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William Jones World War II Scrapbook

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AMERICAN TRAGEDY/continued

loath to get involved. The Navy wasn't giving an inch. There must be more to this than anyone knew.

Then, in 1996, things took another dramatic turn. An 11-year old schoolboy in Pensacola, Fla., named Hunter Scott watched the movie Jaws. In it was a scene in which a character recalls how the sunken cruiser's crew had been attacked by sharks. Scott decided to look further into the tragedy. Utilizing a list of the survivors that was put together after the publication of Abandon Ship!, he learned that they were unanimous in saying a dreadful wrong had been perpetrated against their captain.

Young Scott also learned that at least three Navy locations had received SOS signals and that they were either ignored or dismissed as a Japanese trick. By 1999, a combination of Scott's research and meetings with him and a number of survivors convinced Sen. Bob Smith (R., N.H.), himself a Navy veteran, that there was ample evidence for history "not to be rewritten," as he put it, but "corrected."

Smith went to Sen. John Warner (R., Va), chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Warner initially was skeptical. A former Secretary of the Navy, he was acutely aware of the responsibilities involved in "command accountability." But, as he told me, "meeting face-to-face with those survivors turned me around."

At hearings convened by Senator Warner last fall, Harlan M. Twible, who had been an ensign aboard the doomed ship, declared: "What a difference it would have made if the captain's request for a destroyer escort had been granted. Can you imagine us having to stay in those waters for five nights and four days?"

Paul J. Murphy, who heads up the USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization, testified with consuming passion: "Please help us restore our captain's good name. time is running out for those of us waiting, for whom this has been a goal for more than 50 years."

The Navy's Judge Advocate General, however, Rear Adm. John D. Hutson, responded that he had personally reviewed the trial record of McVay's conviction and that "the proceedings were fair and provided full due process of law.

The Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Donald L. Pilling, left many at the hearing bewildered when he stated that the captain had not been court-martialed for losing his ship but because he failed to zigzag. Asked, "If the Indianapolis had not zigzagged and still arrived safely, would McVay still have been court-martialed?" the admiral had no real answer. He insisted, "Each commander is separately responsible for his own deficiencies without regard to the culpability of othes." The fact that no one else who played a part in the disaster faced a court-martial was not addressed.

This past spring, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution that the charges against McVay were "not morally sustainable" and that his conviction was "miscarriage of justice that led to his unjust humiliation and damage to his career.



The Senate version was [[?]] harsh. It called for recognition of the captain's "Lack of [[?]]ability" but stopped short of saying that an injustice has occurred. Now a compromise resolution must be agreed upon. Only then will the first chapter of the Indianapolis and her brave crew be written.

[[line]]

Contributing Editor Peter Maas' most recent best seller, "The Terrible Hours" is now available in paperback.

[[box]]

YOU CAN HELP RIGHT A WRONG

Write to your U.S. Representative and Senators to share your opinions. For their addresses, visit your library or log on to the USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization site at www.ussindianapolis.org/??/resolutions.htm on the Web

[/box]]

[[image - black & white photograph of Paul J. Murphy]]

[[caption: As head of the USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization, Paul J. Murphy, 75, testified before the Senate last year]]

"PLEASE HELP US RESTORE OUR CAPTAIN'S GOOD NAME," SAYS PAUL J. MURPHY, A SURVIVOR OF THE INDIANAPOLIS TRAGEDY. "TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THOSE OF US WAITING"

[[advertisement]]

[[image - color photograph of a cat]]

[[caption: No sign of the enemies. Yes.]]

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[[image - color photographs of packaging]]

2000 Ralston Purina Company

[/advertisement]]

^[[August 4, 1990 Lorain, Ohio]]

[[end page]]

[[start page]]

[[newspaper clipping]]

^[[Post & Mail August, 1985]]

Barney was there for birth of era

By RICK KREPS

Forty years ago this week, Bill Barney witnessed the event that ended World War II. At the same time he saw the birth of a new age.

His view was from a B-29 Superfortress as it sped away from the terrible mushroom cloud that once was Nagasaki.

In retrospect, Barney realizes the Nagasaki bombing not only convinced Japan to accept terms for an unconditional surrender, it also ushered in the atomic age of mankind.

But on Aug. 9, 1945, his thoughts were not on such historic implications. He was thinking hard on doing his job to the best of his ability, defeating the enemy - and eventually going home.

Bill Barney's roots go deep into Whitley County soil. His parents and grandparents were farmers. Today he still farms 500 acres of the same Thorncreek Township land.

But in January, 1943 life was different. The world was at war and Bill was drafted from his farm life to the services of the U.S. Air Force.

"At first, they put me in veterinary school, buying meat for the government, doctoring dogs and everything else. That wasn't very exciting," said Bill, a handsomely graying, soft spoken man, during a recent interview at his Airport Road home.

[[box]]
[[image: atomic bomb mushroom cloud]]
End the War
Part 1
Bill Barney was a radar operator with the mission to bomb Nagasaki - the last wartime use of an atomic weapon.
[/box]]

The strapping, young farm boy, barely out of his teens, was interested in getting his military career off the ground.

"So it looked like the cadets," he continued, "but when I got in there they were pretty full as far as pilots go. So about the only thing left as far as the flying end of it was gunnery school."

It was off to Laredo, Texas and B-24 gunnery school. After his training was complete, Bill was sent to a staging area in Nebraska for deployment. While in Nebraska, he and some of the other top crewmen were singled out for still further training.

"We were pulled out and sent to B-29 gunnery school in Clovis, New Mexico," he said. The B-29s, or Superfortresses as they were dubbed, were the largest, most combat-ready aircraft yet constructed. In today's terms, the Superfortresses were "state of the art."

After B-29 training the gunners returned to Nebraska for future assignment. While there, Barney accepted a transfer that would

eventually mark his place in history.

"They pulled 15 of us out and asked if we were interested in becoming radar operators. I said I was. Normally they sent you away to radar school, but we picked it up on our own.

I was fortunate enough that the navigator on our crew had gone to radar school," he said. With the added tutoring, Bill was soon an expert radar operator.

"We were still in Nebraska, and one day there was a notice on the bulleting board that all of us in the 393rd Bombardment Squadron had so many days to get to Wendover, Utah. We didn't know where it was, what it was or anything. We had a heckuva time even finding it on the map.

"It was on the Utah and Nevada line. You took off in Utah and by the time you were airborne you were in Nevada," bill said with a laugh.

In Wendover, the 393rd Squadron got word that it had been singled out for unique training.

Nearly all of the men who were assembled had two characteristics in common, they were young and sharp, each ranking in the upper percentiles on intelligence quotient tests.

"The told us we were in a special organization - different type training." he said.

His nine-man crew, headed by 28-year-old Capt. Fred Bock, an experienced

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 1

Barney experienced pilot in the European Theatre, was dispatched to Omaha to pick up a new plane, and awesome -29 Superfortress. The crew immediately named the aircraft "Bock's Car." Keeping with the airman tradition to personalize their craft, a railroad box car with wings was painted near the planes nose.

Bock's Car. The Great Artiste and Enola Gay were stripped-down Superfortresses - stripped down for speed and to pull heavy loads to high altitude.

This the crewmen knew.
They also knew the airships contained specially enlarged bomb bays.

Using those large bomb bays the squadron dropped huge "dummy" bombs in the Nevada mountains. they also trained in Cuba and the Mojave Desert. "final regular training. nothing specific in to special project." noted Barney.

"We kept training - but we didn't really know why. We knew it was something special though."

Part II: Overseas to a date with destiny.

[[image: photo of airmen standing in front of B-29 Superfortress]]
[[caption: AN ERROR in Wednesday's Post & Mail resulted in the front page photo of Brock's Car crew being flipped, thereby wrongly identifying the airmen. In the corrected photo above, Bill Barney is seventh from the left. Crew mates are, from left, Ralph Curry, Charles Levy, Bob Stock, Capt. Fred Bock, Ralph Belanger, Leonard Godfrey, Bill Barney, Hugh Ferguson and Rod Arnold
(Photo contributed)
^[[Post & Mail 1985]]

[[image: graphic time zone map of the world]]
^[[168]]

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