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THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

*How Grundy County
Helped Win the War*

Wound reveals true ironies of war to Brown



Lt. Col. (Ret.) George Brown made a career in the military, which started during World War II in the South Pacific. Brown was injured in combat by a Japanese projectile. He recovered, spared by a half-inch of flesh between the projectile and his spinal cord. (Herald Photo/Jo Ann Hustis)

Japanese projectile came within half-inch of changing young private's life forever

By JO ANN HUSTIS
Herald Writer

The memory of the tree burst enemy projectile that nearly ended his life in the Philippine Islands during World War II is still vivid to Lt. Col. (Ret.) George H. Brown 51 years later.

Brown, of Morris, was an Army private at the time. His unit had traveled to the northwest end of Leyte to be committed to an action. The time was October 1944.

"We were bivouacked in some palm trees. The captain had just given us orders to get back to our troops and get ready to move out, when the Japanese started dropping some shells.

"We think the Japanese were trying to destroy the larger artillery position behind us. But they didn't have the range and the shells were dropping into the trees where we were located.

"The shells formed what we called tree bursts - a burst of steel that fell down to the ground. I heard this one shell coming in and thought, 'Oh boy, I'll never make it to my foxhole.' So I turned and ran to a foxhole behind me. Two guys were already in it.

"And this thing hit me in midair. When I landed on the ground, I was a wounded soldier."

The piece of missile was slightly smaller than a 50-caliber projectile, and had a razor edge on three sides.

"It struck the cap of the shoulder, dug in and tracked through the muscles to a half-inch from my spine in the neck. The doctor removed the piece surgically, handed it to me and said I was indeed fortunate," Brown

noted.

"If the piece had another half-inch of thrust, it could have left me paralyzed from the neck down, or dead, just like that.

"When I rejoined the outfit later to move up to Luzon, an officer told me, 'George, if you had been where you should have been when we went up that slope, you either would have been shot to pieces or horribly wounded. It was a terrible fight.'"

Later during his military career, Brown worked with some Japanese officers in an advisory capacity while stationed in Japan.

"We were talking over lunch when one of the officers mentioned he had been a staff officer across the river from our position. The other was a unit commander there," Brown said.

"I mentioned being there also, and getting wounded in the shoulder. One officer exclaimed, 'Oh, I got wounded in the shoulder, too.'

"And here we were, having a little Mongolian beef together, whereas we were trying to wipe each other out several years ago."

In the Army 90 days after he graduated from college in 1942, Brown was dispatched to New Guinea in replacement with the 70th Division. It was March 1944.

"There I joined the 32nd Infantry Division on a front line along a river. The 32nd was a red hot National Guard from Wisconsin. And I had just missed a hellacious battle engagement by 15 days," he said.

"There were Japanese on one side

See "Wound..." on page 2C

FEATURED INSIDE

- 2C** During war time, a young GI had to grow up quickly
- 3C** Kleinfeldt looked straight into eyes of enemy
- 4C** Ship lost, Spencer survived five days floating in Pacific
- 5C** Chouinard flew over China with famous 'Flying Tigers'
- 6C** McCarter had honor of flying with Gen. Claire Chennault
- 8C** Dix witnessed infamous Pearl Harbor attack

In war time, a GI had to grow up quickly

By Lt. COL. (RET.)
GEORGE H. BROWN

"Fall in."
The command rang out crisply in an August morning in Illinois. The year was 1942. Men of a definite past and uncertain future straggled out of the restaurant onto the already softening asphalt of the main street, Liberty Street, to form for their march to the Rock Island Railroad Station.

Wiping the remaining crumbs of their first communal breakfast from their mouths, they clumsily arranged themselves, under insistent guidance, into the semblance of a formation.

Four ranks of eight men each, they marched in single file. The first rank I formed a color guard with a snare drum and a couple of bugles. The bass drummer would jump parade from his own corner on up the street by the town library, on up the street by the town library. "Well, son, they're all yours," and the oldesters stood by expectantly to have some fun at the expense of the "kid" in charge. They suddenly stiffened, half by instinct, at the authority of the command, "Fall in." This was the first of many commands the "kid" would give - and take.

"Follow Me."
The dark stain of the inverted V on his sleeves stood out against the faded grey-green of his fatigues. A small black jacket, the dusted the dark color initials "G.S." on the left pocket of his swaggy jacket. It was his turn to take command; to lead.

Sweating and work and striving for excellence were the usual occupations of each day at "Chattahoochee University."
"Follow me," - a hurried reconnaissance, a quickly formulated plan, orders issued.

"Halt! Halt here as a base of Fire."
"Maneuver element, stand ready to move out." A quick glance to the

left and right, then down to the second band on his watch. The second band climbed and cut the heart out of the numeral "12."

Let's Go."
March 1945 - a nameless hill among myriad hills along the Villa Verde Trail in north-central Luzon. The hill was too small and too insignificant to even rate a numeral. High above and beyond in the gloom of night loomed Hill 1400. The only use for nighttime in Luzon was to bask in its respite from endless earing days amid millions of humming flies.

On this night, patrols had silently and reluctantly moved out for the patrols in this region favored the defender. After too brief an interval, the patrols returned, reporting no contact, only the noise of movement and digging.

We must advance. Nearly three weeks on this damn hillside with them looking down our throats day in and day out. Sniper casualties every day, with men "cashing in" and not a foot of ground to show for it all.

In the post midnight blackness, a figure materialized, then the skipper's voice, "Can you get out there pick the time to move." "OK, move out when you are ready. I'll support you by fire after first light."

In the remaining moments there was quiet, yet urgent activity. Check the platoon. Platoon? Seventeen men, four of them new today, one noncom, two PFCs and a PVY fronting squads.

"Runner, bring up the rear. Trail a reel of wire. Sound power will be our only contact. 'Hoppy,' tail the second squad, stick to the saddle going out.

Only room for two squads, go back for the third squad when we cleared the saddle. Peer down the trail, try to pierce the blackness. Night vision gives a sickly luminescence to the scene, highlighting the

saddle from the inky void on the flanks. A glance into the gloom behind, a firm grip on the revolver butt, swallow if possible. OK, let's go.

"Send Her Out."
Combat slipped into rear echelon duty. VE Day and the days that followed marched on toward VJ Day and beyond. Tokyo, General head-

the surgeon's office. "Air can't make the pickup, what can you do?" "I'll do my best. Ring you back."
A call to the Navy, Yokosuka answers. "Capt. Navy, this is Capt. Army. Ship reports emergency surgical on board. Air can't make pickup. Ship's last position is closing on Tokyo Bay - on Great Circle Route. Can you assist?"

on both coasts and the flight to safety. A line drawn and a vow made, sealed forever in solemn pact with the sadness and disbelief and uncertainty of the next hour for all those trusting people.

A certain knowledge gained, fought with human suffering and defeat. Retrograde, and in the midst of destruction, a chance to rebuild. An island interlude and a new dimension in understanding.

KM AG, now with the police in counter guerrilla work. No fancy titles, no presidential interest, no Green Berets. In fact, no logistics, no support. Hijack to stay alive, to keep the mission alive, to push in small ways toward a final victory.

"Captain, let's take the next ridge."
"An advisor now, to the ROK Police." The phrase, casually spoken, was an affected casualness. Our men had been struck down by fire from the ridge that was our objective. Come on now! The air strike is over, let's move. Well, here goes nothing. Looked down at the pitifully inadequate 38-caliber revolver. Some supporting fires, I'll say.

Up and over down the forward slope. Don't think about getting hit, but for morale. Besides, it's a seven-mile hand carryout, the 15 miles in the back end of a jolting weapons carrier to the nearest Korean Police Dispensary. My medicine cabinet back home is better equipped for treatment.

Small arms fire picks up. The cough and blast of the mortars take up the counterpoint rhythm. A "pickle barrel" on a machine gun emplacement over on the next finger

ridge. Some shooting. Ever try it without a base plate, right, or Bipod?

The whole firing line stood up to cheer. "Manza! Manza!" Then they flopped down to take up again the deadly pecking away with rifle fire. Who scored the touchdown? OK, Captain, let's move, let's take the next ridge.

The salt air smacked against the nostrils and the slap, slap of the bow wave against the midships of the boat to soporific to resist. The first unfettered sleep in 22 months. And those months became blurred in memory, even on the vanishing wail of the vessel.

More garrison, then vaccination with a saber. A rousing tour with the 30 Armored Cavalry. Was there ever a better life than Recon? Not in my book.

USAREUR, tanks rumbling onto parking pads, their ugly snouts pointed eastward, ever eastward. Grafenwoer, the poor man's Garmisch. France. Vive la France and vive la difference.

CONUS, down below the bend of the Ohio, steaming background of climatic giants whose savage machinations are spelled out in staccato flashes and blasts of thunder that pass in a twinkling to leave man gasping under the blanket of heat and humidity that trails the storm. A command - after such a long, long drought. A command. I don't give a damn what they do. A mission is a mission, and a command is to accomplish that mission to the best of one's ability, and more.

See "Brown..." on page 3C

Recollections of a Combat Soldier

We must advance. Nearly three weeks on this damn hillside with them looking down our throats day in and day out. Sniper casualties every day, with men "cashing in" and not a foot of ground to show for it all.



quarters and staff duty. Plans to be drawn, daily operations to be accomplished.

A city digging out, a nation protesting, a people suspended in mid-air; a hungry, bewildered peasantry.

Hearth and home, loved ones, families on the move to join with long absent males. A medical impasse and the ether crackles with an insistent message. "Stick on board. Must have shore-based surgery soon."

A B-17 from Air-Sea Rescue makes contact and circles the ship. The seas are too rough, oil won't calm them, the plane cannot land and returns to base.

Radio transmissions meld into land line conversations. In Tokyo a hungry, bewildered peasantry. The seas are too rough, oil won't calm them, the plane cannot land and returns to base.

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Wound...

From page 1C

of the river and us on the other." The Japanese really tried to pour it across the river and knock us off.

"The Japanese were always on top of us. My platoon went in with 17 men and came out with 11, and with a private first class at the head of it."

Brown has little patience for those who question whether President Harry Truman was correct in ordering the world's first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

He was working with the service support forces that were going to supply both the bases by bringing up supplies, engineer units, signal corps units and all the other heavy support groups needed to support the pending invasion of Japan.

In addition, they were supporting the combat groups that were forming up for the initial invasion. Brown said.

"It makes me so damn sore, all these people who sit around now and say, 'We shouldn't have dropped the bomb,'" he said.

"But my God, we were praying for that kind of relief. We didn't know we had it (the bomb), but the troops certainly weren't risking the idea of trying to attack the mainland of Japan."

In Manila when World War II ended Sept. 2, 1945, Brown recalled the entire harbor area exploding in celebratory gunfire.

"Every ship - anything with a weapon on it - was fired and lit up the sky. Tracers were flying all over the place. It was a wonder the Air Force didn't bomb us," he said.

"It was such a moment of hallucination, of relief. You could go to bed and sleep and know the next day when you woke up you wouldn't be beaten. And 700 kilometers away you were going to be responsible for some guys who wouldn't come back."

"It was a tremendous feeling."

"On looking back at World War II today, Brown still feels it was a necessary endeavor.

"I do not have any bad feelings about having been involved in it. I look at the people today, in their early to mid-20s, just getting out of college, and I say to myself, 'They will with what they want,'" he said.

"People such as me did not have that experience because we were committed to something."

"But it was a compensating experience. It taught us about ourselves, about self reliance, about helping other people - your buddies if you want to put it that way. You learned responsibility."

"In that sense, the war was a tremendous experience. You paid tuition for it. Still in all, I'm glad I had that experience under the circumstances."



WORLD WAR II veteran George Brown of Morris shows the Purple Heart medal and the Japanese projectile which struck him during combat. (Herald Photo/Jo Ann Hustis)

In Commemoration... The 50th Anniversary Of the End of World War II.

Fifty years ago, newspapers across the globe celebrated "Peace On Earth" when W.W.II came to an end on August 25, 1945. In commemoration of this anniversary, Enesco artist Karen Harb has designed this very special limited edition ornament.

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MISKAS WINES & LIQUORS

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Kleinfeldt looked straight into eyes of enemy

By PETE RESSLER
Herald Managing Editor

Sometimes you have to jump into the fire to put it out. Few people alive today know that any better than Earl Kleinfeldt of Morris.

Kleinfeldt served in the U.S. Navy Air Force as a divebomber tailhook gunner, aboard the "Fighting Lady," the USS Yorktown in the South Pacific.

He can't remember how many times he was asked to jump in the fire. He was never burned, but his fire claimed the lives of unseen Japanese troops.

At the age of 21, Kleinfeldt, then of Chicago, enlisted in the Navy. He went to Great Lakes Naval Station for boot camp. He was trained to be a signalman. They help aircraft carrier pilots land safely.

But, in times of war, needs change quickly and the Navy called on Kleinfeldt to be a radioman on a destroyer.

He was packed and awaiting his final orders one night when the commander called the men together and gave them the choice of working on a submarine or in aviation.

Needs had changed again, and men were needed in these areas. Kleinfeldt chose aviation and was sent to gunnery school.

There he learned to operate a new gadget called radar. The rather crude version of today's sophisticated radar systems was top secret and training took place in a building surrounded by a barbed wire fence and guarded by two large doberman pinchers.

He then went to Jacksonville, Fla., for torpedo bomber training

ultimate target: Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

The assaults took place at such places as Iwo Jima, Okinawa Jima, Takao, Saigon, Hong Kong, Manila and Canton.

Eventually, they reached their target, and Kleinfeldt was involved in the first air raids on Tokyo.

Kleinfeldt's job was simple in theory, but monumental in reality.

He sat in the rear seat of a Curtiss SB2 C-1 Helldiver. The bombers would fly in groups of three, supported by fighters.

Once over the target, the bombers would fall into a steep dive, amid intense anti-aircraft fire from ground installations, pulling up at dangerously low levels and dropping their payload of explosives.

During the dive, the gunner is strapped in his seat and the guns are outside, but tied down.

As rear gunner, Kleinfeldt had to stand up as the bomber leveled out and strafe the ground as the bomber pulled away.

While he never witnessed his bullets hit the enemy, he's certain some of them hit their target.

"We used to be so low I could see the propeller blow the water on the ocean," he recalled.

The squadrons mainly targeted Japanese military installations, such as airfields, fuel and arms depots and naval vessels.

Their job was to weaken the Japanese prior to an amphibious landing by Allied marines.

Kleinfeldt and his pilot, Sully, had no choice but to steel their nerves and jump into the fire. But there were several close calls that area almost humorous to Kleinfeldt in retrospect after 50 years.



NAVY TAILGUNNER Earl Kleinfeldt posed for this photo just before taking off for the first bombing raid on Tokyo.

Fortunately, an American fighter blew the Zero out of the sky before it could fire on them.

Another time, their plane stalled at the bottom of a dive. Kleinfeldt called out, "Sully, you OK?" No answer.

"Sully, you OK?" he repeated. Again no answer.

Earl felt he had no option but to jump.

"I had one leg out and I heard him yell, 'I'm all right!'"

While combat was certainly hazardous, taking off and landing on an aircraft carrier, particularly prior to the advent of jet engines, was also very dangerous.

Success depended on the skills of both the pilot and the signalman who made the decision whether to let a pilot land or to wave him off for another try.

On takeoff, he said, the plane was connected to a steam catapult and the pilot revved the engines while standing on the brakes.

On the go signal, the catapult fired and the pilot released the break to gain enough momentum to lift off the short runway.

"It was a real thrill," Kleinfeldt said, recalling how the force would sink in your cheeks.

But as thrilling as takeoffs were,

landings were extremely dangerous.

Kleinfeldt remembers several planes crashing on the deck or falling short of the ship after sustaining heavy damage from anti-aircraft fire.

Personally, he recounted two situations that nearly ended in tragedy.

Due to the short runway, planes must drop quickly onto the deck where a tailhook hopefully grabs one of two cables attached to hydraulic compressors, the planes would go from about 100 miles per hour to a dead stop in a matter of seconds.

Once, upon returning from a bombing mission in the Philippines, they found that the carriers had moved.

Already low on fuel from the mission, they had to search the open seas for the Yorktown.

When they finally found her, and went in to land, they ran out of gas and the engine died at the instant the tailhook caught.

Another time, they were coming in to land but were off just a bit. The signalman waved the pilot off for another try, but as Sully pulled up, the tailhook caught one of the cables and the plane was pulled to the edge of the carrier.

With one wheel over the side, the



THIS IS THE front of a propoganda flier dropped over Tokyo by Earl Kleinfeldt and other Navy airmen near the end of World War II. On the reverse side was a message in Japanese urging the Japanese military and citizens to give up the fight, as their efforts were hopeless.

and ended up out west to learn dive bombing.

Finally he was on his way to Pearl Harbor where he boarded the Yorktown and began the long journey to the South Sea.

Kleinfeldt and his cohorts liberated a number of strategic areas from Japanese control on their way to the

On one mission, Sully warned Kleinfeldt that they were going into heavy fire and that he should close the bomb hatch quickly after they dropped their "eggs."

Earl was following his orders when he looked out the hatch straight into the eyes of a Japanese Zero fighter pilot.

Brown...

From page 2C

"Order Arms."

A series of gatherings steeped in sentimentality. The sting of salt finds common fellowship along the eyelids of us all. Recollections sharpen into painfully precise foci.

A day in June, bright and gleaming. A respectful group occupies the flanking chairs, troops are arrayed, colors snapping, band serenading.

In contrast to the militarily correct

troops, a smaller group stands facing them across the field.

A little more erect, a little more sharp in appearance, heads high and a little more determined, jaws set with a little more firmness for they are the retiring, parting company with those in whose ranks they stood.

They will set the proud example, they will show the way, this last of their active days.

The litany of the ceremony begins

and each is lost into his own thoughts, responding as befits the drill. The band swells into a marching cadence and the line of troops commences to flow.

They flash by in khaki-settled ranks. Then come the Colors, approaching from the left. Present Arms.

And 20 hands snap to their cap brims. The colors pass. What life-time did the 20 severally live in that moment of marching?

The Colors that rallied them in days gone by. The Colors that would inspire those yet to come when all else had become confused, obscured, or lost in meaning.

Six paces past the right file, and the rear rank of the Color Guard passes from view.

"And the voice that first commanded 'Fall In!' so those many years before, now firmly proclaimed one last order to his last command

"Order Arms."

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25 Years

Lost, Spencer survived five days in Pacific with help of friends, family

By Jo Ann Hlustis
Herald Writer

The visage of his family in the sky overhead kept Dan Spencer from drowning in the shark-infested Pacific Ocean during the closing weeks of World War II.

Seaman First Class Spencer, a family man, loved his wife and three children, and wrote to them every day while aboard the USS Indianapolis.

Spencer, who lived in Morris 44 years, died eight years ago at the age of 72. The details of how he survived the sinking were given in interviews with his family and other survivors.

Four days in the water after the Indianapolis was sunk by a Japanese submarine, Spencer told shipmate Michael Kuryla of Hillside he "couldn't take it any more."

"Dan was going to slip out of his life jacket. Then he looked up and saw the faces of his wife and three children in the clouds. He said he had to stay alive one more day," Kuryla said.

"I prayed, and I know Dan did, too. He was that kind of guy. He wrote to his wife every day. I said, 'Gee, Dan, what do you have to say, day after day?' He called her 'Sis.' He loved his wife and children. And I loved Dan," Kuryla said.

Spencer enlisted in the Navy in 1943. He and 1,192 other sailors and Marines were the final crew of the Indianapolis left San Francisco on July 16, 1945.

In a box spot-welded to the deck, the ship carried 200 pounds of components and uranium for the atomic bomb unleashed on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945.

"The wording, 'Radio Parts' was stenciled on the cover," said Kuryla. "I helped bring the box aboard. Sometimes I sat on it on deck."

The ship was mortally struck by two enemy torpedoes at midnight on July 30, 1945, and went down 12 minutes later, taking more than 800 lives with her. She was the last ship sunk in World War II.

"I was sucked under as she went down and my life flashed before me. I said the Act of Contrition and blacked out. A sailor helped me onto a life raft," he said.

Some survivors tied their life rafts together. They rubbed the fuel oil off an onion and ate it. Later they found 34 cans of Spam. They opened the cans and found the Spam was too salty to eat.

"We cut the Spam into chunks

and fed ~~the~~ the sharks that kept bumping against our rafts. It was an attempt to keep them away. But some men went out of their minds from drinking salt water and swam out among the sharks," Kuryla said.

The survivors dehydrated more the longer they remained in the water.

"Our lips cracked and our tongues were like dry sponges. We were choking and getting delirious. We were losing men; they were dying," Kuryla said.

Some sailors hooked their life

preservers together. Sharks bit at them. Those who died were unhooked and let go.

Spencer and Ed Brown of Garden City, Calif., dove out the starboard side of the ship as she went down. They were among those who hooked their life jackets together.

There were 366 sailors in their group. Sixty-six sailors were still alive when Spencer and Brown were rescued five days later.

"Many of them died from exposure. And the sharks were eating us faster than I realized," Brown said.

"The toughest part was the long days and the planes flying overhead. We'd pray. Then when the planes didn't spot us, we'd begin swearing. 'You blank so-and-so.'"

The survivors were becoming delirious and some swam off, headed for what they said was an island where other people danced and drank cold beer, Brown said.

The fuel oil in the water burned their noses, ears, and lips. Combined with the sun, it was most miserable.

"There was no food. Many sailors drank salt water. Then they'd

become delirious and swim off. Dying that way was easiest because you just went to sleep, Brown said.

"Someone said there was a ship sunk 10 feet below us with cold water aboard. I was going to go down. Danny said, 'Don't dive down.' Danny dove down, then," Brown said.

Spencer, Brown, and 52 other sailors were rescued by the PBY seaplane flown by Lt. Adrian Marks. Kuryla was rescued by the USS Register. The survivors were transported to the Navy hospital in Guam.

"I was pulled aboard the PBY. Danny must have been pulled aboard, too. I just don't remember much more until after we were in the hospital," Brown said.

Spencer and Brown went aboard ship together.

"Danny was a hell of a guy to be around. Danny kept saying I saved his life and kept him from going goofy in the water. Danny did the same for me. I really loved him," Brown said.

Spencer's youngest daughter, Carol Johnson, of Seneca, was three years old when a Navy official came to their home to inform her mother the Indianapolis was missing.

"About a week later, another Navy man came to the door and said Dad was found among the survivors in the water," said Johnson. "Then Mom cried."

"Dad went through hell for five days and four nights. He talked about it constantly in his later years, and he would cry a lot."

"He had a nervous breakdown while we were living in Wisconsin. An airplane flew overhead one day. He must have thought it was an enemy plane and yelled, 'Down, down, everybody down, duck.' He ended up in the veterans hospital for a time."

Spencer attended his last reunion of the Indianapolis survivors in 1988.

Survivor Curtis F. Reid, Birmingham, Ala., attended his first survivors reunion on Aug. 2, 1995. The date was exactly 50 years after the survivors were picked up.

"Oh, Lord, the sharks. They were everywhere. I saw them eat the legs off survivors," Reid, 76, said.

"The Lord pulled me through. If it hadn't been for Him, I wouldn't be here now. Thank goodness I gave myself to the Lord when I was out there in the water."

Reid said he thought he would not survive the night of the fifth day because the weight of his water-soaked life jacket was pulling him down. He was rescued that day by Marks in the PBY.

"The plane door opened and a hand reached out and grabbed me. They commenced questioning us on the hospital ship about what happened. They didn't want to believe the Indianapolis got sunk," Reid said.

After the Indianapolis was torpedoed, Robert E. Shaffer of Pasorbis, Calif., jumped with his friend, Johnny, off the port side. Both wore life jackets.

"We swam halfway across the Pacific Ocean. Then I looked back over my shoulder at the stern of the ship and it was right over our heads," he said.

"I would go down like a ship would that would pull you under. The torpedoes had hit forward and blew the bow off, and the screws were still in the water. The stern was still chugging along, getting lower and lower in the water, and that's the way she went down, otherwise, the suction would have pulled us under and there would have been a lot of survivors."

A delirious sailor swam up behind Shaffer the third day they were in the water, got out the hunting knife that all sailors carried, and eyed him.

"You've got a potato in your locker and I want you to take me down there (beneath the surface of the ocean) and get it," the man said to Shaffer.

Johnny saved his life. He swam from behind and got his arm around the sailor's head and I got hold of the sailor's arm and got the knife. And we just kind of pushed him away."

"Me and Johnny stayed together from there on."

Survivor Grivver Carver of Monterey, Calif., said an emergency signal was sent out when the Indianapolis was sinking, and was received at Leyte.

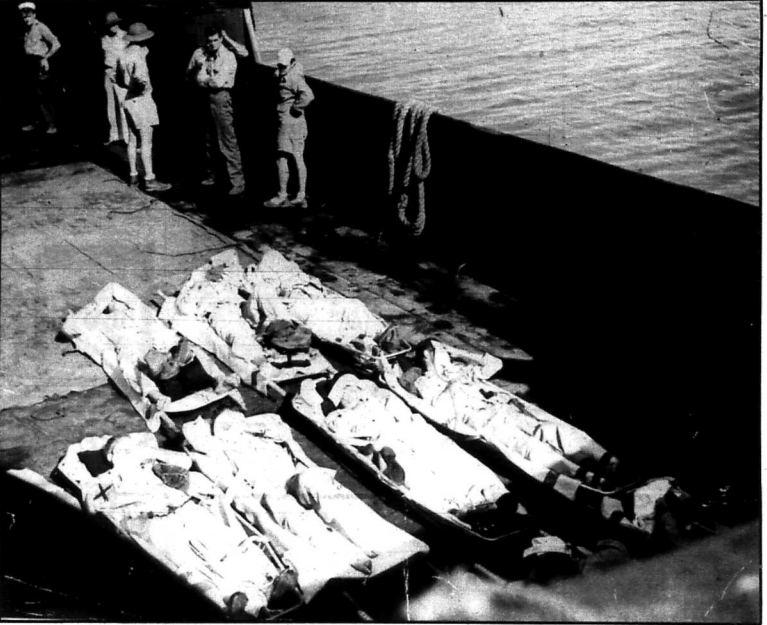
"The commanding officer told the recipient to just listen and if you hear it again, do something about it."

"But we didn't have time to send out a second message before the ship went down," Carver said.

"After we were all back home and the war was over, I telephoned the man. He said, 'Yes, I received the message. I wanted him to come to a survivors' reunion, but he never did.'"

Carver was rescued by the USS Bassett.

"I believe I was saved because I have a place here for some reason, and my duties are not over yet. My time will not come until my duties have been fulfilled."



AFTER BEING RESCUED, some of the survivors waited on stretchers on the ship's deck to be transported to a hospital. Daniel Spencer is the sailor on the lower left. The survivors were rescued five days after the USS Indianapolis was struck by a Japanese submarine's torpedo. (Official Photo U.S. Navy)

'No one knew about a ship being missing...'

By Jo Ann Hlustis
Herald Writer

The USS Indianapolis, flagship of the Fifth Fleet, sank after being struck by two torpedoes from a Japanese submarine in the Pacific Ocean on July 31, 1945.

The torpedoes struck at midnight. The Indianapolis slipped in flames beneath the waves 12 minutes later.

The battleship was returning from Tinian in the Mariana Islands after delivering parts for the world's first atomic bomb. The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in early August 1945, thereby hastening the end of World War II.

The final crew of the Indianapolis consisted of 1,196 sailors and Marines.

Five Marines and 311 sailors survived the sinking.

The other 875 men either went down with the ship or died in the water from dehydration, delirium, drowning and/or shark attack.

The United States Navy did not discover the tragedy until five days and four nights after the Indianapolis was sunk.

It is the worst sea disaster in the Navy's history.

Long-time Morris resident Daniel F. Spencer was among the sailors who survived.

With hopes of rescue dimming, Spencer and former Seaman Ed Brown, California, entwined their legs and clung together to stay alive in the ocean.

"Danny and I treated water and swam and drifted for five days and four nights," recalled Brown, then 17 years old.

"We lived through the heat of the day and the cold of the night, hoping somebody would find that we were out there. Each day progressively got worse.

rescuers came around. It was hard to comprehend that a ship the size of the Indianapolis would disappear and nobody came looking."

Spencer and Brown were rescued by Lt. Adrian Marks and the crew of his PBY Catalina seaplane.

"I don't think I gave up hope, and I don't think Danny did, either," Brown said. "I think that's the reason we survived. I was with Danny Spencer all the time I was in the water."

"But I was just about gone when

the crew threw the life ring at me from the Catalina. They said for me to grab it. I felt myself dizzy and didn't realize the PBY was so close. Then they pulled me in."

By falling asleep was the way most of the sailors died, Brown said.

"They died of exposure and no food or water. After while they drank the salt water in desperation. Salt water on an empty stomach begins a chemical reaction. Then the brain snips and you're all

gone."

"We had people who acted very crazy. After a little experience with that, we adjusted to the fact they were gone. They were still alive, screaming and hollering. But for all practical purposes, they were gone."

"So, we unbuckled their life jackets when they went to sleep, and let them drift away. You know, burial at sea. It wasn't a horrid thing."

"The ones I really felt sorry for

were the few badly burned survivors who were in so much pain because of the salt water on top of the burns. There was nothing you could do for them. But they were in so much pain they really were out of it, and didn't last very long."

The survivors splashed and made noise to scare off the ever-present sharks, Brown said.

"They'd circle around us like Indians around the covered wagons. They'd swim into us once in a while. But I never saw a man who was alive attacked by a shark."

During the first reunion of the Indianapolis survivors, Brown mentioned he felt the episode with the sharks was overblown in the movie, "Jaws."

Those he made the comment to said it was the other way around, that the sharks were worse than portrayed in the movie.

"I told them that if there were really that many sharks out there, we probably could have walked to shore on their backs," Brown said.

Earl Riggins of Oakland, Ill., one of the five Marines who survived the sinking still shudders at the memory of the sharks.

"I was in the water 105 hours, which was too long. There were a lot of worst moments during that time," he said.

"But I suppose the worst of all was when you saw the sharks getting in among your friends and so forth."

"I think all of us had given up hope, yet we were still trying to hang in there. If the planes hadn't spotted us, I don't think we would have made it until the ships got there."

William C. Myers and the crew of the USS Ringness rescued Capt. Charles B. McVay, commander of the Indianapolis, and 48 other survivors.



DANIEL SPENCER posed for this photo with his mother and father prior to leaving to serve the U.S. Navy during World War II.

See "Missing..." on page 5C

Notes on the sinking of USS Indy and her crew

By JO ANN HUSTIS
Herald Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Said a survivor of the sinking of the USS Indianapolis on July 30, 1945, "I was never more hot than when I floated naked in the ocean under the sun at high noon, wishing for night to come to cool things off. I was never more cold than in the ocean at night, wishing for the day to come and warm things up."

"I was in my birthday suit when the rescue ship picked me up."

Of the 127 survivors still living, 105 came to the 50th anniversary of the disaster and dedication of the Indianapolis Memorial on Aug. 2, 1995. Highlights included:

- A World War II veteran in a military overseas cap embroidered with the name of his ship, USS Sacramento, and the wording, "Pearl Harbor Survivor." He gazed at two Indianapolis survivors seated in wheelchairs. "People today just don't realize what we went through," he told them.

- A graying woman laid two scarlet carnations edged with green fern on the base of the monument where the names of the ship's final crew were engraved. "My Dad," she explained to the wheelchair survivors.

- "The Indianapolis, the last ship lost in combat in the war, left an indelible mark on the nation's history," noted featured speaker Adm. Philip M. Quast of Military Sealift Command.

- "The 319 sailors and Marines who survived suffered shark attack, starvation and exposure. The others died in unspeakable horror. Heroism consists not so much of inflicting pain, but of enduring it," he said.

- Congressman Andrew Jacobs of Indiana noted the Indianapolis "clearly carried the United States into the nuclear age."
- "This is hallowed ground indeed," he said. "At least four generations are here today to pay tribute to the Indianapolis and the gallant men

"We leave our descendants the message that World War II veterans saved the world. If it wasn't for them, we'd have Hitlerism and Hirohitism today."



aboard her. The Indianapolis is now in port for eternity.

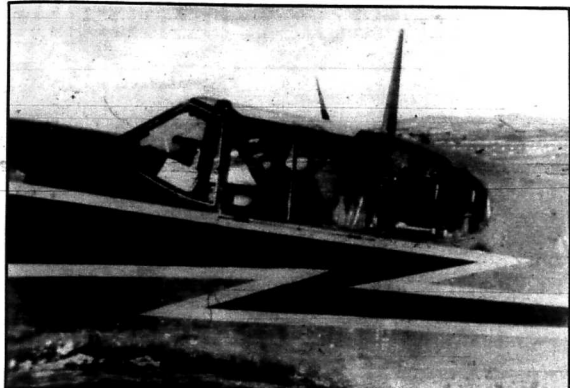
- Congress recognized the invaluable contribution of the Indianapolis to the nation in a commendation to the ship and crew for their service to the United States.

- "Now I can get on with the rest

of my retirement," commented a survivor at the end.

- Survival Michael Kusiva of Chicago, telling how he, wife, Lorraine, re-enlisted in the Air Force during Operation Desert

See "Indy..." on page 6C



RICHARD "RIZ" CHOUINARD

Chouinard served as 'Flying Tiger' in China during war

By MICHAEL FARRELL
Herald Writer

Richard Chouinard was a fighter pilot with the 14th Air Force in China during World War II. A native of Kankeake, Chouinard had been in the grocery business since 1939 when he entered the military in 1943.

After extensive training in numerous locations throughout the United States, Chouinard was sent to China on July 4, 1944, as part of the 14th Air Force, known as the Flying Tigers.

He explained there is confusion because the 14th Air Force and a group of volunteer American pilots to the United States entry into the war were both called Flying Tigers.

The American volunteer group consisted of American pilots paid by the Chinese to fight the Japanese

and they were known as the Flying Tigers. When the U.S. entered the war, the American volunteers were combined with the 14th Air Force, which then also became known as the Flying Tigers.

Chouinard, a captain, was a pilot of a P-51 fighter plane in China.

He reported there was no heavy equipment available, so the Chinese used hammers to break up rocks to form a runway. Then a huge roller was pulled manually over the rocks to flatten out the runway.

Since the Allies had no heavy artillery, the Japanese were able to force the Flying Tigers to move from one base to another.

Although efforts were underway to build a road from India and Burma into China, the Americans working on it suffered heavy casualties. So many cargo planes were shot down "flying the hump" (over

the Himalay Mountains), Chouinard said it became known as the "Aluminum highway."

Chouinard said supplies were always short and food was not a high priority, so Americans learned to eat like the Chinese, including a lot of rice.

Fuel had to be flown in, and that, along with the weather, limited the number of days the pilots could fly.

Chouinard said there was little air contact with Japanese planes. "We would attack and strafe their airfields," he said. Chouinard said they attacked any target they could find including supply convoys and ships.

Chouinard served in China until the end of the war.

After his service in World War II, Chouinard was called back to serve in Korea. He was part of the Fifth Air Force and served in Korea in 1952 and 1953.

Missing...

From page 4C

"I'll never forget seeing two sailors sitting on a cork floater net where they had been four days and five nights," Myers said.

"Surrounding the two sailors, as we pulled the ship in alongside to pick them up, were three sharks. The sharks were circling the net, waiting for these youngsters to fall off. The sharks were not bothered the least bit by my ship coming right alongside the net."

"The sight is still so vivid in my mind today. The survivors were discovered by Herbert Hickman of Norman, Okla. An aviation ordnance gunner, Hickman was aboard the USS Ventura flown by Lt. Wilbur C. Gwinn.

Hickman was extending a special antenna outside the plane when he happened to glance down and spotted several men floating in the water.

"It just floated up. No one knew about a ship being missing or any other disaster," Gwinn said. "We were led at about 200 feet, traveling about 30 nautical miles per hour. On the third pass, we started seeing heads covered with oil in the water."

"It was purely an accident and really a miracle that we saw the men at all. The sun and waves were at just the right angle and reflected a narrow oil slick, which we followed about 15 miles to a huge mass of oil and debris floating on the surface of the water."

"Sighting the survivors was one of the richest blessings I will ever have."

Gwinn radioed the air base that 50 men were discovered in the water. But the message became garbled and the base misinterpreted the number of survivors. A plane was sent to drop a life raft to five survivors, and a ship was dispatched to pick them up, Hickman said.

"Then we spotted about 75 more survivors floating in small groups. We sent the next message saying we had about 150 men in the water and that caught some attention."

"That message really started the ball rolling," Hickman said. Gwinn's crew dropped the airplane's life raft, cork safety net and life jackets to the survivors.

Then Lt. Marks and the PBY were dispatched to the scene. But Marks thought he was to rescue one man in a life raft because of the garbled message.

"Instead I came across the greatest Naval disaster in all history," he

said.

"I kept loading survivors and loading survivors until the plane was filled like sardines in a sardine can. They were two and three deep in the plane and still more were being brought aboard and we had nowhere to put them."

"I finally cut the engines and we put more survivors on both wings. We wound up with 56 survivors, plus the plane's nine crew members. To the best of my knowledge, we still hold the world's record for the most people ever rescued by a single airplane."

Myers and McVay radioed Pacific Fleet headquarters about the rescue. The message also noted that the captain was not steering a zig-zag course - standard procedure to avoid submarine attack - when the ship was torpedoed.

McVay was found guilty of not zig-zagging during the court martial in the wake of the disaster, and retired shortly thereafter. He shot and killed himself with his service revolver at his home in the 1960s.

"Capt. McVay was not guilty of anything whatsoever but carrying out his orders in a wartime situation in which it's them or us," said Myers.

"Unfortunately in that case, it was them."

Postscript: Dan Spencer made his home in Morris for 44 years. He was father to Senecans Carol Johnson and Sue Ehret, Neal Adrian Spencer of Morris, and Ervin Spencer of Eldorado.

The interviews with Marks, Gwinn, Myers and Hickman were conducted in Indianapolis during the 1993 reunion of the survivors.

Gwinn, known as "The Angel" to the survivors, died of cancer in 1994. A lone PBY was flown over the monument in his honor during the dedication.

Marks is gravely ill with Alzheimer's Disease and could not attend the 50th anniversary ceremony. He resides in a nursing home in the Indianapolis area.

Hickman still lives in Norman, Okla. Capt. Myers could not be located. There is no phone listed for Riggins in Newton, Ill., his home in 1993.

Capt. McVay's two sons, Kimo and Charles McVay IV, both of Hawaii, attended the event. Kimo McVay dedicated three Hawaiian flower leis in honor of the Indianapolis survivors who lived, those who rescued them, and those who died.

"Heroes all. God bless you," he said.

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McCarter had honor of flying for Chennault

By KEVIN WOODWARD
Herald Writer

Frank McCarter, 74, who fought in World War II, joined his two brothers in the war against the Axis. But he didn't fight in the Pacific, Europe or at home in the defense industry.

McCarter, who was born and raised in Gardner, flew with the 14th Air Force in China against the Japanese.

The 14th Air Force was commanded by General Claire Chennault, who led the American

Volunteer Group Flying Tigers, before accepting a commission with the U.S. Army Air Corps.

McCarter realized that in 1942, when he was 21 years old, that he would likely be drafted. He chose to join up instead, figuring he would have a better shot at landing in something he liked. A lifelong aviation buff, McCarter, or "Mac" as his squadron buddies called him, headed to Chicago to take the aviation cadet tests.

He passed and joined up in October 1942.

After completing primary training in South Carolina, he went to Greenville, Miss., for basic training. He earned his wings at the air base in Selma, Ala.

Then he was transferred to Sarasota, Fla., to complete six weeks of fighter training.

The boy who had never left Gardner was about to go half way around the world, but he didn't know it until his flight from Sarasota was airborne and the sealed orders were opened.

McCarter, and two of the men he completed fighter training with, Harry C. Miller and Kao Ching Li, were ordered to Karachi, which was in India then. From there, they were to go to China for combat flight.

"I never heard of Karachi," McCarter said, "before being sent there."

The trio was assigned to the 16th Fighter Squadron at Chenkung and flew with some of the members of the original American Volunteer Group Flying Tigers.

"Our second day there, we had our first mission, into Burma," McCarter said.

Two of the missions McCarter recalls most readily are a November 1944 mission to bomb Hanoi, which was occupied by the Japanese, and a fighter sweep of a major convoy.

Thirty-six B-24 Liberators charted a course to Hanoi. McCarter and his P-51 Mustang squadron escorted the bombers.

"It was exciting for us because they were throwing 75 mm flak (black puffs) at the bombers and 90 mm flak (white puffs) at our fighters," McCarter told.

"We knew they had radar because they were so accurate."

The other mission happened at daybreak. A convoy was traveling with its lights on, making the trucks easier to spot. The entire convoy was wiped out. "It was not a pretty sight. It's nothing to brag about," McCarter said.

In all, McCarter flew 60 missions before being shipped back to the states. He had been trained to use a new computing gun sight and was about to be sent back to China as an instructor until the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. He was discharged on Sept. 11, 1945.



FRANK MCCARTER meditates prior to flying his next mission as a member of the 14th Air Force, under General Claire Chennault.



FRANK MCCARTER, of Morris, posed for this photo with fellow Flying Tiger Kuo Ching Li. The pair went through fighter training together.

Indy...

From page 5C

Shield at age 62. Lorraine Kuryla, better known as "Grambo," trained to use a machine gun. Her meeting with President Clinton was aired nationwide on major television.

"I was the only Indy survivor who wore a T-shirt that said, 'My wife and daughter both wear combat boots,'" Kuryla observed.

The man who was questioning former crew members about being reassigned from the Indianapolis and inadvertently included a survivor. "When did you leave the ship?" he asked. "When she went down," was the laconic reply.

Survivor Giles "Doc" McCoy, chairman of the anniversary committee: "This monument is not for the survivors who have had 50 years of life, but for those who gave their lives serving aboard a combat ves-

sel. We leave our descendants the message that World War II veterans saved the world. If it wasn't for them, we'd have Hitlerism and Hirotoism today."

Former Indianapolis, Ind., mayor Richard Hudnut: "Fifty years ago the USS Indianapolis sailed into history."

It has now symbolically sailed into her final port and will be here throughout eternity. Her crew did their job heroically.

Survivor Daniel Spencer of Morris was on the committee that conceived the idea of the reunions of the final crew of the Indianapolis. Spencer died eight years ago.

The reunions were held every five years. The combined reunion-dedication was three years after the 1992 reunion. Because of the advancing age of the survivors, the next reunion will be in two years.



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And special thanks to those who shared their remembrances of World War II to make this historical compilation a reality!

Flavell recalls perils of battles in Pacific

Morris resident Tom Flavell participated in the action in the Pacific Theater of Operations during World War II.

Flavell was a resident of Westmont when he enlisted in the Navy three days before his 17th birthday, and sent to Great Lakes Naval Training Center for basic training.

"I ended up in the amphibious force as a member of an LCVP boat crew aboard the USS Newberry, APA 158.

"We took 1,600 Marines on board and trained in the Hawaiian Islands on how to hit the beaches. Then we were sent to invade Iwo Jima.

"On our way to Iwo Jima, Tokyo Rose came over the public address system, saying the Japanese knew we were coming to invade the island and were ready for us. They would destroy us, she said.

"Each time Tokyo Rose came over the intercom system, I went around the ship singing. 'I wouldn't worry, I wouldn't care, I wouldn't worry, we're almost there. I'll make you happy, I'll make you gay, I'll make you happy. Some other day.'

"A couple of Marines cussed me out and told me to shut up, but I kept on singing.

"We arrived at Iwo Jima and lowered the landing craft. We circled and then lined up in the third wave to hit Red Beach. A few mortars landed and one hit an amphibious tank.

"My coxswain broached the boat after the Marines landed, so we couldn't get off the beach.

"Three of us filled sandbags to make a foxhole. After we finished, one of the guys went inside the foxhole and sat down on something hard.

"He said, 'What's that?' A Marine sergeant heard him and

said, 'That's a land mine, you damn fool.' The sergeant picked up the mine and threw it into the surf. It never exploded.

"Another sergeant came by later and told everyone to pick up their rifles because the Japanese were pushing the Marines back. I found a rifle and waited for the enemy. Thirty minutes later they gave us all the clear.

"I told a Marine he could have the machine guns off our landing craft. As I was handing them down to him from aboard the craft, a missile flew by, barely missing my right ear.

"It made a sucking sound and created a breeze? I figured a Japanese had me in his sights, so I quickly jumped down off the craft.

"I was sitting later with another sailor outside our foxhole and he said, 'There's an ensign from our ship. Let's go see him.' The ensign was about 30 feet away from us. We ran over and flopped down on the sand on either side of him.

"Then a mortar landed where we were sitting. Shrapnel from the shell went over me and struck the ensign.

"He yelled, 'I'm hit, I'm hit. We helped him to a landing craft that was taking wounded to a hospital ship.

"I was on the beach more than eight hours. Then I was assigned to another landing craft and we took supplies to the beach the next two days.

"On the third day, our ship went out to sea before we got unloaded and we were left about 200 yards off shore all night.

"A Japanese plane flew over and all the ships fired at it. I fired at it with the 30-caliber machine gun.

"It was the biggest display of fireworks I ever saw. Only the

five-inch and six-inch guns were high enough to hit the plane, but they missed.

"Then we tied our craft to an LCM from our ship. My thumb got caught between the line and cleat as I put the line over. The incident took the end of my thumb off and pulled out the fingernail. There was no painkiller aboard, and that night was the most painful one of my life.

"We took two more Marines aboard after we left Iwo Jima and headed for Okinawa. There we pulled off one of the biggest and most successful fake invasions. The fake landing took place 30 minutes before the real invasion at another location.

"The Japanese sent troops and supplies to our area and our planes bombed and strafed them. We went in on the first wave to about 50 feet from a tree-lined beach, then turned around and went back out.

"I was manning a machine gun and ready to fire at the enemy, but we weren't fired upon.

"We were lucky because we were sitting ducks when we turned around.

"These other ships were hit by suicide planes during the time we were gone from our ship.

"We left Okinawa to invade the island of Kyushu. Expectations were this was to be a tougher invasion than that of Iwo Jima.

"We were about 70 miles from Kyushu and were to invade the following morning when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan.

"The invasion of Kyushu was put on hold while the Allies waited to see whether Japan would surrender.

"Everyone cheered when they heard of the invasion because we knew we could have lost many lives in the attack.

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Witnessed infamous bombing of Pearl Harbor

By JO ANN HOTTIS
Herald Writer

MARSELLLES - More than five decades have passed since Japanese war planes roared over Pearl Harbor to dump their first load of bombs on a U.S. possession. It was 7:55 a.m. on Dec. 7, 1941.

Deane S. Dix was on the main deck of his battleship, the USS Nevada, when he heard the roar of the aircraft engines and looked upward into the sky.

"The blazing sun emblem of Japan was on the sides of the aircraft. The planes took me by surprise. But when I saw that big flaming sun go over us, I knew it was war," he said.

The Nevada was berthed west behind the USS Arizona, the first ship sunk in the attack with the loss of 1,100 American servicemen.

The vessels were tied up in Battleship Row alongside Ford Island. This was the location of the United States Naval Air Base and the first hit by the bombs.

"I did not see the bombs hit the Arizona. But I saw what happened just after the bombing began. The harbor was a mess. Every place you turned were smokes and flames."

The Nevada was the only battleship to get under way after the attack, Dix said.

"We tried to get the Nevada safely out of the harbor. But the Japanese were bombing and torpedoing her while we were making the attempt. So, we turned the ship around and beached her on Ford Island in order that the channel would not be blocked."

The Nevada's motor launch had taken off

from the vessel shortly before the ship was struck, Dix said.

"After the Nevada was beached, we pulled alongside and helped to take off the troops. There weren't a great number killed during the attack on the Nevada, but a lot of others were injured. The launch made many trips back and forth from the ship to the island, taking the

remained at Pearl Harbor the next three days.

"On the fourth day the officers lined up the troops; they wanted 100 volunteers and counted out the first 100 in the line. They sent us on patrol until the end of December, then to San Francisco.

The next time Dix saw Pearl Harbor was in late 1942.

"The blazing sun emblem of Japan was on the sides of the aircraft. The planes took me by surprise. But when I saw that big flaming sun go over us, I knew it was war."



dead and wounded to the base."

After the beaching, the Nevada's crew stayed aboard to manually operate the guns.

Dix was among the troops who bunked that night on hastily set up cots at the YMCA on the island.

"No one slept very well that night. And I really hadn't had time to think about things until that evening. Then when I did think about it, I decided I was pretty damn lucky."

Dix was not injured during the attack, and

back to see Pearl Harbor in the summer of 1979 and the two ships were still there.

Dix, a native of Marseilles, enlisted for a four-year hitch in the Navy in 1938 and was dispatched to Pearl Harbor in 1939.

"The third anniversary of my enlistment was on the Saturday, the day before Pearl Harbor was bombed."

"I thought then I had only one year left to go before my enlistment was up."

"On Sunday, I knew I didn't."

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Panish helped drive Japs off Guadalcanal

By MICHAEL FARRELL
Herald Writer

Frank Panish Sr., was one of four brothers from Morris who served in the United States Navy during World War II.

Panish spent 17 1/2 months on Guadalcanal, after he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in Chicago on March 12, 1942. He went on active duty on April 7, 1942. He took basic training at Treasure Island in San Diego.

A native of Morris, Panish graduated from Morris Community High School in 1930.

U.S. Marines invaded Guadalcanal in August of 1942.

Panish said he was with a Navy unit in which everyone had a trade or a skill. "We were all more than just seamen. There were tinmiths, mechanics and men with all different skills. However, that did not matter because everyone was loading bombs and helping however they could."

He sailed for Guadalcanal on the U.S.S. Polk with James Roosevelt, the president's son, and the Fourth Marine Raiders. "We were lucky," Panish said, "we got two meals a day because Roosevelt ordered it." They arrived in March 1943.

The raiders would attack the Japanese and try to disrupt their communications and operations, he

"There were millions of the malaria mosquitoes, but the ones that bit me must have died. I never had a fever, but I had a tent mate collapse right in front of me."



said. Panish was with the Carrier Aircraft Service Unit which was assigned to Henderson Air Field on Guadalcanal.

He noted the airfield was supposed to be secure but the Japanese were all around it. "At the start we had five Grumman fighters and 17 torpedo bombers. We had one or two trucks so we had to trade with the Marines. A case of beer would get you a good truck."

Panish said he survived 188 bombing and strafing raids conducted by the Japanese over about seven months. "After one raid there were 57 bullet holes in my tent."

He said it was 115 degrees in the shade and it rained often, so it was always muggy. A lot of men suffered minor injuries trying to run in

the mud. Panish also said the flies were so thick they would never go more than a few inches from your arm.

"There were millions of the malaria mosquitoes, but the ones that bit me must have died. I never had a fever, but I had a tent mate collapse right in front of me. We had a hospital tent and three doctors."

Panish said his camp was located within about 300 feet off the Lunga River, and everyone swam in the river because of the heat.

"We were on Guadalcanal for 10 months before we got our first fresh egg. We were eating that canned stuff that was 20 years old. The butter for the hardtack would not melt, even though it was 115."

At one point, Panish said he learned his brother Joe, who was stationed in the Philippines, was on Guadalcanal. "I had my own Jeep and my .45 caliber pistol and I drove over to see him."

Panish said his unit was awarded three Battle Stars by Admiral William "Bull" Halsey.

Even after the Japanese were driven off the island, Panish said he remained. "They knew I was educated and could do math, so they made me pay officer. I paid pilots that had been shot down 16 months earlier and paid all the officers. I

Bednarick was getting set to invade Japan when war ended

Gerald F. Bednarick of Morris, a sailor during World War II, was among those servicemen who were helping prepare to invade Japan when World War II ended on Sept. 2, 1945.

This is his experience: "I was drafted into the United States Navy in June 1943. After graduating from boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Base in Waukegan, I was assigned to the Armed Guard Transport Pool. The Armed Guard consists of Naval personnel assigned to merchant ships to man the guns for antisubmarine and aircraft protection," he wrote.

"Due to the number of merchant ships that were sunk by enemy submarines, the Armed Guard had the highest casualty rate of any branch of the Navy."

"After serving on board the SS Jean Lafitte for five months, I was assigned to the Matsonia, a large ocean liner converted to a troops transport, in October 1944.

After many voyages to the South Pacific, we were ordered to Seattle, Wash., to pick up medical personnel for the invasion of Japan. Much to my surprise, one of the Army nurses was from Morris.

"After a stop in Hawaii, we proceeded to Tinian (an island group in the South Pacific). We stood on the bridge of the Matsonia and viewed the B-29 Enola Gay take off with the now-famous atomic bomb."

"At that time, as one on our ship even knew what an atomic bomb was. Everything was so top secret. Eventually we were informed of the tremendous power of atoms confined.

"There was no doubt in the minds

of the servicemen who were preparing to make the invasion of Japan that the dropping of the atomic bombs saved thousands of lives of the Allied Forces.

"When the Matsonia arrived back in Honolulu, we tied up at Aloha Tower. That's where we were when the war was declared ended."

"I was formally discharged May 4, 1946."

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-- Winston Churchill



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-- Franklin D. Roosevelt



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