In January 2017 the continuing internet search for information pertaining to South Park High School students who lost their life in service located additional information regarding James J. Faulkner from several websites and sources.

DIAL 1939 Swimming with James Faulkner (1941), Joseph Bamberger (1940), James Durkin (1939), Eugene McCourt (1940), Cecil Murphy (1940), Edward Tighe (1940), Bertel Wessman (1941)
James J. Faulkner, 19, son of William B. Faulkner, 1091 Tifft St, recently won his Navy wings of gold and was commissioned an ensign in the Naval Reserve following the completion of the prescribed flight training course at the Naval center, Pensacola, Fla. Having been designated a Naval aviator, Ensign Faulkner will go on active duty at one of the Navy's air operational training centers before being assigned to a combat zone.¹

James J. Faulkner, 1001 Tifft St. has been commissioned an ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve at Pensacola, Fla.²

Buffalo Flier Dies in Crash Of Navy Plane. Ensign J. J. Faulkner Near End of Training. Ensign James Joseph Faulkner, 20. son of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Faulkner 1091 Tifft St., was killed Tuesday in the crash of his Hellcat fighter plane near Santa Rosa, Cal., the Navy announced last night in San Francisco. Ensign Faulkner, who entered the Naval Reserve nearly two years ago, was nearing the end of his combat training in preparation for duty with the Pacific Fleet. He won his Navy wings and commission at Pensacola, Fla., last April. Born in Buffalo, the young flier was graduated from Holy Family and South Park High schools. He was working at the Chevrolet engine plant when he enlisted. A brother, William B. Faulkner, Jr., is an Army fighter pilot, now stationed in Florida.³

On line inquiry found a reference⁴ in the California Death Index for James Joseph Faulkner reporting his death on 10 October 1944, in Napa California. It lists his date of birth as March 20, 1924 in New York.

It was learned, through further research⁵ that Ensign James J. Faulkner, VF-6, was killed in a crash of the F6F #42956 he was flying at 1630hrs on 10 October 1944. He was rated as a Pilot on March 16, 1944 and had a total of 504.9 hours of flight time. No previous accidents.

The accident occurred 5 miles north of Calistoga, California. He had been flying at 2500 feet for 30 minutes in what is described as a routine instrument flight.

---

¹ Courier Express, April 19, 1944  Page 10
² Courier Express, April 29, 1944  Page 10
³ Courier Express, October 13, 1944  Page 15
⁵ US Navy accident report, October 10, 1944
The report narrative relates:

“The plane was on a routine instrument flight, with another plane, accompanying him, as chase pilot. The radio transmitters went out, due to a short in the chase pilot’s plane, thereby losing radio contact. The chase pilot did everything he could think of at the time, and time being short, to attract FAULKNERS attention right up to the time the plane hit the mountain. The plane exploded and burned on impact. Plane was in good condition at all times.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That pilot flying instrument plane make more frequent checks by lifting goggles and looking around, and that a standard procedure is being worked out to get pilots attention in case of radio failure. The above recommendations will be carried out. Procedure for attracting attention will be a slip stream.”

The report places 70% cause on material (radio failure in chase pilot’s plane) and 30% PE.

Handwritten notes on the report are fairly legible and relate, in the lower section: “Plane was rigged for instrument flying in accord with Fleet Air West Cmd. This restricts the pilot when wearing red polarized goggles from seeing anything outside covered portion of cockpit. Letter sent asking for (…) and witness statement chase pilot (our Lt) tried to get pilots’ attention fly close flight & cross under to bounce his plane but did not fly in front of him to give him slipstream”

Handwritten notes at top of first page, “struck mountain while on inst. flight. While flying instruments plane failed to make checks by looking around and when radio failed. Radio failed on chase pilot plane.”

Ens. Faulkner was training out of NALF Santa Rosa at the time of his death. Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Santa Rosa was first commissioned in 1943, as an outlying airfield of Naval Air Station Alameda. There were two 7,000-foot concrete runways. One was oriented 160-340 and the other 060-240. Each runway had a parallel taxiway, and there was a concrete apron in the northwest quadrant of the runway crossing. Two other outlying airfields, Cotati Naval Outer Landing Field and Little River Naval Outer Landing Field, supported Santa Rosa flight operations training 21 squadrons of fighters, dive bombers, and torpedo planes during World War II.6

With new information, additional research located a file on FLICKR, posted by Colson Johnson entitled, “F6F-3 Hellcat, Napa Wine Country, CA.” In this photo album are 83 pictures, posted January 31, 2015, of the hill and wreckage of Ens. Faulkner’s aircraft still at the scene. These photographs can be viewed at:

6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naval_Auxiliary_Landing_Field_Santa_Rosa
Additionally, a Facebook account for Matt Cerkel was located that also shows pictures of the crash site. In correspondence with Cerkel, he gave permission for use of the pictures he posted:


Ensign James J. Faulkner was buried on October 20, 1944, in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Section F, Lot 60, Grave #1. He was 20 years old.