

# MIDWAY

NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES - SAN FRANCISCO COMMANDERY



## Mission: History

*Studiorum Historiam Praemium Est*



5 June 2000

★★★★★★

Volume 2, Number 6

## Turning Point in War with Japan Is Officially ‘America’s Trafalgar’



### Naval Establishment Plans Annual Honors; Should Be Nationwide

United Kingdom in Midst  
Of Decade-Long Celebration  
Of Nelson’s Historic Victory

A year ago, this space carried the words “Midway is America’s Trafalgar.” Note was made that while neither battle was decisive, each changed the course of the war in which it was fought. Those wars being what they were, Midway and Trafalgar can be said to have changed the course of history — or to have kept the course of history from changing.

The similarity of the battles ends when it comes to the regard for them by the peoples protected by the victories. In Great Britain, the story of Nelson’s victory is remembered and taught in schools. In the United States, the Battle

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Correction

In the May issue of *Mission: History* the middle name of Admiral William Sowden Sims was incorrectly given as “Snowden.”

We apologize for any inconvenience caused by this error.

THEIR BOMB RACKS EMPTY, a pair of Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bombers of VS-6 bid adieu to *Akagi* and head home to USS *Enterprise*. One of the bombs penetrated *Akagi*’s center elevator and exploded on the hangar deck among airplanes that were being refueled and rearmed after their attack on Midway Island. Everything exploded — gasoline, bombs, torpedoes and the planes themselves. The odd-looking projection from the ship’s starboard side is her funnel.

*Detail from a painting by R. G. Smith*

## Nationwide Remembrance Of Midway Victory is Due

(Continued from page 1)

of Midway was all but forgotten on the day after VJ Day.

In the United Kingdom, the victory at Trafalgar is celebrated annually and, with its 200th anniversary only five years off, Great Britain is in the midst of an entire decade devoted to its memory. In the U.S., ask the average man on the street about the Battle of Midway and the likely answer will be "That was a movie, right?"

Last summer, the Chief of Naval Operations put in motion a plan to change that, at least within the naval establishment. In an "administrative message," Admiral Jay L. Johnson said "It is one of my goals to help preserve our rich naval heritage and build upon it." He cited the founding of the U.S. Navy and the Battle of Midway as the two most significant events in the history of the service. "Beginning 4 June 2000," he wrote, "we will inaugurate annual activities commemorating one of the most decisive sea battles in world history."

Admiral D. L. Pilling, Vice-CNO, followed through in March of this year with a message suggesting forms the commemoration of the Battle of Midway should take but granting considerable leeway in the sentence "Commanders, commanding officers and officers in charge are encouraged to commemorate the anniversary as desired and as deemed appropriate for their commands...."

In Mid-April, there appeared on the World Wide Web site of the Naval Historical Center suggested agenda of possible commemorative activities, including a dining out. The dining out agenda is complete with toasts to be offered. The sixth of these is "To the continuing success of Midway Night as a commemoration of the warriors of the Naval Service."

"Warriors?" We have noticed this locution popping up with increasing frequency in the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, along with "warfighters." We have talked with a number of Midway veterans, and they considered themselves sailors and flyers, not warriors.

Because there is nothing we can tell you about the Battle of Midway that has not been told better in the literature of World War II, we have chosen to bring



THREE JAP BOMBS have made a mess of *Yorktown* and left her dead in the water, to the dismay of pilots returning from attacking enemy carriers. Some of that smoke is coming from a 1.1-inch ammo ready magazine, where an ensign and three sailors are beating out flames by hand.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph

you the stories of a Marine who was on Midway Island when Jap bombs were falling, a gunnery officer who distinguished himself aboard *Yorktown* during her ordeal and a radioman-gunner who was one of the few survivors of torpedo plane attacks against the Japanese aircraft carriers.

As to the Navy officially recognizing that the Battle of Midway should be honored, well it's about time. But the Navy is preaching to the choir — it's the civilian population that should be made aware of Midway and of the contributions of the armed services to its tranquility. A Briton's heart beats faster at the sight of the White Ensign. It should not be otherwise here.

## Ninety-Day Wonder Helps Save His Ship, If Only for a While

John d'Arc Lorenz of Portland, Ore., was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy Reserve on 14 November 1940. He was a graduate of the first V-7 Midshipman program, and after a short leave reported aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) at Pearl Harbor.

Ens. Lorenz may have been a "ninety-day wonder" but he was a battle-tested old salt by 4 June 1942, and a battery officer aboard his flattop. He had been through the Battle of the Coral Sea where, in the gloom of dusk on 7 May his gunners had a live-fire exercise when some Japanese airplanes mistakenly tried to land aboard *Yorktown*. One Jap was shot down and the others were frightened off.

On the afternoon of 8 May, Japanese dive bombers and torpedo planes caught *Yorktown* and USS *Lexington* (CV-2) with their combat air patrol down. It would be a fight between the anti-aircraft gunners and Jap planes. Lady Lex was lost in the battle, but *Yorktown* was able to dodge most of the bombs and torpedoes. An 800-pound bomb penetrated her flight deck about 15 feet inboard

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### How to Get in Touch

*Mission: History* has been asked to provide an address for reader communications. E-mail may be sent to this address:

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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 typewritten copy, double-spaced, accompanied by a 3½-inch diskette containing the submission in MS Word 6.0 for Windows.

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

## Battle of the Coral Sea Was Lorenz' Baptism

(Continued from page 2)

from the island and exploded in the fourth deck. Ens. Lorenz became an expert on many of the operational aspects of naval warfare. *Yorktown* limped home to Pearl, facing an estimated ninety-day repair job.

*Yorktown* steamed into the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard at 1430 on 27 May, suffering serious internal wounds from the bomb blast and leaking where her plates had been buckled by near misses. She was pushed directly into the big dry dock and more than 1400 men went to work on her. They worked in shifts, around the clock once and then almost around the clock again, and at 1100 on 29 May the dry dock was flooded and *Yorktown* moved into the harbor, with the workmen still aboard.

*Yorktown* was fueled and took on aircraft that afternoon and, at 0900 on 30 May, sailed to join Task Force 17 which, with Task Force 16, constituted the Pacific Fleet that would oppose a Japanese invasion of Midway Island. It wasn't much of a fleet. Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher had in TF 17 one aircraft carrier in *Yorktown*, two cruisers and six destroyers. Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance in TF 16 had two carriers, USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) and USS *Hornet* (CV-8), six cruisers and eight destroyers.

This armada was to meet a Japanese fleet consisting of four fleet carriers and one light carrier, seven battleships, 11 cruisers and about 45 destroyers. The Japs of course were screening a large invasion force with numerous transports, supply ships and auxiliaries. Both sides had submarines on hand, and one of them would be the death of *Yorktown* and the destroyer USS *Hammann* (DD-412), the only U.S. ships lost.

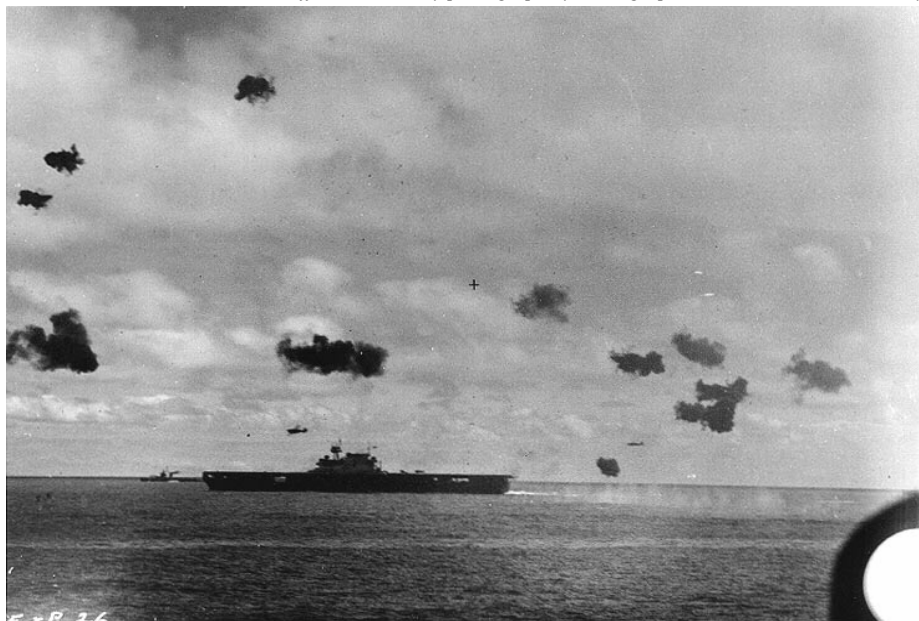
As the two forces approached each other, scout airplanes probed the seas in front of them, looking for the enemy. The Americans had the benefit of Consolidated PBY *Catalinas* based at Midway Island, the Japanese relied on fleet aircraft. Even so, the ordinarily thorough Japs were desultory in their search. But they found *Yorktown*.

At noon on 4 June, dive bombers from *Hiryu* approached *Yorktown* just as she was refueling combat air patrol fighters. She had sent twelve *Wildcats* to relieve



POUNDRING THE LUMPS OUT of *Yorktown*'s flight deck was only part of the effective damage control that enabled the ship to go from dead in the water to 20 knots and resume flight operations, but enemy torpedo planes would arrive in about an hour.

Official U.S. Navy photograph by Photographer 2nd Class William G. Roy



TWO JAP TORPEDO PLANES pass *Yorktown* after dropping their fish. These Nakajima B5N2 "Kate" planes are from *Hiryu*, which at that moment was under attack by *Yorktown* aircraft.

Official U.S. Navy photograph.

those that landed. Her dive bombers that had sunk *Soryu* were orbiting and waiting to land. *Yorktown*'s fuel lines were drained and the ship bent on 30 knots, prepared to fight.

The combat air patrol took care of 18 of the approaching Japs, but eight got through. Anti-aircraft fire took care of

two of them, but three made hits on the carrier. One of the Jap planes was disintegrating under the withering flak, when its bomb literally fell out of the plane and struck the flight deck near Ens. Lorenz' 1.1-inch gun mount, killing most of his twenty-man team.

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## Ensign and Three Sailors Fight Ready Magazine Fire

(Continued from page 3)

Dazed, but otherwise unhurt, Lorenz rallied his three remaining men, two of whom were wounded. Together, four of them doing the work of 20, got the 1.1 back in action against the ship's attackers. About then, smoke began to seep around the edges of a hatch leading to the gun mount's ready ammunition stowage. Ens. Lorenz opened the hatch to investigate and found that shrapnel had holed the shell casings of the hundreds of rounds of ammo stowed in the locker, and they were burning and shooting sparks "just like fireworks."

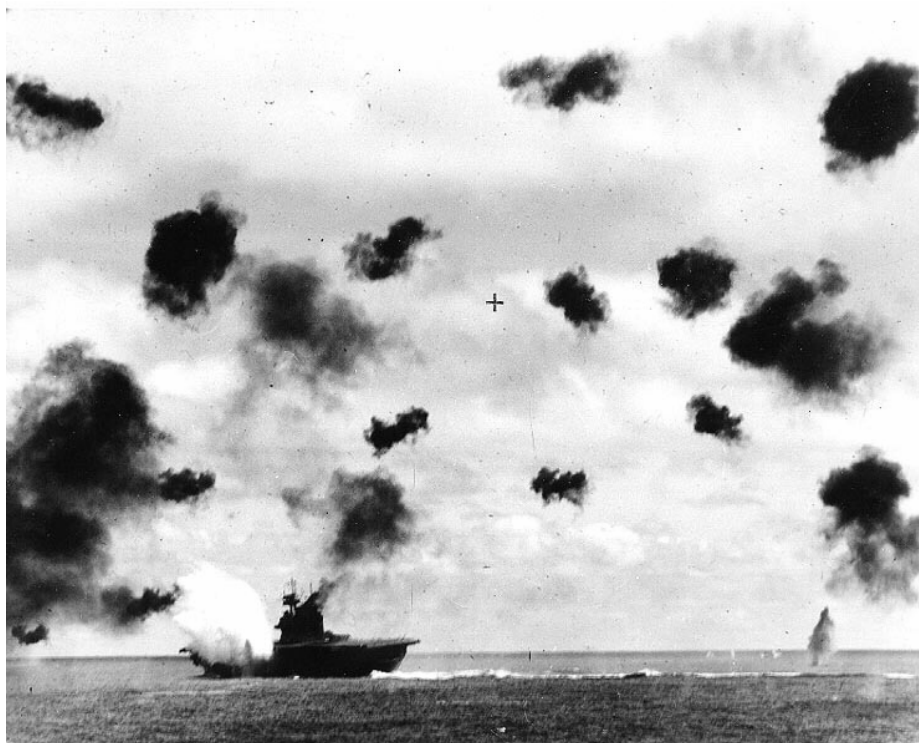
The word "leadership" has been discussed in recent issues of the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, by writers searching for a definition. They need look no further.

Ens. Lorenz led his three men into that locker, which was itself a bomb with the fuse lit, and together they beat the flames out with their clothes and bare hands. For this, the ninety-day wonder was awarded the Navy Cross.

*Yorktown* was a mess. The bomb that nearly got Ens. Lorenz killed many more men and started fires below which were subsequently extinguished. Another bomb exploded in the funnel, rupturing boiler uptakes, disabled two boilers and blew the fires out in five of the ship's six boilers. The third bomb penetrated to the fourth deck and started fires adjacent to the magazines, which were promptly flooded. *Yorktown* was dead in the water and much of her communications, including radar, was knocked out. Admiral Fletcher transferred his flag to USS *Astoria* (CA-34) and ordered another cruiser, USS *Portland* (CA-33) to take the carrier in tow.

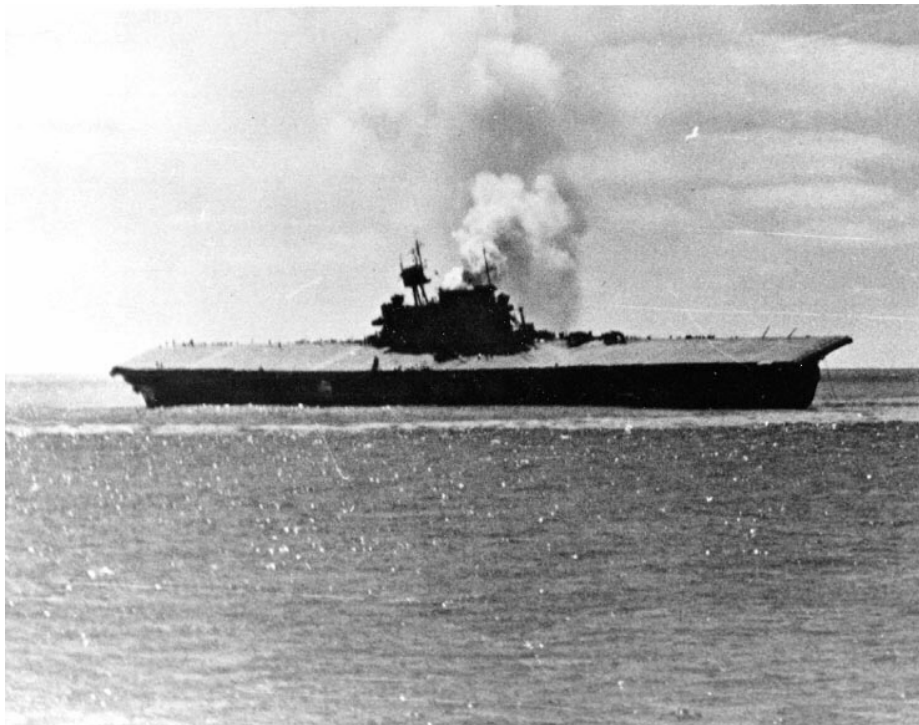
*Yorktown's* damage control made the tow unnecessary. By 1340, four boilers were back in business, the ship was making 20 knots and was refueling fighters. Radar on a cruiser picked up another wave of attackers, so *Yorktown* launched eight *Wildcats* with partially filled gas tanks to join four others in an attempt to stop *Hiryu's* torpedo bombers, which were escorted by *Zeroes*. Ens. Lorenz returned to his 1.1-inch gun mount. At 1430, the enemy planes closed *Yorktown*.

The carrier was able to dodge two



A SECOND JAP TORPEDO hits *Yorktown*, this one on her port side amidships. The torpedoes sprung the carrier's plates, hastily repaired after damage was incurred in the Battle of the Coral Sea. This torpedo also breached her port side fuel tanks.

Official U.S. Navy photograph.



IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SECOND torpedo hit her, *Yorktown* developed a 17-degree list which worsened rapidly to 26 degrees. Order to abandon has not yet been given.

Official U.S. Navy photograph.

torpedoes, but two hit, jamming her rudder, severing all power connections, opening her port side fuel tanks and springing the plates hastily mended at Pearl Harbor. *Yorktown* developed an immediate 17-degree list, and this soon

increased to 26 degrees. Shortly before 1500, Capt. Elliott Buckmaster gave the order to abandon ship.

Ens. Lorenz had unfinished business to take care of. He wanted to say fare-

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DESTROYER USS *Balch* (DD-363) stands by as *Yorktown* is abandoned at about 1600 on 4 June. Men from *Balch* went over the side to help rescue carrier men in the water. *Yorktown* isn't dead yet; she would right herself without help, but a sub got her on 6 June.

Official U.S. Navy photograph.



THE UNFORTUNATE USS *Hammann* (DD-412) was alongside *Yorktown* on 6 June when the carrier was attacked by the Japanese submarine *I-168* at 1330 on 6 June. The Jap sub fired a spread of four torpedoes, one of which missed. Two of the torpedoes passed under *Hammann* and exploded against *Yorktown*. The fourth hit the destroyer amidships, breaking her in half. She sank in four minutes with a loss of nine officers and 72 men. Torpedoman 1st Class Berlyn M. Kimbrell set all depth charges on safe and passed lifejackets to the men on the fantail before leaving the ship. He was killed by the underwater explosion of one of *Hammann's* own torpedoes.

Official U.S. Navy photograph by Photographer 2nd Class William G. Roy

## *Unconscious But Still Alive, Sailor Saved from Sick Bay*

(Continued from page 4)

well to his fallen gunners and made his way through the darkened ship to the sick bay on the second deck, with only a red lantern to guide him. When he reached the sick bay, he found one of his men was still alive, but unconscious. Ens. Lorenz and another ensign carried the sailor to the flight deck and lowered him ninety feet to the water, then shinnied down the line themselves.

Once in the water, the two officers supported the unconscious sailor, keeping his head out of the water so he wouldn't drown. They had floated for about two hours, waiting to be picked up by one of the destroyers that were fishing *Yorktown* men from the sea, when it appeared they were drifting ever farther from the rescuers. Fortunately, one of the officers had his sidearm, and used it to signal for help.

All three were rescued. The unconscious sailor recovered his health and went home to Michigan.

*Yorktown* was nearly saved, but was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 6 June, and went to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

## Destroyermen Instrumental In Saving Downed Plane Crews, Torpedoed Sailors

Seaman 1st Class Arthur E. Lewis and Fireman 2nd Class H. E. Prideaux were aboard USS *Balch* (DD-363) when *Yorktown* was abandoned. The commanding officer of their destroyer wrote:

These two men were very active and tireless in carrying buoyed lines from 300 to 400 yards out to exhausted swimmers. Time after time, each of these voluntarily, and with disregard for his own safety, entered the oily waters to render prompt personal assistance to wounded, exhausted, oil-soaked men who were in danger of being lost if immediate assistance were not forthcoming.... (They) did so with knowledge that their own chances for safety were very slight if a second air attack materialized

John R. Abatie, a sailor aboard USS *Phelps* (DD-360) wrote "I don't believe we fired a shot...(but) we did rescue two pilots and crew who had ditched. Those pilots and crew won't forget the *Phelps*."

## How Army Air Corps Won Battle of Midway

### Pilots Deliver First News; Every Bomb Sank a Ship

While the American fleet was still at sea following the Battle of Midway, Army Air Corps pilots and press agents were talking to reporters, and had been doing so for days, ever since their air strikes had failed to dent the Japanese ships on 4 June.

Thus it was, that the *New York Times* ran a page-wide headline — called a “screamer” in the newspaper game — shouting **ARMY FLIERS BLASTED TWO FLEETS OFF MIDWAY**.

Reporter Robert Trumbull wrote from Pearl Harbor “The Army pilots who actually dropped the bombs reported personally that they made hits on three Japanese carriers, one cruiser, one battleship or cruiser, one destroyer and one large transport.”

In an editorial, the newspaper said “So far as we can now learn, the main damage to the Japanese fleet off Midway was inflicted by our land-based airplanes. The battle shows what land-based air power can do to naval and air power attacking from the open sea when that land-based air power is alert, well-trained, courageous, and exists in sufficient quantity.”

In a letter to Gen. George C. Marshall, Lt. Gen. Delos C. Emmons, commander of the Hawaiian Department and military governor of the Territory of Hawaii, claimed that B-26 bombers had scored two torpedo hits on carriers, one carrier and possibly another was damaged by bombs, three battleships were damaged, a cruiser was sunk and another damaged, a destroyer was probably sunk, another carrier was set on fire, and two transports were set on fire.

Emmons gratuitously added “I offer the thought confidentially that I do not believe that the Navy would have risked their three carriers in this battle against the superior hostile force which had four or five carriers had not they been assured of the support of land-based aviation.” He boasted that the Air Corps “covered itself with glory.”

As so often is the case, Washington took the early reports at face value. On 5

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THE LAST TRANSFER: Survivors of *Yorktown*, who had transferred from the carrier to a destroyer or were fished out of the sea by one when their ship was abandoned on 4 June, were first transferred to USS *Portland* (CA-33) and are now, on 7 June, being transferred to USS *Fulton* (AS-11), a submarine tender.

Official U.S. Navy photograph



CHECKING IN WITH THE CONCIERGE aboard *Fulton* are *Yorktown* survivors with oil-stained life jackets and dungaree shirts. The *Fulton* factotum, intent on his clipboard, seems unconcerned that the man at his left may leave a reminder of his presence on a clean uniform.

Official U.S. Navy photograph

## Official Washington, American Public, Believed Army Hype

(Continued from page 6)

June, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson noted that "Apparently the American forces, mainly land based air forces, have won a surprise on the Japanese."

The next day, Stimson wrote "Our big bombers have played a decisive part in the battle and the facility with which they have hit and injured capital ships of the enemy marks a great change in the previous view of high altitude bombing. The Navy got into it also with its carriers." He said it was the "heavy stream of these big bombers" that carried the day.

As the Navy's ships straggled into Pearl Harbor, the true story of the Battle of Midway emerged, but that's all it did. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, seeking to preserve inter-service amity, said almost nothing to contradict the Air Corps claims, and the American public believed that the Army had played the major role in the battle until well after the war.

But even after the battle, people on the West Coast weren't so sure a victory had been won at all. For the first six months of the war, the news had presented a seemingly endless succession of Japanese successes. The most recent news, that of the Battle of the Coral Sea, had been digested as something of a tie, if that. After all, USS *Lexington*, an irreplaceable aircraft carrier, had been lost, and no one knew that a Japanese invasion attempt had been thwarted.

Possibly the first complete and true account of the Battle of Midway was that in Volume IV of Samuel Eliot Morison's *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, published in 1949 by Little, Brown and Co., but it was pretty specialized reading.

Morison's work had been preceded in 1947 by *Pacific War: Middle Phase*, part of the four-volume *Battle Report* published by Rinehart and Co. Prepared from official sources by Capt. Walter Karig, USNR. It was even more specialized reading.

It wasn't until the 1970s and '80s that a large number of books about the Battle of Midway appeared, with the general public as the intended audience.



SURVIVORS OF USS *Hammann*, four of her 13 officers and 156 of her crew of 228 men, are brought ashore at Pearl Harbor from USS *Benham* (DD-397). Many of those were killed when in the sea by an underwater explosion, thought to be caused by one of *Hammann*'s torpedoes, which was observed running hot in its tube. All depth charges had been set on safe.

Official U.S. Navy photograph



ON THE DOCK at Pearl Harbor, watching *Fulton* arrive and forming a reception committee for survivors of the carrier *Yorktown*, are Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, second from left, Rear Admiral Lloyd J. Wiltse who was administrative chief of Nimitz' staff but would soon get back to sea, in the center background, and Rear Admiral William L. Calhoun, commander of the Pacific Fleet Service Forces, at the right front of the group.

Official U.S. Navy photograph



# R. G. Smith: The Famous Paintings by this Aeronautical Engineer



THE JAPANESE AIRCRAFT CARRIER *Akagi*, one of two carriers with the island on the port side. That curiosity may have fascinated R. G. Smith, for *Akagi* figures in at least four of his paintings of the Battle of Midway, that on our cover, the two here and the one on page 10. All of

these paintings also feature the Douglas SBD *Dauntless* dive bomber, an airplane for which R. G. had an affinity as he had helped design it while an engineer in the employ of Douglas Aircraft Co.

From R. G. Smith: *The Man and his Art*, *Schiffer Military History*, 1999

## Engineer First and Artist Second? Don't Bet on It

R. G. Smith likes to think of himself as an engineer first and an artist second, according to comments by Vice Admiral Richard C. Allen in his introduction to Smith's recent autobiography, but if he does, he contradicts himself. Perhaps one can say he is an artist who considers himself an engineer first.

In Smith's autobiography, from which these comments are drawn, R. G. tells how his sense of aesthetics got him a promotion with his employer, Douglas Aircraft Co.

"I proposed a fairing which would

enhance the appearance as well as the aerodynamic shape of the aircraft. The higher-ups bought the idea. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this modification was to change the scope of my job and shape the future direction of my engineering career."

That sounds pretty much as though the artist in him led the engineer, but first things first.

Smith was born in Los Angeles in 1914, but grew up in Oakland and went to local schools there. He pursued the new discipline of aeronautical engineering at the Polytechnic College of Engineering, also in the East Bay, and graduated at age 20 with a BS in mechanical engineering — right in the middle of the

Great Depression.

How R. G. landed with Douglas in 1936 after having had an odd assortment of short-term jobs including gold-mining is a story in itself.

A fishing companion of Smith's father had a brother who was a police officer in Los Angeles. In the course of family conversation, the officer had learned of R. G., his degree in aeronautical engineering and his interest in getting a foothold in the industry.

One day, the officer stopped a motorist for speeding. The driver turned out to be Roy Brown, the chief draftsman for Northrop Aircraft, a Douglas subsidiary. As Smith recounts, "Under the circumstances, Mr. Brown was predisposed to



# neer Tell the Story of the American Attack on Japanese Carriers



ANOTHER VIEW OF DOUGLAS *Dauntlesses* tormenting *Akagi*. In this painting, Smith shows us two other Japanese carriers — probably *Soryu* on *Akagi's* beam. *Hiryu*, far in the van escaped attention long enough to

send her dive bombers and torpedo planes after *Yorktown*, which was the American ship's undoing, but she too was lost that morning.

From R. G. Smith: *The Man and his Art*, Schiffer Military History, 1999

## Douglas Airplanes Looked Good Because R. G. Liked Them To

listen to anything” the officer had to say. “Send him out and I’ll talk to him,” Brown said, avoiding a ticket.

R. G. got a job that paid him \$18 a month to trim blueprints (with shears) and fold them so they would fit in Navy filing cabinets. He was on the bottom rung of a 50-man drafting department that was developing the Northrop BT-1, predecessor of the Douglas *Dauntless*.

But Smith’s drawings, especially the one in which he enhanced the appearance of an airplane, led to his doing the renderings that showed what a plane would look like, designed one way or another. Usually, the way he presented was the way that looked best to him. In the case of the Douglas A-20 attack bomber, designed for the French before the war, he responded to complaints of a

French pilot by redesigning the entire aircraft. Donald Douglas liked it, the French liked it and the British and Americans also eventually liked it.

Smith’s drawing of airplanes for Douglas led to his meeting Navy Reserve Lt. Cdr. Arthur Beaumont, “The Artist Laureate of the Navy,” who had received a commission after painting a portrait of Admiral William D. Leahy. Also as a result of his work, R. G. met and was soon working with illustrator Bob Poole. Through these two men, he learned the techniques of the artist. The poet had been given his language.

As an engineer working for Douglas, Smith had to see the company’s products in action. In 1944 this took him on a cruise of USS *Ticonderoga* (CV-14) and in 1957 he was sent to USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31) to study carrier operations. In 1968 and 1969, McDonnell Douglas sent R. G. to Vietnam as a com-

bat artist. “I experienced carrier operations in the blue waters of Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin, riverine patrols along the muddy brown water of the Mekong Delta, search and rescue operations in Huey helicopters, and OV-10 attack duty.”

Smith’s two trips to Vietnam “verified a feeling I had been harboring for some time: that many of the military decisions were being made in Washington and not on the front lines. I have often felt that the outcome of this war might have been a swift victory for us rather than the slow defeat it became.”

“Looking back,” Smith writes, “I derive great satisfaction from having participated in the conceptual and configuration phase of virtually every tactical airplane built by the Douglas Aircraft Company in its heyday.”

R. G. became a retired engineer. He will never become a retired artist.



# *Devastators* Devastated, but *Dauntlesses* Dominate

## Long, Hard Day In the Back Seat Of a *Devastator*

Lloyd F. Childers of Walnut Creek, Calif., is a Midway veteran with a story to tell. He was an aviation radioman-gunner riding in the back seat of a Douglas TBD-1 *Devastator* torpedo bomber flown by warrant machinist Harry L. Corl. Their plane, number T-3, was one of two, out of a dozen VT-3 aircraft that attacked the Japanese carrier force, to survive.

Survive they did, but not the airplane. With their airplane trailing smoke as the result of an estimated 30 attacks by Japanese aircraft, with Childers barely conscious and wounded in both legs, they came home to USS *Yorktown* (CV-5), only to find their carrier dead in the water and with a gaping hole in her flight deck.

Corl tried to find USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) or USS *Hornet* (CV-8) which were nearby — somewhere — but an engine without oil will only run so long. Childers remembers Corl saying “Stand by to hit the water.” The pilot put T-3 down alongside USS *Monaghan* (DD-385) and the two were picked up by a whaleboat from the destroyer.

Childers, who transferred to the Marine Corps after recovering, earned his wings as a Marine pilot in January 1944, retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1968 and picked up a doctorate in college administration. He told his Midway story for a special carrier-war-in-the-Pacific issue of *The Hook*, the official journal of The Tailhook Association. *Mission: History* repeats excerpts from that account here.

“This was a special day for me,” Childers wrote of 4 June 1942, “my 21st birthday.” Following an unusually hearty breakfast of steak and eggs, there was a briefing, and *Yorktown*’s aviators were disappointed to learn they were being held in reserve. Not for long. At about 1000 the ship’s speakers blared “Pilots and crews, man your planes.”

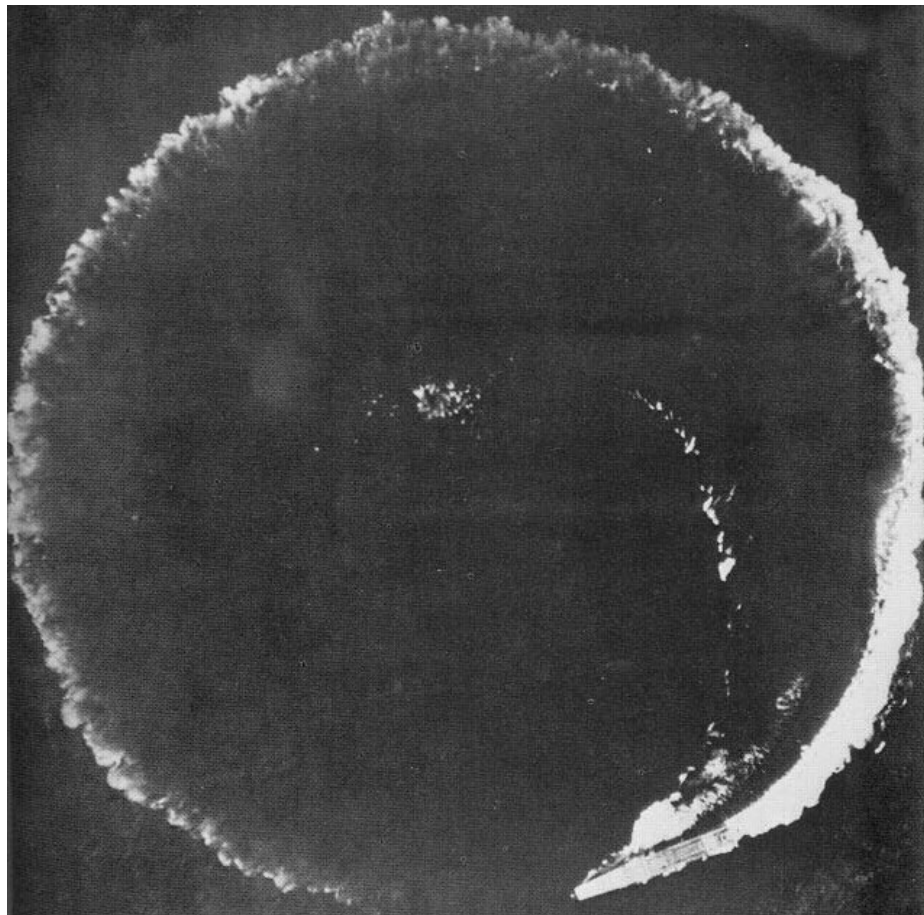
The 12 *Devastators* of Torpedo Three

(Continued on page 11)



A PAIR OF DOUGLAS SBD *Dauntlesses* departs the stricken *Akagi*. The same scene was being repeated with two other Japanese carriers, *Soryu* and *Kaga*, but a fourth, *Hiryu*, escaped attention long enough to launch planes for bombing and torpedo attacks on *Yorktown*.

Detail from a painting by R. G. Smith



CHASING HER OWN TAIL, the Japanese aircraft carrier *Kaga* desperately dodges *Dauntlesses* flown by Lt. Cdr. Clarence W. McClusky, Lt. W. E. Gallaher and Lt. R. H. Best of *Enterprise*. They put four bombs in the carrier — one killed everyone on the bridge and the other three exploded among planes that were being refueled and rearmed.

Photo from The U.S. Navy: An Illustrated History, Pg. 326

## 'Up Ahead! Up Ahead! Here Come the *Zeroes*

(Continued from page 10)

flew for two hours in the general direction of the Jap fleet before the smoke of battle was sighted. Then Childers heard Corl shout "Up ahead, up ahead" and saw a dozen *Zeroes* coming straight at VT-3. He looked to his left and saw their skipper, T-1, go into the water. "I don't recall seeing any other of our aircraft after that," Childers remembers. Whenever he had a target he did what he could with his single .30 cal. machine gun, which wasn't much.

Now Corl began his attack and Childers looked down on the deck of a cruiser. "That sight was frightening," and he heard Corl muttering over the plane's intercom "We aren't going to make it."

"Let's get the hell out of here," Childers suggested as Corl bored in on his target and dropped his torpedo. The pilot then maneuvered his plane wildly through the flak until they left it behind. "I don't know how we got through the ships' fire," Childers says.

Once free of the Jap anti-aircraft fire, T-3 was picked up once more by the *Zeroes*, which made an organized attack, hitting the plane and wounding Childers, who was firing at every enemy plane that came into his line of sight. The wound angered him more than anything. "The dirty bastard shot me," he thought. He looked at the bleeding hole and kept on firing.

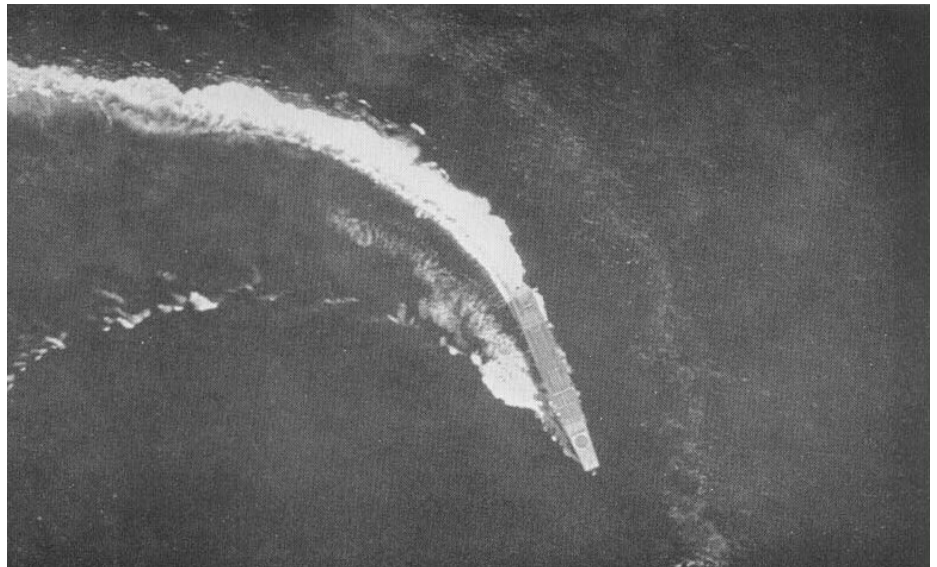
"Then the *Zeroes* started making runs from the beam, one from the left and another from the right. These pilots were good! While I had my right leg as far aft as possible for leverage, another bullet hit it just above the ankle. I knew my right leg was broken badly but continued to shoot at every attacking fighter. At least twice, Corl fired his single .30 cal. at *Zeroes* making head-ons." When Childers saw a Jap trying to saw off T-3's tail with his prop, "I jerked my seat up so I could shoot below our horizontal stabilizer. I could see the pilot's face as I fired pointblank at him. The *Zero* disappeared."

Alone in the sky, heading for home in an airplane Childers said was "full of visible holes," T-3 was beset by two *Zeroes* that "made a total of 30 runs on



A DOUGLAS SBD, its dive brakes open, bores in on either *Akagi* or *Hiryu*, the only two Japanese aircraft carriers that flew the rising sun battle ensign from an island on the port side of the ship. Those two, along with *Kaga* and *Soryu*, had participated in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

*From a painting by Robert Taylor*



THE CARRIER *SORYU* has twenty minutes to live as she maneuvers radically to avoid *Dauntless* dive bombers, one of which took this picture. With her planes on the hangar deck being refueled and rearmed, she was hit by three 1000-pound bombs in three minutes. A quarter-hour later, she was ordered abandoned.

*From Morison, Vol. IV, Pg. 127*

our plane." That was when Childers' gun jammed. He got out his tool kit, trying to repair the machine gun while being shot at, but it was hopeless. "Here came the fighter on the left again. I pulled my .45 cal. pistol and...tracked the plane until he was very close and fired three or four rounds." He did the same when attacked from the right. "Shooting at *Zeroes* with a pistol seemed futile, but it made me feel better," Childers wrote.

Finally free of enemy aircraft, Corl and Childers took stock. The radios — particularly the ZB homer — had taken a

few holes and didn't work. The engine was acting badly and showed no oil pressure. The plane was making only 80 knots and streaming smoke from burning oil. And Childers was wounded in both legs. They were joined briefly by the only other VT-3 *Devastator* to survive Jap anti-aircraft fire and *Zeroes*. T-2 was flown by Wilhelm Esders; his gunner, Mike Braizer, appeared dead.

When Corl, by dead reckoning, finally found *Yorktown*, he was dismayed to find her badly wounded, with her

*(Continued on page 12)*



## Corl Finds His Way Home, But Home is Full of Holes



"WE CAN'T LAND THERE!" When Corl got to Yorktown, he was dismayed to find the flight deck holed by the Jap dive bombing attack. To make matters worse, his engine was about to quit from lack of oil pressure.

*Painting by Alex Durr*

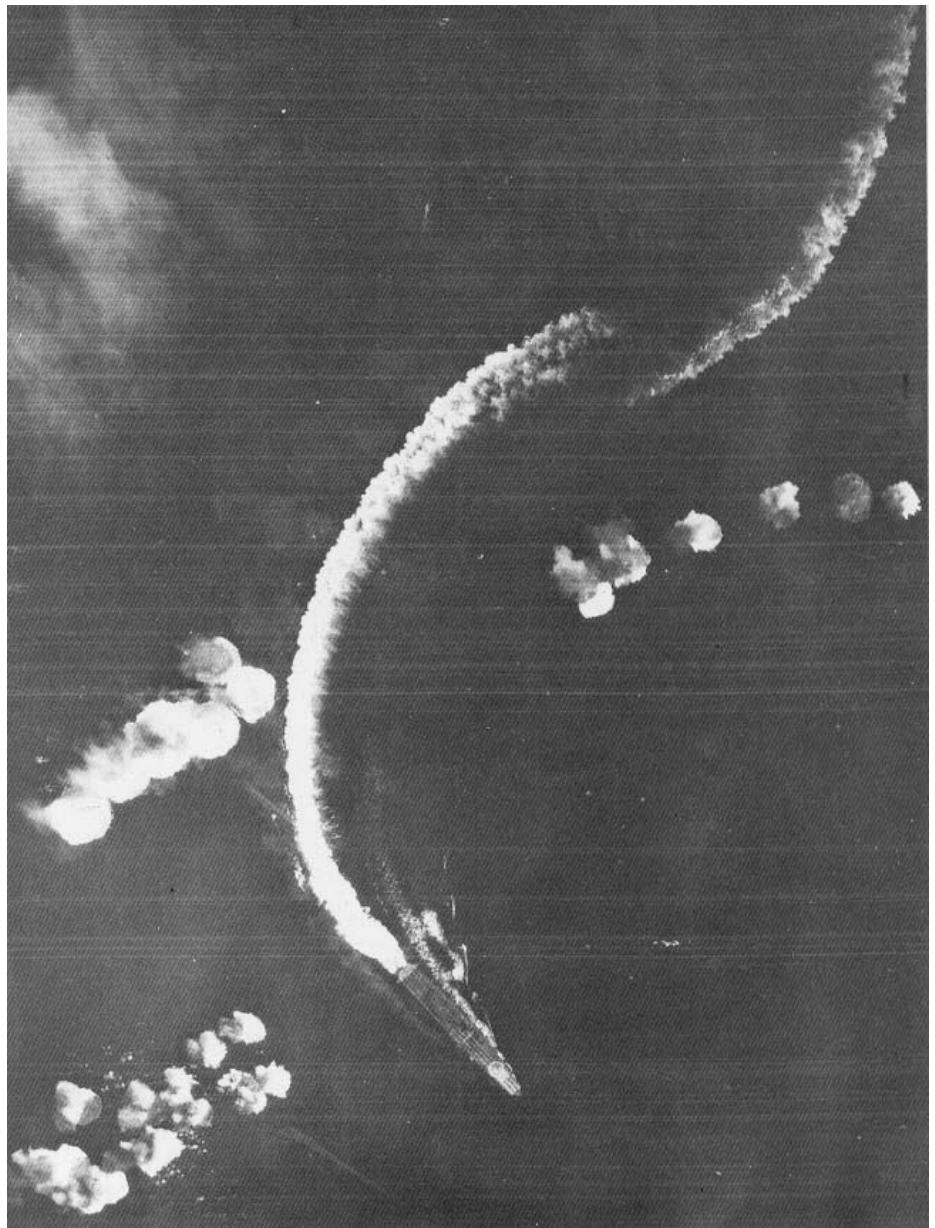
*(Continued from page 11)*

flight deck unusable. He flew past the ship at low altitude, with Childers bent over to keep from passing out due to loss of blood. Brother Wayne Childers, aboard *Yorktown*, didn't see any signs of life in the back seat of T-3. Corl set out to find one of the other carriers, but his engine was unwilling.



CORL PUTS HIS *Devastator* in the ocean with significant skill, right alongside USS *Monaghan* (DD-385). Gunner Childers, almost unconscious from loss of blood, said the water revived him. The two fliers were quickly rescued by a whaleboat from the destroyer.

*Photo taken from Monaghan by a Lt. Kait*



THE JAPANESE CARRIER *Hiryu* under attack by Army Air Corps B-17s. The splashes from a stick of bombs near the ship's wake *could* be covering a ship sunk by the bombers. This attack was made before the arrival, late on 4 June, of 24 Navy SBDs that so damaged the ship that she was scuttled, and sank the following morning.

*Official U.S. Army photo*

"Stand by to hit the water," Corl warned, but it took a moment to sink in, Childers said. A moment later the water revived him a bit. They had ditched a short distance off *Monaghan's* beam. Both flyers got out of the plane and, as Corl was trying to break out their life raft, Childers saw the destroyer lower a whaleboat. "We don't need it, let's go," he told the pilot, and the two slid into the Pacific, supported by their Mae West life jackets. Childers was too weak to swim, so Corl towed him away from the sinking *Devastator*.

"In a few minutes, the whaleboat was alongside, and a crewmember shoved a

boathook at Corl," Childers said. "He told them to take me first, as I was hurt. Aboard the destroyer, I was placed on the wardroom table while the doctor and two corpsmen dressed my wounds and gave me plasma. The doctor told me later that I would have been dead in another 30 minutes without medical help." A couple of days later (6 June), the corpsmen helped Childers to *Monaghan's* deck so he could watch *Yorktown* slide beneath the waves. "It was an awesome sight."

Childers was in the Naval Hospital at Pearl Harbor when he was visited by his

*(Continued on page 13)*



# Enterprise, Orphaned Yorktown Pilots Finally Catch



NAVY DIVE BOMBERS finally caught up with *Hiryu* at 1700 on 4 June, when a force of 24 SBDs from *Enterprise*, 10 of them orphaned *Yorktown* planes, caught her. This picture shows the forward third of her flight deck missing, shortly before she sank at 0900 on 5 June.

*U.S. Naval Historical Center photograph, donated by Kazutoshi Hando*

## Childers Only VT-3 Gunner To Survive Attack on Carriers



CHILDERS heaves himself out of his seat in the rear of the *Devastator*. Corl, fighting an oily canopy, will follow.

*Photo taken from Monaghan by a Lt. Kait*

(Continued from page 12)

brother Wayne two weeks after the battle. "I asked him how many of our guys got picked up. Wayne shook his head. I asked incredulously 'No one else?' He stated, 'No one else. You are the only surviving gunner.'"

## Jap Photos of Burning Ship Taken from Cruiser Scout

The two photographs of *Hiryu* on this page were taken from a scout plane launched from the light cruiser *Hosho*, at the request of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, to learn if *Hiryu* was still afloat.



ANOTHER VIEW of the burning *Hiryu*, taken early in the morning of 5 June. Bombs exploding on her hangar deck along with planes being refueled and rearmed, collapsed the flight deck forward of the island and threw a portion of the forward elevator against the island, where it stayed.

*U.S. Naval Historical Center photograph, donated by Kazutoshi Hando*

## Japanese Carrier Had Lived Long Enough To Cripple Yorktown

The carrier *Hiryu* had been far in the Japanese fleet's van when planes from *Yorktown*, *Enterprise* and *Hornet* had attacked three others on the morning of 4 June, and had escaped their attention.

Suspecting the presence of a fourth carrier, Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher had *Yorktown* send out scout bombers to have a look. While they were looking, their carrier suffered the attacks that caused her to be abandoned, but one pilot transmitted what has been called "the best, clearest and most accurate" scouting report of the entire war.

At 1445, pilot Samuel Adams reported one fleet aircraft carrier, two battleships, three cruisers and four destroyers, steaming north, about 110 miles and on a bearing of 290° from *Yorktown*.

By this time, *Yorktown* was unable to respond, but a flight of 24 Dauntlesses, 10 of them *Yorktown* orphans, were launched from *Enterprise*.

At about 1700, the American planes attacked *Hiryu*, which was making 30 knots and taking evasive action. One bomb knocked the forward elevator into the island, causing extensive damage there. The others exploded among aircraft being rearmed and refueled.

# Meanwhile, Back on Midway Atoll with the Marine Defense Battalion

## Warrant Officer Bill Lucius Makes a Provident Decision

*'Too Scared' at Pearl Harbor To See the Attacking Planes, He Would Stay Outdoors Now*

A few miles north of San Francisco, in what was once called "Russian River Country" but is now thought of as almost a part of the Napa Valley wine region, reside Bill and May Lucius. Bill is a former mayor of the town of Healdsburg and a former teacher at the local community college. He still does a little volunteer teaching at Healdsburg Elementary School and the Senior Center. He's a nice old gent.

As in tough old Marine. The kind that starts out as a private and retires as a colonel.

Bill Lucius was at Midway Island during that first week of June 1942, and he had been at Pearl Harbor the previous December 7. He was a warrant officer, and his job was to defend the island against a landing force of 5,000 Japs, who were on the way according to scuttlebutt from Pearl.

It was more than rumor — there was too much going on in May 1942. The 6th Marine Defense Battalion had been reinforced by part of Carlson's Raiders, a fearsome bunch even to other Marines. A detachment of the VII Army Air Force had arrived with 19 Boeing B-17s and 4 Martin B-26s. Navy air on the island had received 6 new Grumman TBF *Avenger* torpedo bombers and additional Consolidated PBV *Catalina* patrol planes.

Marine Air Group 22, Bill Lucius' outfit, was not as fortunate. It had 7 Grumman F4F *Wildcat* fighters, which weren't quite obsolete, but it relied on 20 inferior Brewster F2A *Buffalo* fighters. MAG 22 also had 11 Chance-Vought SB2U *Vindicator* and 16 Douglas SBD *Devastator* bombers. The quality of the aircraft, but not of the pilots, is reflected in the loss of 28 of them to Japanese aircraft. By 5 June, only two fighters were operational. By 5 June, the Japanese had lost the Battle of Midway.

But what of Bill Lucius on 4 June when the attack came? With MAG 22's aircraft gone to look for the invaders, he



BOMBED-OUT Eastern Island command post of the 6th Defense Battalion, where Maj. William W. Benson was killed by a direct hit from a Japanese dive bomber. Moments before it was hit, Benson had invited Warrant Officer Bill Lucius to join him in the "best dugout" on Midway. Lucius declined the major's invitation.

*From Marines at Midway, a monograph by Lt. Col. R.D. Heintz, Jr., USMC*

headed for his slit trench. "Bill!" called Maj. William W. Benson from his command post, "I have the best dugout on the island as well as the best communications equipment. Why don't you stay with me?" That's the way Walter Lord recorded it in his book *Incredible Victory* (Harper & Row, NYC, 1967), but Maj. Benson may have been less formal in that situation.

Lucius said he had been so scared at Pearl he hardly saw the Japanese planes. He didn't want to miss them now.

At about that time, MAG 22's fighters found the approaching Jap formations, about 30 miles out, and learned to their dismay that the funny little Orientals who exported trashy goods to the United States had produced a superior fighter in the *Zero*, and their pilots were well trained and experienced in battle, too. Only two Jap bombers were thought to be shot down, but their formation was now ragged as it reached Midway.

The Japs arrived at 0630 and shortly after 0640, Bill Lucius saw a bomb land directly on Maj. Benson's "safe" dugout. He rushed over to help, but it was to no avail. The major was dead.

Lucius fought his way across the South Pacific for the remainder of the war, and participated in the surrender of the Japanese at Tseinsen, China, in September 1945.

## Col. Heintz Offers Comments On Marine Corps at Midway

"The contribution of Marines to the defense of Midway, however, had been considerable, from the inception of base development to this moment. Not only had the 3rd and 6th Defense Battalions contributed their share of backbreaking labor, unremitting vigilance and highly effective flak, but the aviation personnel of Marine Air Group 22, at a cost rarely surpassed in the history of United States Naval Aviation, had unhesitatingly faced an enemy superior in numbers and aircraft, and exacted more than a full return for their sacrifice.

"Although directed solely to the Marine aviation units at Midway, Admiral Nimitz's despatch [*sic*] composed after the victory, could well apply in spirit to all Marines at Midway:

"Please accept my sympathy for the losses sustained by your gallant aviation personnel based at Midway. Their sacrifice was not in vain. When the great emergency came, they were ready. They met unflinchingly the attack of vastly superior numbers and made the attack ineffective. They struck the first blow at the enemy carriers. They were the spearhead of our great victory. They have written a new and shining page in the annals of the Marine Corps."



## *Spruance Withdrawal Draws Criticism; He Played His Cards Right*

### **Superior Japanese Force Hoped to Lure Americans Into Showdown Battle**

Following abandonment of Yorktown, Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher ceded freedom of command to Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, who had Enterprise, Hornet, six cruisers and nine destroyers.

As night fell on 4 June, Spruance took stock. His pilots had been flying all day and were not trained in night operations. Some of his destroyers had not been fueled for five days. He had no idea where Yamamoto's main force was or how strong. He turned his carriers eastward and did not reverse course until after midnight.

And he was criticized harshly for not pursuing a retreating enemy. One American reporter said he should have chased the Japs all the way to Tokyo.

But the Japs weren't retreating. Yamamoto hoped he could catch the Americans in a night action, at which the Japanese were far superior and in which the loss of his carriers wouldn't matter. And Yamamoto still had seven battleships, 11 cruisers and almost four dozen destroyers. He also had another carrier with the invasion force and possibly more carriers in reserve.

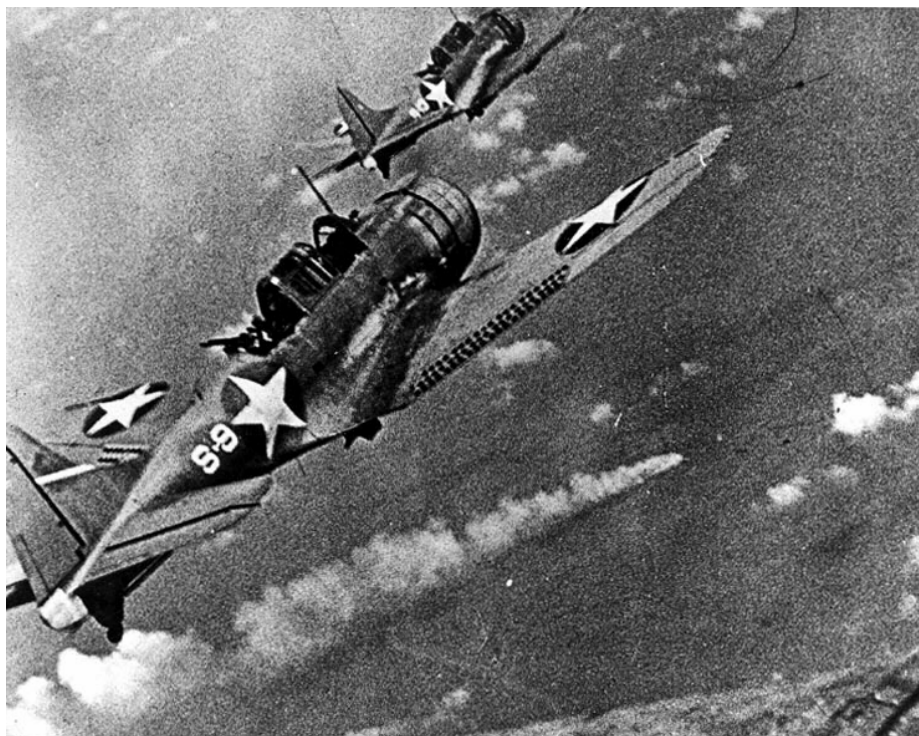
By 6 June, Yamamoto would be re-joined by his Aleutian screening force, which would add another four battleships and nine cruisers.

In his action report, Spruance said "I did not feel justified in risking a night encounter with possibly superior enemy forces, but on the other hand, I did not want to be too far away from Midway the next morning. I wished to have a position from which either to follow up retreating enemy forces or to break up a landing attack on Midway.

At about 0400 on 5 June, the heavy cruisers *Mogami* and *Mikuma* collided, reducing the speed of both, but that was all the action that day.

On 6 June, SBDs from Enterprise and Hornet found the two cruisers, sinking *Mikuma* and putting *Mogami* out of the war for more than a year.

It was not until 7 June that Yamamoto finally was ready to accept the defeat of his planned invasion of Midway.



DOUGLAS SBD *Dauntless* dive bombers from USS *Hornet* close in at about 1445 on 6 June to take another whack at the Japanese heavy cruiser *Mikuma*. This third attack was a *coup de grâce*, as the ship had been abandoned after fatal hits that morning. On this attack, the SBDs also bombed the destroyer *Arashio*, killing most of *Mikuma*'s survivors, who crowded her decks.

*Official U.S. Navy photograph*



DOWN BY THE BOW, burning, dead in the water and abandoned, *Mikuma* was an easy target for a third attack, but another Jap cruiser, *Mogami*, was damaged almost as badly and managed to reach Truk, where she was repaired, though it was more than a year before she rejoined the Japanese fleet. On the third attack, a bomb hit detonated the ship's torpedoes. With that, her two screening destroyers departed and *Mikuma* sank that night.

*Official U.S. Navy photograph*

## What Rewards Were in Store for the Navy's Mysterious Code-Breakers?

### Rochefort Denied DSM, Relieved of Command

The story of the role of Cdr. Joseph J. Rochefort and his code-breakers is so well known that Hollywood even got it right in the movie *Midway*, right down to the disreputable smoking jacket and the offices of his intelligence section, tucked away in the catacombs of the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard administration building. What isn't so well known is the reward Joe Rochefort earned for providing detailed advance information on Japanese plans to attack and invade Midway Atoll.

Rochefort's Communications Intelligence Unit was already in business before the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor and the catacombs in the new wing of the administration building had been designed for its use. The place was equipped with IBM's most exotic devices of the day which, together with its location added an aura of mystery. It adopted for itself the name "Hypo," the word for the letter "H" in the phonetic alphabet and the name of the "H" flag. Hypo also meant Honolulu at the time.

Add to that the fact that everything done by these unusual naval people using futuristic equipment, speaking an arcane language and calling themselves Hypo was classified and you have the breeding ground for mistrust by conventional seafaring men with salt in their whiskers.

Retired Capt. Jasper Holmes, who served under Rochefort at the time, said in his 1979 book *Double-Edged Secrets*, "Not much attention was paid to uniforms or to military punctilio of any kind." To much of the Navy, Hypo did not seem "Navy" enough.

Then there was Washington, then as now intensely jealous of its place atop the chain of command. The chief of naval operations had directed that information emanating from Hypo go directly to the Office of Naval Intelligence, which would then decide who should have it.

Because of this arrangement, Adm. Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Rochefort's ultimate boss, was unaware of much of the information developed by Hypo just prior to the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor.



But, as Holmes points out, there was no possible combination of friendly forces between the east coast of Africa and the West Coast of the United States that could have deterred the Japanese. They might have lost the element of surprise, but that's all.

When Adm. Chester W. Nimitz became CincPac, he issued orders that any information that had a bearing on the Pacific Fleet be passed to him immediately, in addition to anyone else on Rochefort's list. Because of this, forces under Nimitz' command broke even in

the Battle of the Coral Sea in May of 1942 and achieved their stunning victory in the Battle of Midway in June.

Now, what were Rochefort's rewards for his achievement?

Nimitz recommended that he be awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. Navy Commander in Chief Admiral Ernest J. King responded that a lot of people were responsible, including the ONI in Washington. Rochefort did not get the DSM. Instead, efforts were afoot in Washington to strip him of his command, if such it can be called.

In October 1942, Rochefort was ordered to Washington on temporary duty with the Office of Naval Operations. When he got there, he found that he had been summarily relieved as officer-in-charge of the intelligence unit. He was accused of failing to keep King informed on intelligence matters and even of the fiction of causing friction with Nimitz' staff. Rochefort was ordered to sea.

In a letter to Holmes, really intended for all of Hypo, Rochefort expressed his gratitude to the entire crew "for your unselfish and tireless work which resulted in the best damn Intelligence Organization the U.S. Navy or any other Navy has ever seen."

Those words would have looked good on a commendation to Rochefort.



JAPANESE SURVIVORS of the sunken carrier *Hiryu*, under guard on Midway. These men were rescued on 19 June by the seaplane tender USS Ballard (AVD-10), which had been converted from a destroyer in 1940. For two weeks the Japanese sailors had drifted in a lifeboat. They appear unhappy. Now, note the Marine guard: His hat is old issue, as is his rifle, which is a Model 1903-A3 bolt-action Springfield, and he has torn the sleeves from his blouse.

Official U.S. Navy photograph