotions Chair  
(321) 303-9093 or (386) 822-2809*