

The Ship's Bell

Placer County Council,
Navy League of the
United States
Auburn, CA



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President's Message

By Rebecca Dunavent

I always get a bit nostalgic this time of year. I was very fortunate to grow up in a family where education was valued and expected to be a life-long endeavor. Sixty years ago I was getting ready to enter kindergarten. I had my new dress, new shoes, new hair ribbon and the oh-so-important box of Crayola crayons with the built-in sharpener! I *finally* got to get on the big yellow school bus like my brothers and sister did before me and go to that magical place called school. But I also learned that not all educational opportunities were equally available to everyone and education could take many different forms such as a traditional K-12 education/college education, the school of hard-knocks, and summer camps.

Speaking of summer camps, Sea Cadets do their training during the summer in order to avoid school conflicts. I have often told the story about my brothers' first summer training with the Sea Cadets. They returned home with a buzz cut and a new profound sense of politeness to me, their little sister. To this day, they both admit how much the Sea Cadet program impacted their lives. Well, I decided that I wanted to go through this training too but promptly discovered that girls weren't allowed in the program and wouldn't be until 1974. I vowed that I would someday get to do the same kind of training – and I finally did when I joined the Navy in 1987.

Why am I dragging all of you with me on a trip down Memory Lane? It's to let you know how much your financial support means to our youth groups and the impact these programs have on these young lives. At the recent Navy League National Convention, the Placer County Council of the Navy was recognized nationally for its performance in helping to educate and advocate for the sea services. We always knew that the Placer County Council was exceptional, but isn't it fun when the rest of the world acknowledges it too!?

In Memory...

Many of you will remember Aaron Lundquist, who was a member of the Placer County Navy League for over 20 years. After retiring from the Navy as a Captain, Aaron became the Senior Naval Instructor at the Florin High School Naval Junior ROTC program in Sacramento. Upon joining our council he oversaw the management of our youth programs for many years.

Aaron moved to Oklahoma with his wife, Christy, a few years ago and passed away on April 7, 2025. His family will be having a celebration of life in Claremont, OK on October 18, 2025. A livestream will be set up for those who would like to attend but are unable. If you have a story you would like to share about the impact Aaron had on your life or just a funny one you can send it to his daughter Dinah Thomas, at flutterflybabe21@yahoo.com.

Shasta Division Sea Cadets

All stories and photographs were sent to Natalie Brennan by Rebecca Dunavent

By Rebecca Dunavent

Each summer, the Sea Cadets have the opportunity to attend summer training. The following are write-ups from the cadets themselves talking about their experience.



PO3 Jackson:

"I attended Photojournalism during the summer. My time in Camp Rilea was outstanding. The training I took was a laid-back training. It consisted of taking pictures of other trainings like RT (Recruit Training) and MAA (Master-At-Arms) for the camp's Facebook page. We also made a shipbook for every cadet and officer which was made by the Photojournalism team. Each member of Photojournalism had to write and interview for a story that was put into the shipbook. The process of learning to interview and make a compelling story was new and fun for me. Learning the ins and outs of the camera you use is also a part of this course and was fun to play around with the different settings on your camera to get a desired look. It was fun growing on my photography and writing skills and is a very fun training!"

CPO Shawn VanHorn

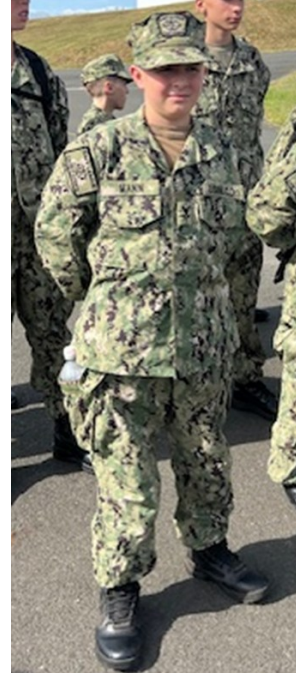
This summer I was honored to be the Battalion Chief for Tracen Rilea. Leading up to training I held several staff meetings with the Recruit Training staff cadets, ensuring that each team member understood their role at training. Although I was most focused on staff for recruit training, I also coordinated classes and events with the other training contingents at Rilea- MAA, POLA, Honors and Ceremonies, small engines, robotics, Navy League Orientation, and photojournalism. This was a new role for me - I learned how to manage my time, how to coordinate and communicate the needs of each training contingent, and how to lead up and down the chain of command, working with adult leaders and staff cadets while inspiring our newest recruits. I enjoyed this training for the challenges and new opportunities in leadership!



CPO Shawn Van Horn and LC2 Cruz

LC2 Hunter Mann:

The training that I attended this year was "Small Engine Mechanics" at Camp Rilea, Oregon. The one thing that I found interesting was doing a complete engine tear-down. We didn't go all the way to the piston, because it would have been really hard to put back together. We also took off the muffler, and we were able to see the spark plug. It was cool because we were able to see the spark from the spark plug too. We were also able to drive a go-cart which was super awesome, because we don't have a driver's license. In addition, we were able to build RC cars and knickknacks that were both electric or solar powered. I love attending Sea Cadet trainings because it opens up opportunities for me to know what I like in STEM fields, so I can narrow what I want to do as a job as I get older. I am a bit ADD, so what I found most interesting this year was that the hum of an engine helps to calm my mind, so I can focus on what I'm doing. I wouldn't have known how calming an engine is and be in-tune to its sounds when running properly if I didn't have this opportunity to go this year.



Shasta Division Sea Cadets were all smiles lining up for chow during their training at Camp Rilea in Oregon this summer.

LC2 Cruz is ready for training!



LT Heather VanHorn with her son, CPO Shawn Van Horn. Lt VanHorn was the Health and Wellness Officer and her son was the Battalion Chief for the training contingent at Camp Rilea.



NJROTC – LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

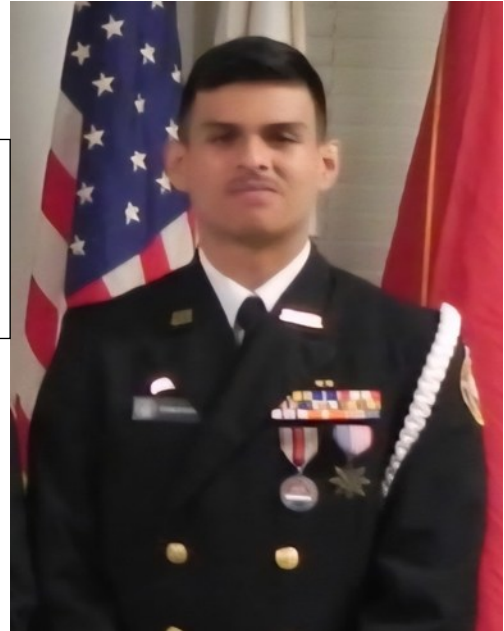
By Rebecca Dunavent

One of the youth groups that Placer County Navy League sponsors is the Luther Burbank NJROTC unit in Sacramento. The unit's CO, LCDR Ephraim Coleman, was selected to attend the Thousand Oaks Youth Leadership Conference (TOYLC) this year. This is a week-long conference designed to develop leadership skills, promote Americanism and Patriotic Leadership, and gain awareness of our nation's free enterprise system. The following is LCDR Coleman's write-up about his experience.:

"My experience at TOYLC was nothing but influential and amazing. From the time we woke up to the time we fell asleep. We learned many things like how to operate as a team under stress and how to communicate as a team. I learned to take more initiative and see that if you have one shot to do something, do it right. I met a lot of amazing people, some from other ROTC programs and some going to military academies. But those people I made friends with will always share a unbreakable bond."



Luther Burbank's NJROTC CO, LCDR Ephraim Coleman, while attending the Thousand Oaks Leadership Conference. (Photographs courtesy of Rebecca Dunavent).



AEROSPACE MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

SUMMER CAMP 2025

By Rebecca Dunavent

This is the third year that Placer County Council of the US Navy League has offered scholarships for a limited number of TS California League Cadets.

The following is an essay written by **Recruit LC1 Beatriz Ferazza Dichoso** about her experience and how much she learned and how much she impressed the staff!

“Gratefully I was rewarded by Sacramento Division Sea Cadets with a scholarship to participate in the summer camp offered by the Aerospace Museum of Sacramento CA.

My week’s camp was the “Sky Explorers” team where learned about aviation. We focused on learning about the four forces that make aviation possible which are: lift, thrust, drag, and gravity. These forces interact to allow an object to move through the air. Lift opposes gravity and thrust opposes drag working together to control the objects motion. In a short explanation lift is generated by the shape of the wings and it is an upward force that opposes gravity and allows objects to rise and stay airborne.

*I learned that **weight** is the force of gravity. It acts in a downward direction—toward the center of the Earth. **Lift** is the force that acts at a right angle to the direction of motion through the air. Lift is created by differences in air pressure. **Thrust** is the force that propels a flying machine in the direction of motion. Engines produce thrust. Finally, **drag** is the force that acts opposite to the direction of motion. Drag is caused by friction and differences in air pressure. These four forces are constantly interacting and understanding how they work is crucial for both the design and operation of aircraft.*

I have learned a lot more and I will share my full experience with my fellow cadets coming back in August. Our time was also packed with lots of activities and experiments like building our own space ship. I am so happy I had this opportunity and I am thankful for my CO, she is a true leader and wants the best for all of us. I also thank the Placer US Navy League Council for providing the full scholarship to TS California League Cadets.

To end, I was awarded by my summer camp counselors with another full week of summer camp at the Air Space Museum because of my interest in learning and cooperation with the counselors and friends. The counselors have placed my name on the roster for the following week and asked me to participate. I will be learning about engineering, designing and building machines. I am very excited to go back and learn even more. Thank you to everyone who invested their time, effort and resources towards my training! I am really considering about becoming an engineer!”



Here is another brief essay from Cadet Sowry Lingam, another one of the young cadets that attended the program. (no photo available)

Ma’ams/Sirs: This report will speak and be a summary of my experience at the museum day camp. The staff and guest speakers were kind. I received much attention from them – good attention, not bad! They made us into amazing groups! I have fully experienced the camp and can truly say that it is amazing! I felt beautiful and had so many fun interactive experiences! Me and Cadet Dichoso (also from the Sacramento Division) are also invited back next year. I also received “swag” gifts and a couple other gifts. I also learned about planes, aviation, space, surface area and chemicals. (I’m not using them without adult supervision!) It was an amazing learning experience! That is the end of my essay ma’ams/sirs. Thanks for letting me be part of it!

News About USS McCampbell (DDG 85)

By Bonnie Potter

The USS McCampbell (DDG 85) is an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer that is named after Captain David S. McCampbell, a naval aviator who distinguished himself as the Navy's leading fighter pilot during WWII. The ship was commissioned in August 2002 and the Placer County Council has been a sponsor of the ship since its commissioning, providing Sailor of the Quarter and Sailor of the Year awards.

In an article posted by Commander, Submarine Group 7 it was noted that Rear Adm. Chris Cavanaugh, commander, Submarine Group 7, visited the crews of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, USS McCampbell (DDG 85), USS Dewey (DDG 105), and USS Ralph Johnson (DDG 114), July 9, to congratulate them on their successful operations supporting the undersea domain.

"Undersea Warfare in the Indo-Pacific takes more than just submarines. It is a multi-domain and often multi-national team effort that includes air, surface, and subsurface forces," said Cavanaugh. "I want to thank every member of the crew, across every department, because I know it takes every one of you to complete the ship's mission. You are all valued members of that undersea warfare team."

McCampbell, Dewey, and Ralph Johnson are forward-deployed and assigned to Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy's largest DESRON and the U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force. "Destroyers are imperative to the anti-submarine warfare mission and provide the theater undersea warfare command relevant and real-time decision making space," said Capt. Justin Harts, commander, Destroyer Squadron 15. "All three crews helped enable the full-spectrum of capabilities for the anti-submarine warfare mission, and we commend them for their performance. Destroyers in DESRON 15 continue to be cornerstones in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Submarine Group 7 directs forward-deployed, combat capable forces across the full spectrum of undersea warfare throughout the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea.

U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet, and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.



Above: RADM Cavanaugh thanking Sailors on Destroyers in Japan (Photo from Commander, Submarine Group 7 article).

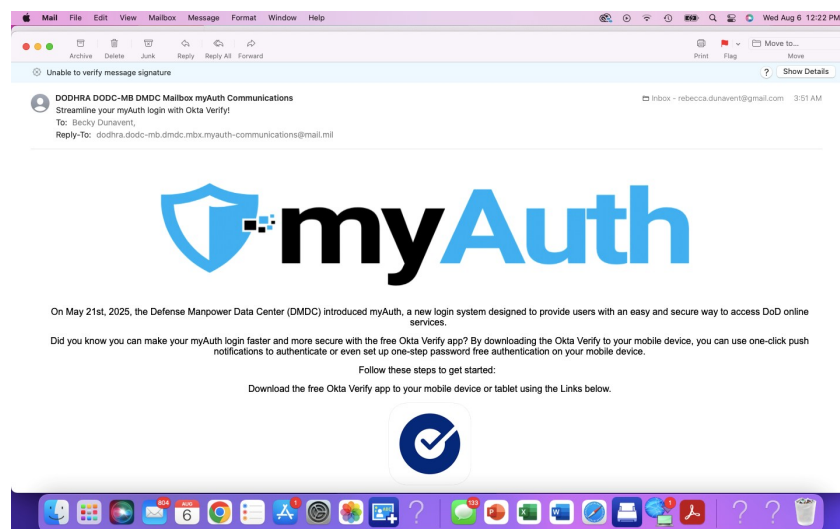
Dinner Reservation Information from Bonnie Potter, Telephone Tree Director

Just a reminder that we pay Chef Jan for the number of people that have told us they are coming to the dinner meeting. Once I hear from the other telephone tree callers, I give the total number of RSVPs to Chef Jan. If you say you are coming, and then for some reason you are unable to attend, we still pay for your meal. We do not collect in advance for the dinners, and we are lucky that Chef Jan does not ask for our numbers a week or more in advance like most caterers. We know that plans can change, so please let us know as soon as possible if you are unable to attend. We may still have to pay for your meal, unless someone decides they want to RSVP after the head count has been submitted. Thank you for your understanding.

NEW LOGIN SYSTEM TO ACCESS DoD ONLINE SERVICES

By Rebecca Dunavent

I'm always paranoid about being "hacked" on my computer so when I received the following email recently I was skeptical....Did you recently receive an one also?



I use a MAC and when my I noticed a little message saying "*unable to verify message signature*" it made me a little nervous. I called Steve Johnson, the Placer County Veterans Service Officer and he helped me out to confirm that this was indeed a legitimate email and that a new system has been implemented. It is supposed to make our logins faster and more secure since we can now use our mobile device to login to DoD websites. This does not appear to be changing how you login to DoD websites with your PC/MAC. Good luck to us all as we continue to navigate the everchanging world of technology!

United States Naval Academy Connections

By Bonnie Potter

Placer County Navy League members Joy Edelman and Karen Willhem were excited to attend the Naval Academy graduation and commissioning ceremony in May. Joy's granddaughter, Alexandra Edelman, who is Karen's niece, graduated and commissioned into the United States Marine Corps. The Naval Academy graduated 1,049 new Navy ensigns and Marine Corps 2nd lieutenants. Vice President JD Vance delivered the commencement address.

Another connection to the Naval Academy is Nathan Kent. He was a 2022 graduate of Rocklin High School and member of the Sacramento Division of the Sea Cadets. Accepted to both West Point and the Naval Academy, he selected the Naval Academy where he will be starting his senior year. A member of the football team, he is a wide receiver #82. We will be cheering Nathan on again this year, his final year at the Naval Academy.

According to the Naval Academy website, when the founders of the United States Naval Academy were looking for a suitable location, it was reported that then Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft decided to move the naval school to "the healthy and secluded" location of Annapolis in order to rescue midshipmen from "the temptations and distractions that necessarily connect with a large and populous city." Through his efforts the Naval School was established without Congressional funding, at a 10-acre Army post named Fort Severn in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1845, with a class of 50 midshipmen and seven professors. The curriculum included mathematics and navigation, gunnery and steam, chemistry, English, natural philosophy, and French.

In 1850 the Naval School became the United States Naval Academy. A new curriculum went into effect requiring midshipmen to study at the Academy for four years and to train aboard ships each summer. That format is the basis of a far more advanced and sophisticated curriculum at the Naval Academy today. As the U.S. Navy grew over the years, the Academy expanded. The campus of 10 acres increased to 338. The original student body of 50 midshipmen grew to a brigade size of 4,000. Modern granite buildings replaced the old wooden structures of Fort Severn.

Congress authorized the Naval Academy to begin awarding bachelor of science degrees in 1933. The Academy later replaced a fixed curriculum taken by all midshipmen with the present core curriculum plus 18 major fields of study, a wide variety of elective courses and advanced study and research opportunities.

Since then, the development of the United States Naval Academy has reflected the history of the country. As America has changed culturally and technologically so has the Naval Academy. In just a few decades, the Navy moved from a fleet of sail and steam-powered ships to a high-tech fleet with nuclear-powered submarines and surface ships and supersonic aircraft. The academy has changed, too, giving midshipmen state-of-the-art academic and professional training they need to be effective naval officers in their future careers.

The Naval Academy first accepted women as midshipmen in 1976, when Congress authorized the admission of women to all of the service academies. Women comprise over 20 percent of entering plebes --or freshmen-- and they pursue the same academic and professional training as do their male classmates.



*Above: Portrait of Nathan Kent
Below: U.S. Naval Academy Graduation Ceremony
(Photographs courtesy of Bonnie Potter).*



PLACER COUNTY NAVY LEAGUE NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED!!!

By Rebecca Dunavent

Each year the Navy League has a national convention to recognize the councils that have been exceptional in their performance carrying out the Navy League goals of education, advocating and supporting the sea services. Once again, the Placer County Navy League was recognized for its outstanding accomplishments for 2024. This recognition is because we are so active in supporting our adopted units, youth groups and in community outreach and legislative affairs. Our board of directors work well together to plan and execute our activities and events, and we have great support from YOU – our council members!

Outstanding Council award: There are about 200 councils now, and only 10 received outstanding (last year there were 14) selected). This was our 11th year in a row to receive this award!

Mackie Newsletter Award: There are four levels of award: platinum, gold, silver, and bronze. Last year we received gold, but this year platinum – thanks to Natalie!

Mackie Social Media Award: Did you know that Bonnie is our ninja webmaster? She earned us a silver in this category!

Sea Service Unit Adoption Excellence Award for Medium Council. It is unusual for a council to sponsor more than a few units. Even though we are only a “medium” sized unit we sponsor nine different entities: 3 Sea Cadet units, 2 NJROTC units, 3 active-duty units, and the Department of Naval Science at the California Maritime Academy.



*Placer County Council President Becky Dunavent presenting the PLATINUM level Mackie Newsletter award to NATALIE BRENNAN.
(Photographs courtesy of Rebecca Dunavent).*

Wandering Scribe YouTube Interview with a Historian

By Natalie Brennan

In early July, Indie author and freelance historian Gabriel Garcia, a connection I made through LinkedIn, reached out to me and asked if I would be willing to be interviewed for his YouTube channel, The Wandering Scribe. I agreed and we held the interview on July 26, and the video is now up. It is about an hour and seven minutes long, but it is simply the two of us conversing about my experience as a World War II historian (I'm still trying to comprehend the fact that I actually am able to call myself one now), my motivations, why I chose World War II specifically, and how I am fulfilling my promise to the veterans who fought in the war.

So... yes... my face is now on YouTube. If you would like to watch the video, or simply listen to it while you go about your lives, I have posted the link and attached the video image below.

Enjoy!

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfDtU8JddtE>



The “Indy”

By Natalie Brennan

This July 30 marks the 80th anniversary of the loss of the “Indy,” the nickname of the USS *Indianapolis*. This heavy cruiser was initially famous for secretly transporting vital parts for the world’s first nuclear weapon, Little Boy, that was dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945. However, many know of the more infamous fate which befell the “Indy” and her crew four days later.

As stated, “Indy” delivered parts for Little Boy to the island of Tinian on July 26th, 1945. According to the National WWII Museum, Ensign Harlan Twible, who joined the “Indy’s” crew in late June 1945, had no idea that the ship had transported parts for the nuclear bomb due to the fact that the project was strictly top secret. Not one soul of the crew knew what they had brought to Tinian, just that there were a lot of high-ranking officers watching the crew unload the cargo. Twible had said that “There were admirals... everything was of importance on the island of Tinian was there to greet what we later found out was the bomb.”

After dropping off the deadly precious cargo, the “Indy” was sent to the neighboring island of Guam so as to join up with other surface forces in Leyte Gulf for further training for Operation DOWNFALL—the invasion of Japan that wound up not happening due to Little Boy and Fat Man. According to The Sextant, the “Indy’s” Captain, Charles Butler McVay, had two options available in terms of getting to Leyte while maximizing the last few miles to practice with anti-aircraft batteries in the best light to follow the tracer shells. Option 1: Leave on 27 July, travel at a max speed of 25 knots (28mph), which would put the “Indy” at Leyte on the morning of July 30. Option 2: Leave on July 28, travel at the slower 15.7 knots (18mph), and get to Leyte on the morning of July 31. McVay chose option 2. This would unfortunately cost McVay everything: his reputation, his ship, and the lives of his crew.

McVay chose to travel at a slower speed due to his pushing the “Indy’s” engines hard during the top secret delivery to Tinian. The Captain’s concern for getting his crew ready for the bloodbath that Operation DOWNFALL was anticipated to be very likely factored into his choice to not zigzag. For the benefit of any readers not familiar with zigzagging, it is a procedure where a ship sails in a zigzag motion to avoid enemy submarine attacks. This put the “Indy” right in the sights of Japanese submarine I-58. This is not to say that zigzagging would have saved the *Indianapolis*; according to The Sextant, I-58 would have still been able to hit her, but McVay “understood that his decisions contributed to her loss and that a commander’s responsibility for his ship, then and now, is absolute.”

At 0015 on July 30, two torpedoes from I-58 slammed into the “Indy”. The first ripped the bow of the ship off, while the second struck amidships near the powder magazine. The explosion resulted in the ship being cloven in two down to the keel, knocking out the power and causing her to sink. On the National WWII Museum website, Ensign Twible is quoted to have said “We knew we were in trouble, so I took command and I told them to hang on to anything they could hang on to.... Then when the tilt became too great... I gave the order to abandon ship. Nobody abandoned, then I yelled ‘Follow me!’ And the bodies came in so fast it was unbelievable.”

Twible jumped overboard and swam away from the burning ship as fast as he could. The *Indianapolis* went down in twelve minutes, taking 300 of her crew with her. According to The Sextant, due to how fast the ship sank, many of her lifeboats were unable to be deployed, so the survivors were wearing kapok lifejackets, which worked well, but were not designed for multi-day use in the water. Others were wearing Pneumatic lifebelts, which were the least desirable due to their tendency to shift down to the waist, resulting in the wearer getting stuck with their heads under the water (see my Travels With Natalie D-Day exhibit photographs for the May-June 2025 issue for more information). So, as the “Indy” sank beneath the waves, 900 of the ship’s survivors floated helplessly in the ocean, their location and the “Indy’s” fate completely unknown to the US Navy due to the lack of escort ships nearby.

After the ship went down, Twible and the surviving 900 crew went into survival mode. Many crewmen were injured during the explosions, some horribly so. While there wasn't any fighting amongst the survivors, Twible said that "everybody was scared to death, these were all 18- and 19-year-old kids." To stay safe in the ocean, the crew formed into groups; Twible conducted a head count of his own group and found that he was the only officer in charge of 325 survivors. Day one ended, and as the days continued to crawl on, there was a catastrophic loss of morale and hope of rescue. Twible said that "we tried to keep the men thinking that they would be saved, but there was no way in God's green earth that I knew we were gonna be saved. My fear was really for the men, not for myself." Many survivors succumbed to their injuries, others to exposure, madness from drinking the sea water, drowning, and dehydration.

Then there were the sharks.

The most infamous images of the *Indianapolis* are the hundreds of survivors being killed and eaten by sharks for days, even being immortalized by actor Robert Shaw's monologue in Steven Spielberg's iconic 1975 movie *Jaws*. According to the National WWII Museum, the exact number of deaths by sharks is unknown, and there were many survivors who never saw sharks. Twible and his group of 325 crewmen, however, were not so lucky. While Twible had organized 'shark watches' who would beat and kick the sharks to force them away, their efforts to fend them off were not always successful. Sharks grabbed survivors who had floated away from the larger groups. These attacks, the screams of their fellows, and the water running red, eventually took their toll on the survivors. Twible had to cut the dead men off of whatever floating wreckage they had tied themselves to and push them into the sea so that the survivors would not have to constantly see the potential fate that awaited them under the water.

Four days and five nights later, the survivors were finally spotted by a US Navy plane on patrol. The pilot radioed the report of "many men in the water," which alerted a PBY flying boat, who then alerted the destroyer USS *Cecil Doyle*. The PBY and destroyer tag teamed in rescuing survivors. In total, 900 men went into the water after the "Indy" sank, only 316 lived to be rescued. The loss of the *Indianapolis* continues to remain one of the worst and perhaps the most controversial tragedies in the history of the United States Navy.

Harlan Twible stayed in the Navy through the rest of World War II and served in the Korean War before having to retire in 1958 due to health issues that he had sustained during those four days at sea. He never talked about the disaster after the war, trying his best to forget what had happened. According to the National WWII Museum, this was initially because the experience was too much for him to share, but eventually he changed his thoughts, feeling that talking about the disaster not only helps people remember what happened, but it honors those who were lost on the ship and at sea. Twible reflected on his decision to give the order to abandon ship, saying "What decision could I ever make that was anywhere near important [as] the decision to tell those men to throw their lives into the water? That was one of the biggest decisions I ever made. I was gambling everybody's life that we were gonna win."

Captain Charles Butler McVay also survived the sinking and the four days at sea in shark-infested waters. Here is why the loss of the *Indianapolis* is considered highly controversial: the Navy's handling of the aftermath regarding Captain McVay. According to The Sextant, in interviews with the Navy for his post-war oral history, months after the loss of the "Indy," McVay expressed that the thought of going down with the ship had crossed his mind. He said that he understood the humiliation that would come if he was the only officer left and his ship was gone. He also told interviewers that "it was very embarrassing to me, being the old fud on the ship" to find out that no officer between himself and a naval reserve lieutenant [Ensign Harlan Twible], except the ship's doctor survived. According to The Sextant, when thinking on why he lived, he said that he "would attempt to save myself, despite thinking that it would have been much easier if I go down, I won't have to face what I know is coming after this." He ultimately concluded that he chose to get away from the sinking ship because 'he enjoyed life' and wanted to repeat some of the experiences that brought him joy."

While floating in the sea, dark thoughts filled his mind about the inevitable responsibility that he had to carry out if he survived: to inform the families of the dead regarding what had happened to their loved ones who would never come home. "I had a great many hours to think of the disaster and I knew of some of the people I had lost. I hated to think of having to see their wives and a great many of them I knew quite well... I knew there was nothing I could say to them."

The safety of the ship and its crew is the responsibility of a captain in the U.S. Navy, this fact is as true back in 1945 as it is today. However, the Navy also affords a great deal of discretion in the maintenance of safety as well; the safety of the crew is paramount. McVay was aware of his responsibility as Captain of the "Indy" and his actions after the sinking are, as The Sextant states, commendable. He remained captain of a group of nine survivors during the days at sea, and the survivors looked to him for leadership. Upon rescue, McVay took accountability for his actions by informing the rescuers that his ship had not been zigzagging when it was attacked, and he refused to shirk the responsibility of command. During the court-martial in December 1945, Rear Admiral Wilder Baker announced McVay's acquittal on the charge of "failing to order 'abandon ship' in a timely manner," but remained silent on the most serious charge of "hazarding his ship through negligence by failing to order the running of a zigzag course." This meant that the court found McVay guilty.

While the Court unanimously signed a statement saying that they believed a sentence for conviction be entirely remitted, McVay did not know this. He did not receive any official punishment, but his hopes for a career advancement were gone forever. He would never be given command at sea, nor rise to a flag rank on active duty again. According to The Sextant, McVay is the only U.S. Navy captain convicted for losing his ship to enemy action in both World Wars and his name would always be associated with the loss of the *Indianapolis* and two-thirds of her crew. Over twenty-eight years after the loss of the "Indy," on November 6, 1968, McVay committed suicide by a self-inflicted gunshot wound, allegedly while holding a toy sailor in his hand, a gift to him from his father. We might never understand why he did this, but it can be hypothesized that the emotional weight of the loss of his crew and the *Indianapolis* very likely played a role in McVay's final action.

If there was ever any semblance of a silver lining, it would potentially be two things. First, in 2001, the Navy exonerated Captain McVay, with the additional congressional resolution that officially cleared his name. The second occurred in 2017, when the wreck of the *Indianapolis* was finally found. Her remains are now being cared for by the Navy, who have left her undisturbed as a war grave for the crew that were taken with her that July morning and a memorial for the survivors of the sinking who were lost in the following days. The Smithsonian Magazine included a quote from the director of the Naval History & Heritage Command director Sam Cox, and I thought it was very fitting: "Even in the worst defeats and disasters, there is valor and sacrifice that deserves to never be forgotten. They can serve as inspiration to current and future sailors enduring situations of mortal peril. There are also lessons learned (and in the case of the *Indianapolis*, lessons relearned) that need to be preserved and passed on, so that the same mistakes can be prevented, and lives saved."

Sources

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<https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/Recent/Article-View/Article/2686164/navy-lessons-learned-from-sinking-of-indianapolis/#:~:text=Captain%20McVay's%20concern%20for%20getting,that%20his%20ship%20was%20sunk.>
<https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/Recent/Article-View/Article/2686750/the-burden-of-command-the-experience-of-captain-charles-butler-mcvay-iii/>
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/sinking-uss-indianapolis-triggered-worst-shark-attack-history-25715092/>



Above: The USS Indianapolis (Photo found on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Indianapolis_%28CA-35%29).

Bottom Left: Captain Charles Butler McVay (Photo found on <https://news.usni.org/2014/07/30/legacy-uss-indianapolis>).

Bottom Right: Harlan Twible (Photo found on <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/harlan-twible-uss-indianapolis-ca-35>).



Special Thanks to Our Community Affiliates

Special thanks goes to one of our Community Affiliates, Lassila Funeral Chapel, Chapel of the Hills, and TGH Aviation. Your partnership with the Placer County Council Navy League is most appreciated.



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Thank You For Reading!

