



Remember Pearl Harbor

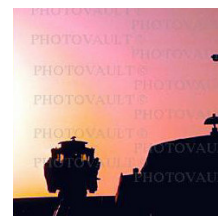


NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES - SAN FRANCISCO COMMANDERY



Mission: History

Studiorum Historiam Praemium Est



December 4, 2000

★★★★★★

Volume 2, Number 12

1944: Typhoon Hammers Halsey



Three Destroyers Lost As Third Fleet Ducks Into Storm's Punch

Nearly 800 Sailors Perish,
Dozens of Ships Damaged

On the 17th and 18th of December in 1944, Admiral William F. Halsey fought a battle with the sea, and it cannot be said that he emerged a winner.

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz said Halsey suffered in a typhoon that battered his fleet "the greatest loss that we have taken in the Pacific without compensatory return since the First Battle of Savo."

That loss? Three destroyers, capsized and sank with hundreds of lives lost – the sea claimed 765 Third Fleet sailors in all. Four light carriers were badly damaged, and another four escort carriers. A light cruiser was mauled, as were seven fortunate destroyers that weathered the storm, two destroyer escorts, a fleet oiler and a fleet tug. More than 200 planes were lost off the decks of Third Fleet carriers.

The cause? A typhoon that made up near Ulithi, gained strength rapidly and proceeded on a west-northwesterly course to Luzon in the Philippines, a

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USS *LANGLEY* (CVL-28) on a roll to starboard. Despite many comments to the contrary, the typhoon that caught up with the Third Fleet announced its presence with a high, long swell, gale winds increasing in force and a falling barometer. Over reliance on aerologists obscured the message from the sea and the need to find a patch of calm sea to refuel ships, and pressure to fulfill military objectives combined to place Adm. William F. Halsey squarely in the typhoon's path. Bowditch warns: "Even the largest and most seaworthy vessels become virtually unmanageable, and may sustain heavy damage. Less sturdy vessels do not survive." Flt. Adm. Chester W. Nimitz commented: "The time for taking all measures for a ship's safety is while still able to do so."

Halsey Ducked Right into Punch

Why Didn't Halsey Outrun Typhoon?

*Pressure to Refuel Ships,
Support Luzon Invasion,
Said to have been Factors*

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distance of more than 1,250 nautical miles, at a speed of eight or nine knots.

A question that has never been answered is why didn't Halsey get his fast ships out of the way of the storm? That doesn't mean he didn't try – he was bobbing and weaving like a slick middleweight, but he was ducking into punches thrown by Joe Louis. In the end, following an inquiry, the typhoon very nearly cost Halsey his career.

On 17 December, the Third Fleet stood off the Philippines, providing air support for the invasion of Mindoro, begun two days earlier, and softening up Luzon for the planned invasion at Lingayen Gulf in early January. Halsey, his flag in USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) had planned to refuel his ships this day and next and then send his planes against targets in the Manila area for three days beginning on the 19th.

The fueling was begun during the forenoon watch on the 17th and became increasingly difficult because of a rising swell and winds approaching 30 knots. Refueling from *New Jersey*, right under Halsey's nose, the destroyer USS *Spence* (DD-512) was tossed about like a cork. Both fore and aft fueling hoses parted, and the attempt was given up. Her fuel down to 15 percent of capacity and her tanks pumped dry of ballast in anticipation of taking fuel, *Spence* rode the sea like a ping-pong ball.

Nathaniel Bowditch, in *American Practical Navigator, a mariner's reference in continuous publication since 1802, published by the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office, and certainly available in many copies throughout the Third Fleet, notes that the first warning is the "presence of a long swell...the crests passing at the rate of perhaps four per*



AIRCRAFT TORE LOOSE from their tie-downs and careered about the decks of carriers, crashing into one another, spewing gasoline and causing fires. Here, sailors aboard USS *Anzio* (CVE-57) stand by with a fire hose as other men struggle to shove a wrecked TBM over the side.

minute." The barometer falls, and as the fall becomes more rapid, wind speed reaches "a value of perhaps 22 to 40 knots."

"Even the largest and most seaworthy vessels become virtually unmanageable, and may sustain heavy damage," Bowditch says. "Less sturdy vessels do not survive."

The symptoms were there, but went unrecognized, possibly because of increasing reliance on reports from Fleet Weather Central at Pearl Harbor and on weathermen in the fleet. Halsey had a staff aerologist on board *New Jersey*, and each of the carriers had its own.

Weather Central had begun tracking a disturbance near Ulithi at 0300 on the 16th, but had it moving north, never approaching within 400 miles of the Third Fleet. Halsey's aerologist was closer, but at 0900 on the 17th, had the storm 100 miles north of its actual path. The problem with these reports was they were based on pilots' observations, made after the planes landed because of the need for radio silence. They were often hours late.

Bowditch notes that the "bulletins and forecasts are an excellent guide, but they are not infallible and may be sufficiently in error to induce a mariner in a

critical position to alter course so as to unwittingly increase the danger to his vessel."

Halsey knew the weather was getting worse rather than better so he suspended refueling and took the fleet on a northwesterly course, which would take him away from a storm advancing from the east. Subsequent reports showed the storm to have changed course, so the commander did likewise. Throughout the afternoon watch and the dog watch, the storm, now fully developed into a typhoon, persisted on its route, drawing ever closer to the Third Fleet.

The route of the typhoon was almost exactly that of an Area III storm depicted in Bowditch, Figure 3902. – "Areas in which tropical cyclones occur, and their approximate tracks."

Through most of the night, Halsey ran due west, and was actually moving farther ahead of the typhoon, outrunning it by about six knots. The glass was rising and the seas were moderating slightly. The fleet aerologist still placed the center of the storm hundreds of miles to the northeast. At midnight, the fleet turned due south, hoping to find smooth seas for refueling in the morning. The ships were to cross the path of the typhoon.

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1941: 'Praise the Lord and...

Pass the Ammunition' - Chaplain Says He Didn't But Others Say He Did

Howell M. Forgy was a big guy – huge, in fact, for the 1930s. He was six, two and two-twenty and solid as a rock. In college, he had been an all-state tackle in Ohio and, graduating into the depths of the Great Depression, he had spent a couple of years as a miner in Colorado. He could more than pull his share of any duty you could give him.

Lt.(jg) Forgy was a chaplain on board USS *New Orleans* (CA-32) when the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

On that Sunday morning, *New Orleans* was tied up in one of the docks of the Navy Yard east of Pier 1010, at the mouth of the South East Loch. Forgy was in the rack, thinking pleasant thoughts of home and mentally rehearsing his sermon of that morning. He would tell those who listened that their fate was what they made of the future, not what has already passed. He had given as the title of his homily "We Reach Forward." His text was taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians, the third chapter, thirteenth verse; "Forgetting those things which are behind, we press on..."

The ship jarred a bit and then moved slightly again. A tug was moving the cruiser to another berth, Forgy thought. There was a rattle that sounded like a youngster running a stick along a picket fence. Then all hell broke loose.

The general alarm clanged, and clanged some more. A bosun's pipe screeched through the ship's speakers. "All hands to battle stations! All hands to battle stations!"

"This is no drill! This is no drill!"

Forgy said he wasn't buffaloed – this was some admiral's idea of how to see if the Marines were awake after Saturday night liberty. The Marines the chaplain encountered on the ladders were of the same mind. "Every one grumbled about GQ – especially at this hour," he said.

Forgy made his way to the sick bay, his battle station, where he was joined by



THIS IS CHAPLAIN FORGY, the six-two, two-twenty former all-Ohio football lineman who said "Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition." There are those who say he actually passed some ammo. He denies it.

Lt.Cdr. Edward Evans, *New Orleans'* senior physician. Neither officer knew what was going on, but Evans said he had seen a burning plane falling out of the sky. Forgy headed topsides.

About five hundred yards off his cruiser's starboard quarter he saw USS *Arizona* (BB-39), a mass of black, oily smoke with her foremast leaning at a drunken angle. Hundreds of oil-covered men were in the water, some swimming, some motionless.

USS *West Virginia* (BB-48) was moored just forward of *Arizona*, and it seemed to Forgy that her back had been broken – *Weavie's* bow and stern were both angled upward. (That was what *West Virginia's* crew called their ship – *New Orleans'* men called theirs *No Boat*.) Forward of *Weavie*, USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37) was rolling over, her bottom coming into view. Hundreds of her men were in the water and others were scrambling up her side, trying to stay on top of whatever part of the hull was top.

The sound of an airplane's engine caught Forgy's attention. "I saw a Jap dive-bomber gliding down toward Battleship Row," the chaplain wrote. "He seemed to be loafing in, deliberately taking his time to pick out just what he

wanted to hit."

Forgy said "There was something mocking about the big rising-sun balls under the wings of the plane." He watched helplessly as the plane's bombs crashed into USS *California* (BB-44), hitting her amidships. "The Jap opened his throttle wide and raced away from his victim.... Now our own guns began thundering in my ears. The sky all around the plane was laced with streaming trails of tracers. The Jap couldn't get through that stuff – but he did."

Forgy wondered if "the devil himself" could have made the Jap pilots immune. "What was this new, horrible, evil power that turned Pearl Harbor into a bay of terrible explosions, smoking ships, flames, and death," he asked. When he saw a Jap plane explode into the bay he felt better.

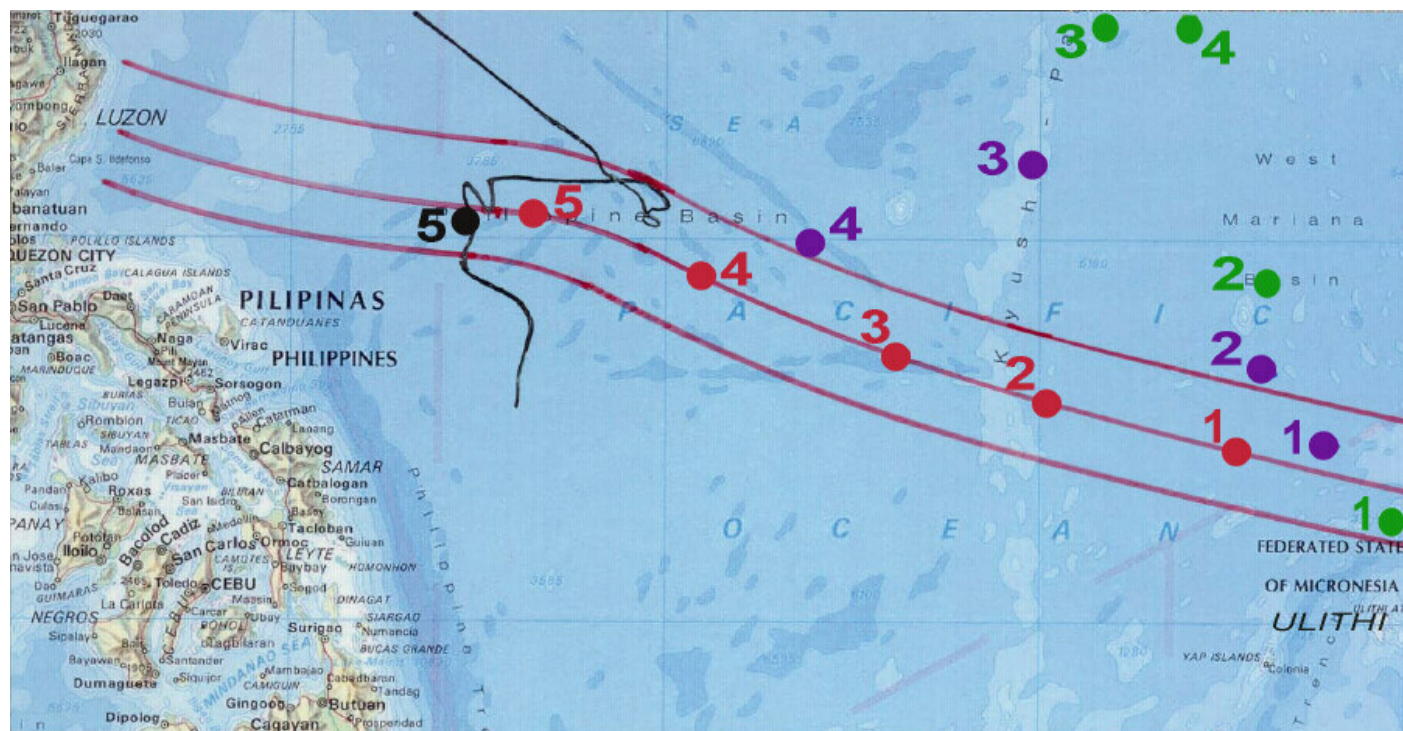
New Orleans hadn't been seriously hit, but she was a cripple anyway. The cruiser had been undergoing minor overhaul and her boilers were cold. Electric power had been supplied by an umbilical to shore, but when the attack began, someone on shore had disconnected the ship in case she had to get underway, as if she could. Without electric power, her sailors trained the anti-aircraft guns by hand and ammunition was passed up

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THIS IS NOT CHAPLAIN FORGY. For one thing, the hat's wrong. But this is what everybody thought he looked like after hearing the patriotic song his words inspired.

Halsey Wasn't Alone in Guessing Wrong



WHERE IS THAT DAMNED STORM? Weather reports and forecasts can be dangerous, especially when they come down from superior headquarters, and even when made by a commander's own staff. Here, the numbers 1 through 4 represent reports of the storm's location at 0900 and 2100 on 16 December and 0900 and 2100 on 17 December.

The green dots are where Weather Central at Pearl Harbor said the storm was and the purple dots are where Halsey's aerologist said it was. The red dots represent the storm's actual center at those times. The red and black dots numbered 5 mark the position of the storm and of the Third Fleet respectively at 0900 on 18 December.



MUCH HAS BEEN MADE of the shift in direction of the typhoon around 0900 on 18 December, but it wasn't that much of a shift, and it wasn't what caught the Third Fleet. Admiral Halsey told the Court of Inquiry, held at Ulithi Lagoon, that he was aware "for the first time" at 0400 on 18 December that he "was confronted with serious storm conditions." At 0400, the storm's center was about 60 miles east of the Third Fleet.

Halsey Unaware of Storm's Gravity Until 18 December

(Continued from page 2)

As the fleet and the typhoon moved toward each other in the early hours of 18 December, the weather worsened precipitously (Halsey told the Court of Inquiry that, at 0400, he was aware "for the first time" that the Third Fleet "was confronted with serious storm conditions").

At around 0430, Halsey asked V. Adm. John S. McCain in USS *Yorktown* (CV-10) and R. Adm. G. F. Bogan in USS *Lexington* (CV-16) for their estimates of where the center of the storm was. Together with a new plot from his own aerologist, he had three guesses — all wrong. According to a plot made of the path of the typhoon after the fact, its center was at that moment about 90 miles east-southeast from New Jersey, and moving at around 8.6 knots in a west-northwest direction. The Third fleet was dead in the path of the storm, which

(Continued on following page)

Typhoon Reaches Full Strength as it Hits Fleet

Typhoon Warning Issued to Fleet At 0400 on 18th

A Few Ships Already Knew,
And They Also Knew How
To Handle a Typhoon

(Continued from previous page)

was ten and one-half hours distant.

Shortly thereafter, Halsey ordered a course change to 180° at a fleet speed of 15 knots. At daybreak, a final attempt to fuel was made, but high seas and gale winds prevented it. At about the same time, the storm dropped its nose and was bearing almost due west. It seemed to be chasing the Third Fleet. At 0830, Halsey finally gave up on refueling.

Shortly before noon, the admiral ordered some elements of his fleet to "take most comfortable courses" consistent with the generally southerly course of the fleet. The ships were now widely spread and the course chosen by fleet oiler USS *Mascoma* (AO-83) took her through the eye of the typhoon. Her barometer fell to 27.02.

This malevolent storm, to employ a pathetic fallacy, not only changed direction to take aim at Halsey, it had been gathering its violent strength along its path from Ulithi and reached full fury just as it reached the Third Fleet.

At 1345, Halsey now realized what he had considered "serious storm conditions" at 0400 were something more. He issued a typhoon warning, the first time he had used that word and the first that Fleet Weather Central in Pearl Harbor knew of the gravity of the situation. It was worse even than what Halsey or anyone else thought – three destroyers had already been swallowed by the sea.

Halsey's heavy ships more or less kept station but the rest of the fleet had become scattered over a 3,000-square-mile patch of the Pacific, so some bore more of the brunt of the storm than others, but none fared well. Most of their commanders chose to fight the sea, and

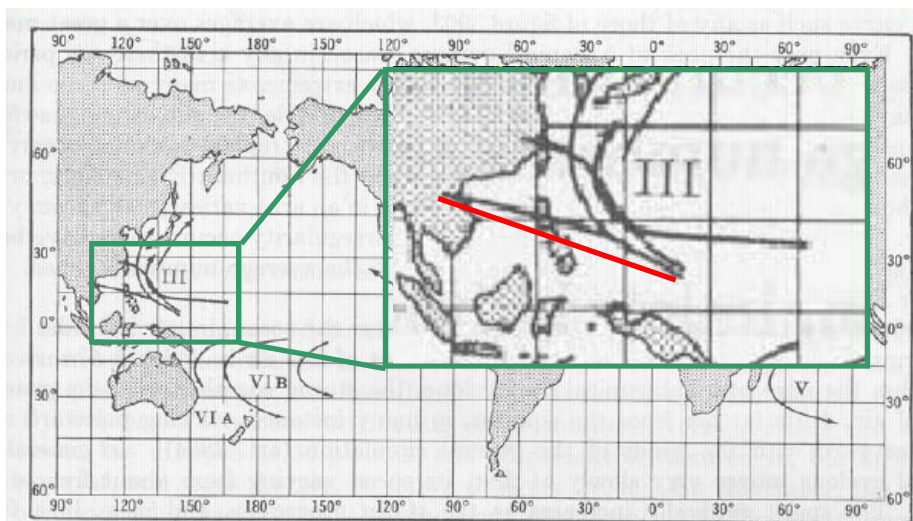


FIGURE 3902.—Areas in which tropical cyclones occur, and their approximate tracks.

IN THIS ILLUSTRATION from *American Practical Navigator* we find the typhoon that hammered the Third Fleet. Bowditch, published by the Navy's Hydrographic Office and in continuous publication since 1802, must have been in every ship in Halsey's command. The inset shows that a typhoon originating near Ulithi, arcing across the Philippine Sea and crossing Luzon, would not have surprised the well-read mariner.

the sea wins those fights.

The skipper of USS *Buchanan* (DD-484), Cdr. R. W. Curtis, understood this, and observed in his report of the typhoon that the best way to deal with a tropical cyclone is to heave to, bow-on to the sea if to the right of the center or stern to the sea to its left. Doing so affords the greatest amount of headway away from the storm center and the least amount of leeway toward it.

In his endorsement of *Buchanan's* report, Halsey wrote "This basic fact of seamanship is not well understood among naval officers."

Capt. R. C. Warrack of USS *Kwajalein* (CVE-98) understood that basic fact of seamanship. His ship was part of the At Sea Logistics Group of Capt. J. T. Acuff and was closer to the storm's center than most. Warrack hove to, bow to the sea, and maintained his stationary position with both engines ahead full. In his report, he noted that "The battle ensign was reduced to a small scrap showing two stars."

Lt.Cdr. J. H. Wesson, captain of USS *Hickox* (DD-673), also understood the rule, and saved his battered ship. He reported that his steering motors were lost, the main switchboards and the emergency Diesel electric generation boards battered out of commission, his motor whaleboat ripped from the ship,

the searchlight and radar antenna blown over the side, green water poured down a stack and flooded a boiler, much of the superstructure aft of the funnels was damaged and the depth charge racks were crushed. *Hickox* survived – three destroyers didn't.

The Three Destroyers

USS *Hull* (DD-350), USS *Monaghan* (DD-354), both old FARRAGUT Class ships, and *Spence*, a modern FLETCHER Class destroyer, were battered under by mountainous seas. Their few survivors tell similar tales.

Hull and *Monaghan* were part of the screen for Acuff's replenishment unit, while *Spence* was part of the screen for Halsey's flagship group. On the morning of 18 December, *Hull* had 70 percent of her fuel capacity aboard and *Monaghan* was even better situated with 75 percent. *Spence* had something less than the 15 percent she had reported a day earlier during her failed attempt to refuel from *New Jersey*. The constant promise of refueling had led the destroyers' commanders to leave their tanks empty of ballast. All three were last heard from between 1007 and 1117 on the 18th.

Spence was in terrible shape to confront heavy seas. A FLETCHER Class destroyer can steam for a week at 8 knots on full tanks, but *Spence* had less

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Destroyers *Spence*, *Hull*, *Monaghan* are Lost

Only 93 Survive As an Angry Sea Swallows Ships

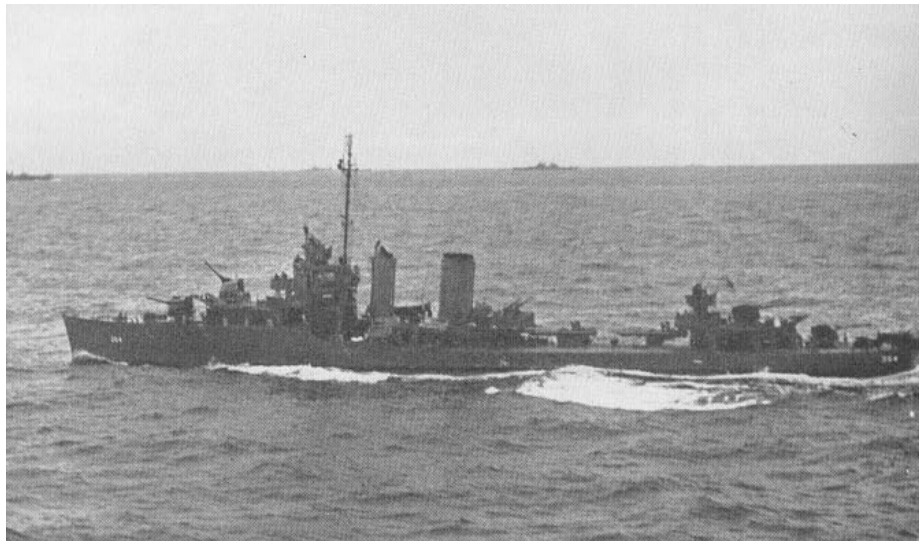
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than a seventh of that. At around 1000, ballasting was belatedly begun, but it was too late. Seas were mountainous at 50 to 60 feet and what one of *Spence's* officers called a "gale" was blowing at 115 knots, though anything more than 75 knots is commonly thought of as being "hurricane" force winds. Reports over TBS of other ships losing men overboard prompted Lt.Cdr. J. P. Andrea to suggest his crew seek shelter below decks.

At about 1100 everything happened at once. *Spence* rolled heavily to port, taking water down her ventilators and probably a funnel. The circuit boards were shorted out and one fire put out. The ship's rudder was jammed full right and one more roll put her under. Only one officer and 23 men survived. An account of the ship's last moments can be read on the World Wide Web at <http://www.cds23.navy.mil/lossof.htm>

Lt.Cdr. J. A. Marks, skipper of *Hull*, may have been the first in the fleet to recognize the storm as a typhoon – he had served in destroyers in the Atlantic where they were called hurricanes – but the conclusion he reached at around 0900 on the 18th failed to save his ship. Though his fuel tanks were 70 percent full, three of them were only half full, and those three were side-by-side, across the ship, forward of the machinery spaces. The surging liquid would amplify the force of a roll.

Marks, who was one of *Hull's* eight officers and 55 enlisted men to survive, told of his ship's last moments. "The seas were monstrous, the winds having reached well over 100 knots," he wrote, adding he believed that "No wind or sea could have been worse." All the battering that occurred to *Hickox*, happened to *Hull*, as well, and more. "At times, I felt the bridge, which was taking such extreme punishment from the tons of water bashing the whole structure, would be



AN OLD FARRAGUT CLASS destroyer, USS *Monaghan* had been busy since 7 December 1941. During the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor, she cleared the harbor and sank a Jap midget sub. She took part in the Battle of the Coral Sea and at Midway fished our friends Harry Corl and Lloyd Childers from the water after they ditched their dive bomber. She saw action in the Battle of the Komandorski Islands and took part in the landings and strikes against New Guinea and the Marshall and Caroline Islands. Only six of her complement survived the typhoon.



SHOWIN' OFF, with her crew manning the rail, USS *Spence* cuts through a moderate sea at speed. She had operated in the Atlantic and Caribbean until the summer of 1943 when she moved to the Pacific and joined Capt. Arleigh Burke's DesRon 23, and saw action when the Little Beavers took on four cruisers and six destroyers at Empress Augusta Bay.

torn off the ship."

Marks said the end came "Shortly before 1200." The enormous force of the wind was "laying *Hull* on her starboard side and holding her down. The sea was beginning to surge in torrents into the ship's upper structure. I continued to remain on the bridge until the water flooded up to me, before stepping into the sea as she rolled over."

Marks and the other survivors were picked up three days later by USS *Tab-*

berer (DE-418).

The actual time of *Monaghan's* loss has never been determined, nor is the exact location of her sinking known. She was last heard from at 1007 on the 18th. Watertender Second Class Joseph C. McCrane spoke of sounding the fuel tanks at sometime between 1000 and 1030, in preparation for ballasting. The ship was rolling too heavily to continue that operation so he sought shelter in the after five-inch mount, which he found

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Only Six of *Monaghan's* Wartime 251 Complement Survive Capsizing

Destroyer Escort Tabberer Saves 55 Survivors from Sea

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crowded, but not too crowded.

"We must have taken at least seven or eight heavy rolls to starboard when the ship finally rolled over on her side," McCrane said. The weight of the gun mount door and the wind blowing against it made it difficult to open "But eventually, we did get it open and managed to crawl out. Thankfully, none of the men had panicked, nor was there any confusion among them. They did the best they could to help their shipmates." They were all thrown into the sea and eventually McCrane found himself on a life raft with nine others.

One, Gunner's Mate Joe Guio, who had stood outside the gun mount hatch pulling sailors out, died from exhaustion. During the next three days, two more died from exposure. Another thought he saw land and houses and swam off into the night. On the third day, the raft was spotted by search planes and, within an hour, USS *Brown* (DD-546) came to their rescue.

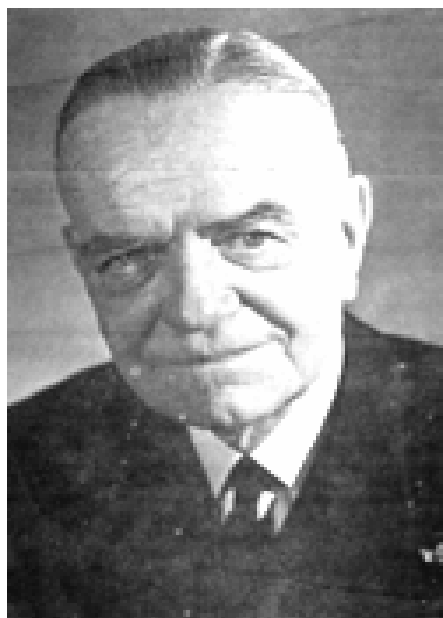
There were six of them – all that was left of *Monaghan* and her crew.

Members of the Naval Order's San Francisco Commandery will remember that it was *Monaghan* that plucked Aviation Radioman-Gunner Lloyd F. Childers of Walnut Creek and his pilot, Warrant Machinist Harry L. Corl, from the water during the Battle of Midway, after they had returned to their carrier only to find a gaping hole in her flight deck. Their Douglas Dauntless dive bomber had been damaged and was not up to the task of finding another carrier and Childers was badly wounded, so Corl ditched parallel to *Monaghan*. A doctor aboard the destroyer told Childers that he would not have lasted another thirty minutes.

USS *Tabberer*

The smaller destroyer escorts had a rough time of it and, though none foundered, none was pluckier than *Tabberer*, the ship that rescued the survivors of *Hull* and *Spence*.

At one point, while trying to rescue an exhausted swimmer, the ship rolled nearly on her beam ends and almost



ADM WILLIAM F. HALSEY was found by a Court of Inquiry to have been culpable in the losses and damage suffered by the Third Fleet, but he was not found to have been negligent. History has been less kind.

brought the swimmer onboard. But not quite, and when a huge shark approached, *Tabberer's* sailors drove it off with rifle fire. The swimmer was incapable of reaching a life ring thrown to him, so the ship's executive officer, reserve Lt. Robert M. Surdam, dove into the sea and carried a line to him.

Another *Tabberer* over-the-side rescuer, Bosun's Mate L. A. Purvis, was bending a line to a half-drowned swimmer when the ship rolled violently. Purvis' own lifeline was snagged by her underwater sonar dome and he was dragged under the ship as she righted herself. He tore his kapok life jacket off – the line was attached to it – and swam under the ship, coming up on her other side. He and the swimmer both survived.

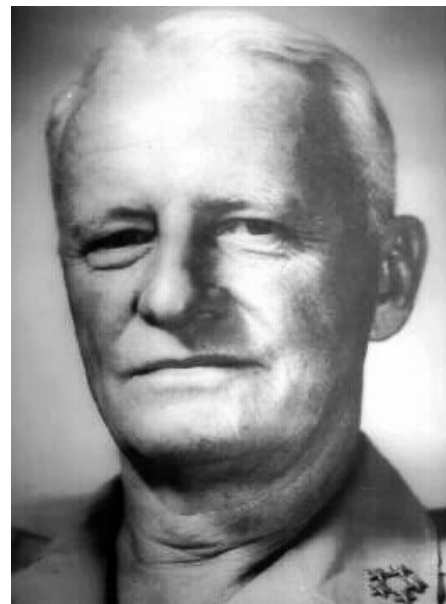
In his report on the rescue of *Hull's* survivors, Lt.Cdr. Henry L. Plage, *Tabberer's* skipper, made note of the kapok life jacket. "Out of the 55 men rescued, 54 had kapok jackets. It is believed many were drowned during the storm because of the inadequate support given by the belt-type life jacket."

The Aftermath

Admiral Halsey first learned at 0225 on 19 December that ships had been lost and immediately detached USS *Blue* (DD-387), USS *Gatling* (DD-671) and

Brown to join *Tabberer* in the search for survivors. They were later joined by *Rudyard Bay* and her escorts USS *Robert F. Keller* (DE-419) and USS *Swearer* (DE-186), and still later by USS *Nehanta Bay* (CVE-74). *Brown* found *Monaghan's* six survivors, as well as a dozen from *Hull*. *Swearer* recovered nine from *Spence*.

A court of inquiry was convened aboard a destroyer tender in Ulithi Lagoon on 26 December and placed responsibility for damage resulting from the typhoon squarely on The Bull who, it should be noted, bore the burden well. As endorsed by Fleet Admirals Nimitz and Ernest J. King, chief of naval operations, the court's report cleared Halsey of negligence, but not errors. The report said his mistakes were "errors of judgment resulting from insufficient information, committed under stress of war operations, and stemming from firm



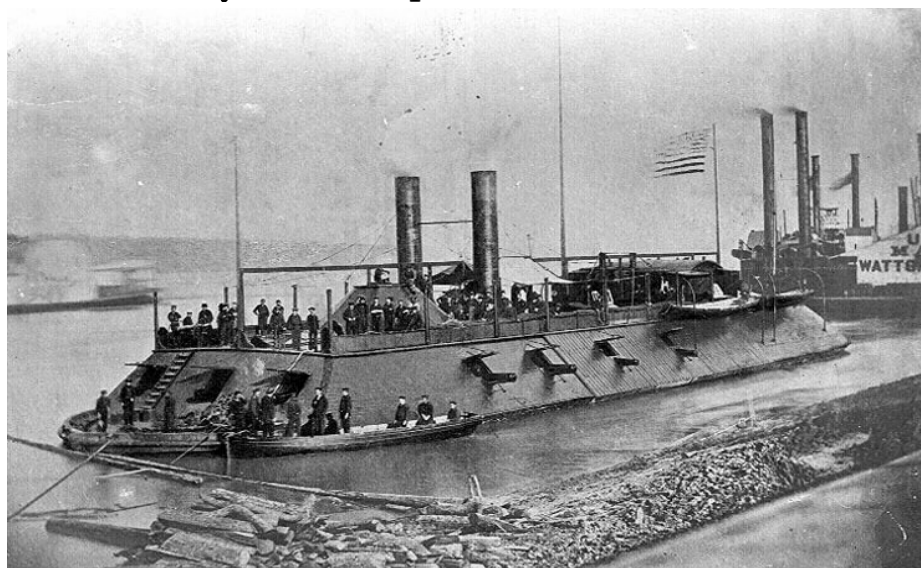
FLT.ADM. CHESTER W. NIMITZ wrote a Fleet Letter freighted with sound advice for mariners. "The time for taking all measures for a ship's safety is while still able to do so," Halsey's boss concluded.

determination to meet military requirements." The court also recommended improvements in ship construction to prevent entry of the sea under hurricane conditions and improvements in weather reporting.

Nimitz flew to Ulithi where he spent Christmas and talked about the typhoon to many officers of the Third Fleet,

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Johnny Rebs Torpedo and Sink Gunboat USS *Cairo* in Yazoo River



THE 512-TON GUNBOAT USS *Cairo* was commissioned by the Army in January 1862. She took part in several actions on the Mississippi River before being transferred to the Navy in October. Two months later she was sunk while clearing the Yazoo river of "torpedoes."

'We're All Between Perdition and the Deep Blue Sea'

(Continued from page 3)

from the magazines from one man to another.

The voice of Lt. E. F. Woodhead rumbled from his barrel chest and cut through the sound of war. "Get over by that ammo hoist. Grab those shells and get them to the guns." Forgy got over by the ammo hoist, and we come to a fork in the road of this tale.

Some sailors have remembered this mountain of a man reaching into a hoist and swinging 100-pound five-inch rounds out to the ammo line, entirely believable of a man who would write about "those devils, coming out of the sky without warning and sending to their death thousands of men of a nation at peace, were violating every rule of God and man."

But Forgy says not so. He was a man of the cloth and forbidden to participate in combat, whatever his personal feelings, and unlike the attackers would violate the rules of neither God nor man. He stayed with the exhausted men, he said, slapping their backs as he shouted in encouragement "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

Forgy's seven-word sermon of Sunday, 7 December 1941, caught the ear of Frank Loesser, whose father was a distinguished German-born teacher of classical piano and whose older brother, Arthur, was a renowned concert pianist

and music critic. Frank was a Tin Pan Alley tunesmith who had been a process server; office boy, a roving reporter and a nightclub singer on New York's famed 52nd Street. By the beginning of the war, he had written the lyrics to "Two Sleepy People," "Small Fry," "See What The Boys in the Back Room Will Have" and "I've Got Spurs that Jingle, Jangle, Jingle." After the Jap attack, Loesser joined the Army and rose to the lofty rank of private first class.

Though he became a major composer and lyricist for Broadway musicals after the war, Pfc. Loesser was able to take time from his military responsibilities to write the words and music to several patriotic tunes while a soldier. Hearing Forgy's words was an inspiration, and the song that resulted was among the most popular throughout the war.

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

And we'll all stay free!

Praise the Lord and swing into position,

Can't afford to be a politician.

Praise the Lord, we're all between perdition

And the deep blue sea!

Yes, the sky pilot said it,

You've got to give him credit,

For a son-of-a-gunner was he, shouting:

Praise the Lord, we're on a mighty mission!

All aboard! We ain't a-goin' fishin'.

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition,

And we'll all stay free!

On the morning of 12 December 1862, Lt. Cdr. Thomas O. Selfridge in the gunboat USS *Cairo* led a small flotilla up the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg, Miss., to destroy Confederate batteries and clear the channel of "torpedoes," as mines were then called.

Hearing the rattle of musketry, Selfridge turned *Cairo* to the attack.

On the river bank, hidden behind a bush, were Rebel sailors Zedekiah McDaniel and Francis Ewing. They detonated two torpedoes and sank *Cairo*.

Nimitz Letter Reminds Officers of Responsibility For Safety of their Ships

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which had returned to the lagoon for repairs. After the Court of Inquiry had issued its report, he issued a commentary of his own. In a long Fleet Letter that could have been written by a descendent of Nathaniel Bowditch, he reminded his officers of the timeless responsibility of sailing masters for the safety of their ships, and with indirect reference to the commander of the Third Fleet said "It is most definitely part of the senior officer's responsibility to think in terms of the smallest ship and most inexperienced commanding officer under him."

He concluded "The time for taking all measures for a ship's safety is while still able to do so. Nothing is more dangerous than for a seaman to be grudging in taking precautions lest they turn out to be unnecessary. Safety at sea for a thousand years has depended on exactly the opposite philosophy."

How to Get in Touch

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Submissions are not encouraged because of constraints on the time available for editing. If such are sent, they should be sent as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word 6.0 or as type-written copy, double-spaced, accompanied by a 3½-inch diskette containing the submission in Microsoft Word 6.0 for Windows.

Quite welcome are suggestions of events for coverage. Please offer suggestions two months ahead of the anniversary of an event.