

Jim Robertson served with the Marine Corps and trained as a pilot, joining VMB-413 – the Marine Corps’ first medium bomber squadron. With 1st Lieutenant Jim Robertson as pilot and squadron athletic officer, VMB-413 deployed to Hawaii in January 1944. The squadron flew North American PBJ-1s; the U.S. Navy’s equivalent of the famous B-25 twin-engine Mitchell bomber, and the flight echelon flew to the island of Espiritu Santo, part of the New Hebrides, at the end of the month. Following a brief training period, the squadron then moved northward to Stirling Island (part of the Treasury Islands) from where it flew night-time missions against Japanese forces at Rabaul and neighboring islands.

Shortly before midnight on April 20, 1944, Robertson, with the squadron’s executive officer Major Douglas E. Keeler at the controls of the PBJ-1D, was returning from a mission over the Japanese stronghold of Kavieng on the island of New Ireland. The bomber had been damaged by Japanese anti-aircraft fire and was attempting a landing in heavy rain at the Allied airstrip on Green Island when it overshot the runway and crashed into the lagoon killing all on board. In addition to Jim Robertson and Major Keeler, other crew members were Second Lieutenant Charles F. Leidberg from Chicago; Staff Sergeant Gilbert V. Enck of Portland, Oregon; Sergeant Aaron S. Johnson Jr. of Pluckemin, New Jersey; and **Sergeant Robert C. Hubbell of Philadelphia.**

