SECOND WORLD WAR

Weekly: it is stated to have consisted mainly of young "individualists" who had proved unmanageable in other squadrons. The organization had great esprit de corps and a brilliant record.

The squadron left the United States aboard U.S.S. Bunker Hill, and after a short service in the Atlantic, went to the Southwest Pacific. There it was detached from the carrier and land-based at Ondongo, New Georgia. From then on it had a great many hours of very active combat duty in the area between Rabaul and Bougainville. On November 11, 1943, for example, the squadron was en route from Ondongo to raid Rabaul when it was called on to protect a large task force proceeding toward Empress Augusta Bay: Pillsbury’s own flight log indicates that he flew over ten combat hours that one day, refuelling and getting ammunition from various carriers in the task force.

Ten days after that, Pillsbury was reported missing in action. Commander Blackburn wrote: "He and Ensign Hogan were strafing Japanese positions on the southeast end of Bougainville Island on Nov. 21 [1943]; they split to avoid a particularly heavy concentration of anti-aircraft guns and when Hogan turned back to rejoin he could not find Charles. He searched as long as he had sufficient fuel and the squadron subsequently made extensive careful search for a period of three days. Unfortunately, the jungle growth in that area is extremely thick and it is virtually impossible to see even a house, even if directly over it... the circumstances of his disappearance make it almost a certainty that he was shot down at tree top level, which gives absolutely minimum chance of survival. ... I know I speak for the whole squadron when I say that we could have spared anyone else better. Charles was careful and painstaking in his instruction of the younger pilots who... to a man, worshiped him. We always teased him about his inquisitive mind and love for figuring out and testing the solution of difficult problems, but respected, the while, the results and the knowledge obtained. ... Charles was a gallant, excellent officer and a ‘good shipmate’ and I am proud to have had him under my command."