

# THE DAYBOOK

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Cover: Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland and Japanese Foreign Ministry representatives Katsuo Okazaki and Toshikazu Kase correct an error on the Japanese copy of the instrument of surrender. The rest of the Japanese delegation stands relaxed on the verandah deck. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)



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Direct questions or comments to the Editor at (757) 322-3107, Fax (757) 445-1867, E-mail [hrnavalmuseum@navy.mil](mailto:hrnavalmuseum@navy.mil) or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, Virginia 23510-1607. The museum is available online at [www.hrnnavy.mil](http://www.hrnnavy.mil).

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

By John Pentangelo



Seventy-five years after the Empire of Japan surrendered to the Allies we remember the United States Navy's role during the Second World War. As the main article in this issue of *The Daybook* recalls, the war heralded the dawn of the "American Century." One might

argue that the Navy's growth presaged those one hundred years of American dominance. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt, a former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, ascended to the presidency. A committed navalist and published naval historian, TR already lectured at the Naval War College and corresponded with the likes of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Stephen B. Luce. As president, he built a "Great White Fleet" and sent these new powerful warships on a cruise around the world in 1907-1908. His former naval aide, William S. Sims rose to Commander, United States Naval Forces Operating in European Waters during the First World War. Sims laid the groundwork for allied cooperation and was instrumental in building a "Navy second to none."

When the United States entered the Second World War after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the largest and most

powerful Navy the world has ever seen fought a two-ocean war that established dominance at sea ever since. While the Atlantic Fleet protected the supply lines to Europe in cooperation with the British Royal Navy, the Pacific Fleet operated with near-total responsibility for reversing Japanese conquest in Asian waters. Author and historian Timothy J. Orr provides an overview of the ferocious struggle in the Pacific, especially in the conflict's final months. The article is awash with emotion and experience from Sailors who survived. To further the necessary commitment to remembering wartime experience with personal stories, Director of Education Laura L. Orr interviewed former U.S. Congressman Bill Whitehurst. A radioman and belly gunner on a TBM Avenger aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV 10) in 1945, Whitehurst puts you in the skies as American forces inched toward the Japanese home islands. Finally, some of today's most prominent naval historians offer readers a list of their favorite books recounting the role of the sea services during the war. The list is sure to spark deep thought and appreciation for naval literature.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Walter Borneman, Jim Hornfischer, Timothy Orr, Craig Symonds, and Ian Toll for their contributions to this issue of *The Daybook*. On behalf of the entire staff of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, I want to express profound and sincere gratitude to Congressman Whitehurst and all who served for their contribution and sacrifice during the defining conflict of the "American Century."

# “I am Satisfied that the War is Over Now”: The U.S. Navy and the Journey to V-J Day

By Timothy J. Orr

On September 2, 1995, President Bill Clinton spoke at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of V-J Day. Surrounded by hundreds of spectators and dozens of veterans, Clinton described the legacy of the war’s conclusion, pointing out how the war transformed the century into the “American Century”:

We must never forget both the tragedy and the triumph of that time, because it holds lessons for all time. We learned in World War II the forces of darkness give no quarter. They must be confronted and defeated. We learned that the blessings of freedom are never easy or free; they must always be defended. We learned, too, something remarkable about America. This century, marked by so much progress and too much bloodshed, witnessed humanity’s capacity for the best and the worst in life, is now known as the American Century.

Clinton’s speech was the capstone of a long, four-year parade of fiftieth anniversaries commemorating American involvement in World War II. As Clinton made clear, V-J Day symbolized the culmination of American unity and purpose. To him, the final year of the Pacific War was a string of American triumphs. He declared, “From the cliffs of Normandy to the beautiful waters of Hawaii, we have celebrated over the last year and a half the extraordinary achievements of the generation that brought us victory in World War II.”

Today, amid the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we pause to consider the role of the U.S. Navy in the path toward V-J Day and whether or not Clinton’s words still ring true twenty-five years later. Few Americans who remembered September 2, 1945, could forget the iconic image of the surrender

ceremony on the verandah deck of USS *Missouri*, when officers and politicians hovered around a cloth-covered mess table and signed a historic document that brought an end to the world’s greatest global conflict. This formality and pageantry became the primary memory that helped forge Clinton’s so-called “American Century,” but it is equally important to remember how the U.S. ended the war with a clarion call for the complete and utter destruction of mainland Japan. U.S. armed forces sought a speedy end to the war in the Pacific through the simplest means at their disposal, the ending of as many Japanese lives as possible. It was, as historian John Dower once wrote, a “war without mercy.”



During the final campaign against Japan, Admiral William F. Halsey (left) commanded Third Fleet and Vice Admiral John S. McCain (right) commanded Task Force 38. They are depicted here aboard USS *Missouri* on V-J Day, September 2, 1945. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

Task Force 38 steams in formation off the coast of Japan on August 17, 1945. This picture was taken from the rear seat of a carrier plane assigned to USS *Shangri-La*. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)



Although the U.S. Navy did not participate in the firebombings of Tokyo or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima or Nagasaki, the fleet followed the same mentality. To ensure victory, the Japanese needed to be left with nothing. The U.S. Navy’s path to V-J Day carved out a smaller swath of destruction of Japan’s home islands, but it was no less sincere in its attempt to make the Japanese pay for the war in human terms. Rear Admiral Arthur Radford spoke for many when he told *Time* magazine: “The Japs are asking for an invasion, and they are going to get it. Japan will eventually be a nation without cities—a nomadic people.”

The Allies already had a plan in place, codenamed OPERATION DOWNFALL. Created at the multinational Octagon Conference in Quebec in September 1944, DOWNFALL suggested coordinating three offensive strategies simultaneously: an amphibious invasion, a naval blockade, and high-altitude aerial bombardment. More than anything, DOWNFALL’s creation resulted from competing services each demanding a hand in Japan’s final demise.

In late May 1945, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester Nimitz, commenced issuing orders to his subordinates, detailing their roles in DOWNFALL. For the Navy, the first phase involved aerial attacks from carriers stationed offshore. Nimitz tasked Admiral William Halsey’s Third Fleet with this responsibility, and Halsey was more than eager to do it. For the past three months,

he had advocated the need for the carrier fleet to sweep enemy airfields and naval bases. In February, Halsey told a radio interviewer that the fleet must fight with unforgiving malevolence: “If we go easy on these rats now, they’ll use the next twenty years just like the Nazis used the last twenty-five.”

With both the U.S. military and government pushing for a speedy end to the Pacific War and vengeance upon mainland Japan, by June 15, Halsey and Nimitz agreed on the terms of the attack. The Third Fleet would sortie from Leyte on July 1 and commence its assault as near as possible to July 10, starting with Japanese air bases likely to contain kamikaze aircraft. Then, as the month went on, the pilots would switch to naval bases where the Japanese Combined Fleet anchored its surviving ships. After that, Halsey’s surface ships would commence shore bombardments of military installations within sight of their guns and the carrier pilots would switch to industrial targets: power plants, bridges, and railroad yards. Tension was high among the Third Fleet’s sailors, many of whom had seen bitter action against the kamikazes off Okinawa and the Philippines. They expected more fanatical resistance when they reached the home islands. A squadron commander whose carrier was en route to Japan wrote in his journal: “It looks like we are in shape for the big game. I just hope the big game doesn’t last too long.”

Halsey's fleet arrived 150 miles off the Japanese coast on July 9, exactly as planned, and the first attacks began on July 10. Halsey's pilots had orders to seek out the airfields near Tokyo and destroy all aircraft on the ground. The first strikes were a stunning success. The Navy claimed the destruction of eighty airfields and over 1,000 enemy aircraft. Additionally, U.S. losses were minimal. Some pilots believed this signaled that Japan was at death's door and the war would be over by the end of the summer. That night, Ensign Glen Wallace of USS *Essex* jotted in his flight log, "No one saw a single airborne aircraft—we lost no pilots—210 sorties—good weather—three Japs splashed around task force—latest scuttlebutt, we go home the 19<sup>th</sup>." Halsey, too, expressed himself shocked with the ease of the first day's battle, and on the home front, the press touted the raid's accomplishment. A *Time* magazine article concluded, "The blow was delivered in the Halsey manner that they had learned to expect. It was daring, powerful, and crushing."

By the end of the week, Halsey added the Third Fleet's surface ships to the fray. He ordered Rear Admiral John Shafroth's bombardment group (sectioned from Vice Admiral John McCain's Task Force 38) to target factories within range of their primary guns. On July 14, Shafroth's ships attacked the Kamaishi Ironworks on

northern Honshu. Three battleships—USS *South Dakota*, USS *Indiana*, and USS *Massachusetts*—participated in this bombardment along with two heavy cruisers and nine destroyers. Together, they destroyed more than 1,000 buildings and killed approximately 420 civilians. The main target—the ironworks—suffered severely, losing iron and coke stockpiles that amounted to ten weeks' worth of work. The next day, USS *Missouri*—soon to be the scene of the upcoming surrender—was involved in a major bombardment. On July 15, it damaged the Nihon Steel Company and the Wanishi Ironworks at Muroran. Then, on the night of July 17-18, it bombarded factories along the Hitachi shoreline. During the night bombardment, *Missouri's* 16-inch shells tore into factories during a shift change, piling up the bodies. As one sailor remembered, "We killed a lot of people, but it didn't mean nothing to us. Kill them, or they're going to kill us."

For the last thirteen days of July, air attacks and surface bombardments occurred in coordination. For the aviators, many of the later attacks involved taking out Japanese surface ships, and nearly every pilot was involved in this effort. On July 24 alone, U.S. carrier planes flew 1,747 sorties. That day, they sank three battleships—*Ise*, *Hyūga*, and *Haruna*—sending them into the mud, their decks awash.

Below Left - On July 14, 1945, Rear Admiral John Shafroth's bombardment group attacked the Kamaishi Ironworks on northern Honshu. This photograph was taken from the deck of USS *South Dakota*. The ship in the foreground is USS *Indiana*. USS *Massachusetts* is barely visible on the other side of *Indiana*. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

Below Right - On July 28, 1945, U.S. carrier planes attack the Japanese battleship *Haruna* at Kure Naval Base. The battleship was struck by eight bombs and sank in the shallow water. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)



On July 24 and 28, 1945, U.S. carrier planes attacked *Amagi*, an *Unryū*-class aircraft carrier moored at Kure Harbor. Several direct hits and many near misses caused the ship to capsize. It was photographed here, in 1946, during the American occupation. (United States Navy image)

Armor piercing bombs and rockets delivered mortal blows to two veteran heavy cruisers, *Tone* and *Aoba*, setting them afire and likewise putting them into the silt. The carrier bombers also found a brand new aircraft carrier, *Amagi*, and destroyed it. Hit with multiple 260-pound fragmentation bombs, *Amagi's* flight deck buckled and the ship listed slowly to port. By the time the Allies found it during the occupation, it had nearly capsized. Meanwhile, *Amagi's* sister ship, *Katsuragi*, took a direct hit, and another hit four days later caused the crew to abandon ship. That same day, the carrier planes also took out the light cruiser *Ōyodo*, which acted as the flagship of the Japanese fleet. *Ōyodo* capsized, prompting Halsey to quip, "The commander in chief of the Combined Japanese fleet could reach his cabin . . . only in a diving suit." In addition to the destroyed capital ships, U.S. forces claimed to destroy 2,400 aircraft, 40 hangars and barracks, 173 locomotives, four bridges, 41 tanker cars, one power station, and one lighthouse.

Despite the impressive damage inflicted upon Japan's armed forces, the raids were dangerous. The Japanese ringed their ships with anti-aircraft batteries and camouflaged their vessels so they could not be seen from the air. On July 18, for instance, strike groups from the carriers *Yorktown*,

*Cowpens*, *Shangri-La*, and *Randolph* tested their luck against an immobile battleship—*Nagato*—anchored at Yokosuka. *Nagato* was anchored in place and devoid of defenses, but it still took all day to sink it into the mud because the surrounding defenses filled the sky with flak.

As the Navy's carrier bombers attacked airfields and naval bases, U.S. Army Air Forces launched high-altitude bombers from the Marianas Islands. For the past five months, 20<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command's B-29s had been executing a massive fire-bombing campaign against Japanese cities. Back in March, against his own instincts, Brigadier General Curtis LeMay ordered a firebombing mission over Tokyo, which incinerated over 260,000 buildings and killed over 100,000 inhabitants. For all its ghastliness, the raid convinced LeMay of the strategic potential of firebombing, and subsequently, he ordered additional firebombing missions against Nagoya, Kobe, Osaka, Yokohama, and Kawasaki. LeMay predicted that these missions left 1,200,000 factory workers homeless and cost Japan over 100,000 man-months of labor. In his after-action report, LeMay believed that this was the most "economical method of destroying the small industries in these areas . . . of bringing about their liquidation."

While LeMay and Halsey were confident that continued



This photograph depicts a U.S. Army Air Force B-29 participating in the firebombing of Osaka, June 1, 1945. Air Force attacks on major cities continued in conjunction with the Navy's raids along the coast. (United States Air Force image)

aerial bombing would bring Japan to its knees, policymakers back in Washington began to harbor doubts about the next phase of the plan, the amphibious assault of the home islands. As part of OPERATION DOWNFALL, U.S. Joint Staff Planners had already finalized plans for two amphibious assaults, OPERATION OLYMPIC, the invasion of Kyūshū, which planned to deploy fourteen divisions on “X-Day,” November 1, 1945, and OPERATION CORONET, the invasion of Honshu, which earmarked at least forty divisions for the initial landing on March 1, 1946. After ten months of planning, it seemed likely that the Army and Marine Corps would carry out these operations.

But, in the summer of 1945, after the bloody battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa began choking headlines, OLYMPIC’s and CORONET’s potential appeared doubtful. President Harry Truman became their chief critic. On June 18, during a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Truman predicted that U.S. armed forces would lose 268,000 servicemen killed and wounded by the time OLYMPIC had finished. Growing fearful of the war’s next step, Truman began seeking alternatives to an amphibious assault.

That alternative arrived, as if on cue, fourteen days later. On July 16, the War Department’s Manhattan Project successfully detonated an atomic bomb in a remote desert location in central New Mexico. After limited deliberation with the Joint Chiefs, Truman sent orders to 21<sup>st</sup> Bomber Command to have a special bomber squadron prepped to deploy an atomic bomb over Japan. It needed to be used against one of the remaining urban targets—a city that had not yet been firebombed—unless Japan surrendered before August 3. As Truman explained later, “I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt it should be used. The top military advisors to the President recommended its use, and when I talked to Churchill, he unhesitatingly told me that he favored the use of the atomic bomb if it might aid to end the war.”

Whatever the ethics or the rationale behind Truman’s decision, he and the other Allied leaders met at Potsdam to finalize the instrument of surrender. It outlined fairly specific demands, which included removing all of Japan’s civil and military leaders from power, mandating Allied military occupation of the home islands, enforcing complete



Left - President Harry Truman (left) made the decision to attack Japan with atomic weapons. Many reasons informed his decision, not the least of which involved his growing doubts about the wisdom of executing OPERATION OLYMPIC. He is seen here receiving a tour from Captain James H. Foskett. They are aboard USS *Augusta*, the ship that carried Truman to Potsdam. Secretary of State James Byrnes is at center. (National Archives and Records Administration image)

Below - This photograph is believed to depict Hiroshima in the aftermath of the bombing, August 6, 1945. The enormous cloud might not be the remnant of the mushroom cloud, but smoke from building fires. (United States Air Force image)

disarmament of Japan’s military forces, and granting jurisdiction to punish civil and military officials for war crimes. The Potsdam Conference produced an ultimatum that promised to enact “prompt and utter destruction” upon Japan if the Allies’ terms were not met by Truman’s deadline.

August 3 came and went, and with that, on August 6, the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group launched “Special Mission 13.” Three B-29s flew to Hiroshima. One of them, *Enola Gay*, carried a 140-pound uranium fission bomb nicknamed “Little Boy.” At 8:15 A.M., Little Boy deployed under parachutes and floated downward toward the center of the city, then crammed with about 381,000 residents. At 2,000 feet above sea level, the bomb detonated. Three days later, “Special Mission 16” set out for Nagasaki, another undamaged city. There, a B-29 called *Bockscar* dropped a plutonium implosion bomb called “Fat Man.” As many as 200,000 Japanese civilians and military personnel were killed by the two atomic bombs or died of radiation poisoning in the months that followed.

The use of the bombs was no big secret to the U.S. sailors off the coast of Japan. One Third Fleet pilot, Ensign



Glen Wallace of Fighter Bombing Squadron 83, jotted in his diary on August 7: “Heard of Atomic bomb being dropped on the Japs.” Further, many of the sailors concluded that this meant a speedier end to the war. Many ships’ crews believed that the war’s end was only hours away. On USS *Yorktown*, the captain announced that the Japanese government had made contact with the Swiss government in order to accept the terms of the Potsdam Conference. *Yorktown*’s crew exploded with joy, and revelry continued all evening. A Torpedo Squadron 88 (VT-88) pilot wrote, “Everyone on



This photograph depicts four pilots from USS *Yorktown's* VF-88. They are (left to right): LTJG Blair Rodgers, LTJG Maurice Proctor, LTJG Joseph Sahloff, and LCDR Richard Crommelin. During the final mission of Air Group 88, August 15, 1945, Proctor and Sahloff were involved in a harrowing dogfight over Tokyo. Sahloff and three other F6F Hellcat pilots were killed. (United States Navy image)



Here, six TBM Avengers from USS *Yorktown's* VT-88 fly in formation on August 22, 1945. Radioman Second Class G. William Whitehurst crewed the tunnel position of TBM-134 (lower left) during the August 13 airstrike. (United States Navy image)



This screen-capture was taken from the cockpit of LTJG Maurice Proctor's F6F Hellcat during his return trip to USS *Yorktown*, August 15. It depicts the battle damaged plane flown by LTJG Clarence A. "Ted" Hansen. A few minutes earlier, twenty Japanese fighters had jumped Proctor and Hansen, shooting down four of their wingmen. ("Return of the Fighting Lady" film)

the ship was practically delirious with joy. Each shouted and smacked his mate on the back and shook hands with him. Parties were started in staterooms, ready rooms, anywhere handy." The next morning, Radioman Second Class George William Whitehurst entered VT-88's ready room, only to find a dozen unconscious, intoxicated pilots sprawled across the floor. "It looked like a mafia hit," he later recalled.

However, this good news was premature. Japan had not yet made any formal capitulation and Admiral Halsey did not want to slow down the Navy's bombing missions for even an instant. When no "cease fire" order arrived, he scheduled two more raids for August 13 and 15. The fleet would strike Taira, Sendai, and Tokyo. The sailors grumbled at receiving their new orders. One VT-88 gunner, Aviation Ordnanceman Third Class Ralph Morlan, jotted in his diary: "I wish we would just get the hell out of here."

On August 13, Radioman Second Class Whitehurst found himself in the belly of his TBM Avenger, participating in his tenth strike over the mainland. Like many in his air group, he saw little value in this mission. To him, the war appeared all but won. This day, VT-88's mission involved striking a power plant inside Tokyo, but heavy fog prevented the pilots from seeing it, so the strike rerouted to a fishing village where some coastal vessels were anchored. As he looked out the window, Whitehurst noticed some fishermen paddling out into the cove, apparently carrying on life as if peace had already been declared. Each TBM carried a massive 2,000-pound bomb, so large that it filled the bomb bay. Whitehurst recalled, "I knew that not a few of our bombs would fall in that village with devastating consequences." Using the intercom, Whitehurst called to his pilot, pointing out the proximity of the civilian targets. His pilot, Lieutenant Douglas LaPierre, called back, "Whitehurst, shut up! Arm that bomb!" Whitehurst continued, "So over we went, and as I suspected, some of the bombs fell on the village and heaven knows how many people we killed."

The lives of the Tokyo fishermen might have been spared, if it had been not for the diplomatic jockeying that occurred after the arrival of the Potsdam ultimatum. Initially, the Japanese government announced its intent to accept the Potsdam declaration, so long as the office of the emperor was retained. This touched off a long debate in Washington, whereby Secretary of State James F. Byrnes replied that the Imperial Office would be subject to the will of the Allies,

no matter the condition. In short, Japan might keep its emperor, or it might not. In turn, the Japanese Foreign Office vacillated for several days, until Emperor Hirohito broke the deadlock, announcing his acceptance of the Potsdam terms.

The news of war's end reached the Third Fleet the very next day, August 15, but only after several carriers had already launched their airstrikes. Air Group 88 from USS *Yorktown* had already sent two dozen planes to sweep Atsugi Airfield south of Tokyo. While they were in the air, Admiral Nimitz issued an order suspending all combat operations. The carrier relayed this news to the men flying on the mission, instructing them to jettison their ordnance and return to the ship.

Unfortunately, six F6F Hellcat pilots from Fighting Squadron 88 (VF-88) had already reached Atsugi when the radio squawked the orders to return. Quickly, the six pilots breezed over the airfield without firing a shot and then began their return trek. About five miles from Atsugi, halfway between the runway and the coast, twenty Japanese fighters attacked them.

Coming in from 4,000 feet above the F6Fs, the Japanese planes dived in at high speed. One of the American pilots, Lieutenant (junior grade) Joseph Sahloff, spotted them and called out, "Tallyho! Many rats, six o'clock high, diving!" Outnumbered more than three-to-one, the Americans did not stand a chance. Sahloff was shot down in a few minutes. When his plane began streaming smoke, he tried to get over open water and ditch. But suddenly, his engine flamed out and his F6F landed with a tremendous splash in Tokyo Bay. Sahloff appeared to bail out, but he was never seen again.

Next, seven Japanese planes attacked Lieutenant (junior grade) Maurice Proctor's aircraft. It received 28 holes from enemy fire and the pilot was forced to dive to a lower altitude to escape. Then, another F6F exploded in fire, forcing its pilot to parachute from 7,000 feet. Two other planes took heavy fire as well, and they plummeted to the ground in flames, killing both pilots. The last pilot, Lieutenant (junior grade) Ted Hansen, who fended off the Japanese and subsequently made it back to *Yorktown*, was so occupied with defending himself that he had no time to identify which of his three companions had parachuted out and which two had ridden their planes to a fiery end. Whatever their identities, Lieutenant Howard Harrison, Ensign Billy Hobbs, and Ensign Eugene Mandenberg were dead.

On USS *Yorktown*, Hansen and Proctor landed their damaged F6F Hellcats on the flight deck and told their grisly tale. *Yorktown's* flag officer, Rear Admiral Arthur Radford, who had earlier questioned the need for this particular mission, later wrote, "These were our last combat casualties. Their loss was a personal tragedy to me on this day of victory."

The Third Fleet's war did not end with this depressing skirmish. Air Group 86 from USS *Wasp* likewise received Nimitz's recall order too late. In fact, *Wasp's* strike planes had already dropped bombs on a Japanese airfield when the watch officers told them to return to the carrier. As the pilots made haste to get out of harm's way, a handful of Japanese fighter planes stalked them back to the fleet. An F6F pilot, Lieutenant (junior grade) Jack Morrison of VBF-86, sighted an Aichi B7A "Grace" bomber cruising below him at 8,000 feet. Calling "Tally-ho!" over the radio, Morrison dived in. His wingman, Lieutenant Commander Cleo J. Dobson, who did not initially see the B7A, followed him in the dive. As he descended, Dobson caught sight of the enemy plane and pressed the trigger. Dobson wrote, "I closed in on his tail and really let him have it. His left wing root blazed and he went into a spin. After falling about 1,000 ft. his left wing came off and more flames came from his plane. We followed him on down and saw him splash in the drink. Boy, he really made a splash."

Dobson took personal satisfaction in this aerial dogfight—perhaps the last dogfight of the war. Back on December 7, 1941, Dobson had been a member of Scouting Squadron 6 (VS-6), the first U.S. naval squadron to be attacked by Japanese planes, and thus, he had also been part of the Navy's first aerial dogfight of the war. In fact, Dobson had lost a close friend that day, Ensign John Vogt, who had been shot down by a Japanese fighter plane. Dobson noted in his journal, "I am satisfied that the war is over now. That settles the score for Johnny Vogt."

The war was, in fact, over. Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur—the senior commander of the South Pacific Theater—arranged for a formal ceremony to ensure the signing of the instrument of surrender. The responsibility for coordinating this ceremony fell to Captain Stuart S. "Sunshine" Murray, the commanding officer of USS *Missouri*. MacArthur demanded that the surrender ceremony move like clockwork, right down to the minute.

The Allies allowed eleven Japanese officials to attend the surrender ceremony, but the senior member of that party posed a difficulty. The Japanese foreign minister, Mamoru Shigemitsu, had a wooden leg which limited his mobility. MacArthur wanted Shigemitsu to approach the surrender table at precisely 9 A.M., Tokyo time. It was not a simple request. Shigemitsu would have to leave a launch, climb a gangway, and then climb a ladder to reach the verandah deck, where the documents and pens would be waiting. In preparation, Murray performed at least twenty dry runs using a young sailor with a swab handle stuffed down his trousers to simulate Shigemitsu's unwieldy gait. Through this relentless practice, Murray believed he had Shigemitsu's walk timed down to the minute.

V-J Day, September 2, dawned cloudy and overcast.



The dignitaries began arriving on USS *Missouri* at around 7:15. Nimitz came aboard from his flagship, USS *South Dakota*, a few minutes after 8:00. Forty minutes later, USS *Buchanan* came alongside, dropping off MacArthur and the other representatives of the Allied powers. Nimitz and Halsey greeted MacArthur at the end of the gangway and escorted him to the verandah deck. One of MacArthur's officers brought the instrument of surrender with him, which caused a minor panic among the officers on the *Missouri*. There were two documents to be signed, each forty-by-twenty inches. The table on the verandah deck was too short to accommodate the two documents when they were placed side by side. "All hell broke loose!" remembered Captain Murray. The officers made a mad dash to the wardroom to find a larger table, but everything was bolted down. Next,

they headed to the crew's mess compartment, where the mess cooks were hanging chow tables. The mess cooks were cleaning the last table when the officers accosted them and demanded it be turned over, not telling them that it would be used to end the largest war in human history. Several of them grumbled that their work would not be done until they had cleaned and hung it, but then Captain Murray arrived, brandishing a green tablecloth from the wardroom. He ordered them to relinquish the table and they begrudgingly complied.

In a comic display, Murray and his officers frantically set up the new table and cloth, which elicited a few sarcastic remarks from those watching: "That's a beautiful common touch, to use the crew's general mess table, and use a green cloth from the wardroom." Murray blushed with embarrassment. It was evident that the tablecloth was full of coffee stains.

From a nearby destroyer, USS *Lansdowne*, the eleven-man Japanese delegation arrived via a launch. The skiff arrived at precisely 8:56. As it docked along the starboard side, between turrets 1 and 2, all eyes turned to Shigemitsu, who had gone almost catatonic. At this moment, he was overcome with cold feet. Murray remembered, "He must have sat there and wiggled for a full thirty seconds before he made any motion . . . of getting out. But finally he started up and really and truly he just crept out of that boat." It took so long for Shigemitsu to reach the verandah deck that MacArthur missed his cue. MacArthur came out of his stateroom a few minutes too early, was forced to wait, and then grumbled, went back inside, and had to exit again.

On the verandah deck, a sea of faces greeted the Japanese. Everywhere there was available space, sailors crowded to get a glimpse. Some sailors cluttered the rails in groups, rotating positions so that everyone got at least a few minutes of gawking. Nimitz wrote later, "Every turret top—every point of vantage was occupied by newsmen—cameramen—including local Jap papers—and officers and men from the ship who could get a foothold." A band played "The Star-Spangled Banner" and General MacArthur made a few prepared remarks.

Surrender ceremonies begin on USS *Missouri*, September 2, 1945. Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu can be seen ascending the gangway wearing a top hat. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)

At 9:05, after having been aboard for only ten minutes, Shigemitsu signed the instrument of surrender on behalf of the Japanese government while Japanese General Yoshijiro Umezu signed on behalf of Japan's armed forces. When Shigemitsu sat in his chair, his secretary, Toshikazu Kase, whacked his wooden leg, causing it to hit the tie rod that held the legs of the collapsible mess table. For a second, the officers of USS *Missouri* held their breath, worried that the flimsy table might collapse and ruin everything. It rattled but did not break. Murray recalled, "Our fingers were all crossed, all those who knew how it was."

MacArthur signed next, using six commemorative pens to complete his signature. Chester Nimitz signed fourth, representing all military forces of the United States. After the ceremony, Nimitz wrote in a letter to his wife, "When it came my time to sign—I'll confess to nervous excitement—but I did sign in the correct places." In addition to Japan and

the U.S., eight other countries signed: China, Britain, the Soviet Union, Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

At the end of the ceremony, MacArthur told the crowd, "Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world, and that God will preserve it always. These proceedings are closed."

At that moment, in a perfectly timed aerial ballet, 1,400 American aircraft roared in the skies overhead—some 350 carrier planes and over 1,000 B-29s. A *Missouri* gunner's mate, Robert Bruno Nichols, was on watch, manning a 40mm Bofors on *Missouri*'s starboard fantail. Due to his position, he had missed the entire signing ceremony, but he remembered the flyover for the rest of his life. He recollected, "You could hardly see the sky with how many planes were over, the bombers and the fighter planes. I couldn't believe how many planes we had. There could have been 500. I couldn't count. I'll never forget that." As he watched the flyover, another sailor on *Missouri*, Radioman Third Class Bob Schultz, took notice of another hopeful omen. The weather suddenly changed from overcast to

sunny. He recalled, "The sun started to shine. And it probably did all over the world."

The Pacific War was at an end, and everyone in the fleet knew the important role the U.S. Navy had played in it. In the last few weeks, Halsey's Third Fleet had come remarkably close to participating in the wanton destruction enacted by the Army Air Forces, but due to the sudden deployment of the atomic bombs, the Navy was absolved of the world's condemnation for targeting civilians. Instead, the Navy was remembered for a different reason. It became the stage where peace was enacted.

On the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is important to remember both the official signing ceremony—including its gentlemanly demeanor—and the intense hatred of the bloody weeks that preceded it, when the Navy tried to lead the way in Japan's extinction. The pathway to peace is rarely an easy one, but if the Pacific War "witnessed humanity's capacity for the best and the worst in life," as Bill Clinton observed in 1995, then the U.S. Navy represented that dissonance.

It might also be said that V-J Day signified the Navy's

importance in creating the "American Century." We now know that humankind's propensity for waging war did not disappear with V-J Day. But for one brief moment—a single day, September 2, 1945—it appeared as if world peace had arrived, and that the U.S. would take the lead in regulating the new world order. It was a truly epic moment, and on this, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we should pause and remember it.

*Dr. Timothy J. Orr is associate professor of history at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He is the co-author of Never Call Me a Hero: A Legendary American Dive Bomber Pilot Remembers the Battle of Midway; author of Last to Leave the Field: The Life and Letters of First Sergeant Ambrose Henry Hayward; and has published numerous articles about the American Civil War.*

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz signs the instrument of surrender. General Douglas MacArthur stands behind him on the left. Next to him are Admiral William F. Halsey (center) and Rear Admiral Forrest Sherman (right). (Naval History and Heritage Command image)



U.S. carrier planes commence an all-day flyover, September 2, 1945. This photograph was taken from the top of USS *Missouri*'s turret 1. USS *Ancon* can be seen in the distance. (Naval History and Heritage Command image)



# “I Never Saw So Much Flak in My Life”: A Belly Gunner’s Experience over Tokyo

By Laura Orr, Director of Education

**D**r. G. William Whitehurst is a Norfolk, Virginia, native who joined the Navy in May 1943. He served as the radioman and belly gunner on a TBM Avenger aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV 10) from June 1945 through the end of World War II. Upon returning from the war, Whitehurst got his Ph.D. and taught history at the Norfolk division of William and Mary (now Old Dominion University). Beginning in 1968, he served for nineteen years in the United States House of Representatives. In this oral history interview, Whitehurst discusses how he became a belly gunner, along with some of his more difficult missions as the war in the Pacific came to a close.

**Question:** Please tell me when you joined the Navy and how you came to serve on the TBM Avenger.

**Answer:** I was drafted into the Navy in May of 1943. I had just turned 18 in March, and they got me really quickly. Boot camp didn’t last very long. It was the height of the war, and lasted about five weeks. Took tests, and this old chief got me aside, and he said, “Son, you did real well. We have a couple of aviation slots. Would you like to be an aviation radioman?” I hadn’t flown in my life or anything, and I said, “Well, that sounds exciting.” I didn’t know it was going to be terrifying. It was exciting beyond my ken. Anyway, I went to aviation radio school down near Memphis, Tennessee. Learned Morse Code, and then you had to agree to be a shooter, which was fine by me. I thought it was going to be exciting. It was terrifying. You had to agree to go to aerial gunner school. So I went to Hollywood, Florida, and I was a good shooter. It’s funny, it’s like riding a bicycle. You can do it and do it well, and I did. I was right at the top. I learned to shoot, and the rest of my life, I had that skill.

**Question:** Tell me about the squadron to which you were assigned. What were some of your missions over Japan?

**Answer:** I was assigned to a torpedo squadron, and I was the radioman and the belly gunner. This airplane [the TBM Avenger] had three people, the pilot forward who flew the airplane, a turret gunner, who was back where I was. His



Young Bill Whitehurst shows off his Navy uniform, 1943. (Image courtesy of Bill Whitehurst)

feet hung in my face, that’s how close it was. After training, we went out to the Pacific. It was in late June 1945, and we were placed in an air group aboard the carrier *Yorktown* (CV 10). In July, we sortied and began to make strikes against targets in Japan. I made ten missions before the war ended in August, and three were bad. The third one, our plane was struck. We were glide bombing; we couldn’t go straight down like a dive bomber, but we were diving on a Japanese battleship [IJN *Nagato*] at the naval base in Yokosuka, which is now an American naval base. Anyway, we were in the dive from 10,000 feet and supposed to pull out at 3,000 and drop this 2,000-pound bomb on this battleship that was in harbor, at anchorage. So, off we went. We had done this so often in practice, and I was holding onto a little .30-caliber machine gun to strafe if we got shot at, and down we went, and we didn’t pull out. I looked over my shoulder and saw the altimeter needle go below 3,000 feet, 2,000, and I was a basket case. Finally, we pulled out just under 1,000 feet. I could see this guy shooting at us, so I wasted some bullets on him. I called the pilot on the intercom, and I said,

“Lieutenant, what’re you trying to do?” He said, “Look at the port wing, left wing,” and I did, and we had taken a 40-mm shell and it opened this big hole. He said, “I made a long, shallow pull-out to prevent any stress on that wing.” I said, “Are we going to make it back to the *Yorktown*?” “Oh,” he said, “Yes, it’s a Grumman airplane”—they called it Grumman Ironworks—so, back we went and we landed safely. That was the closest I came to buying the farm.

About the sixth or seventh mission, we hit Kure, on the Inland Sea, and that was the main Japanese anchorage in the country. I’m not trying to be melodramatic, but I’ll tell you how bad it was. I never saw so much flak in my life, and that day, on the luck of the draw, we got both the morning and the afternoon strike. Usually, you do one or the other. My pilot, who had flown in the Solomons in 1943 and been shot down, called on the intercom to Jimmy Bowlds, the turret gunner, and me, and he said, “This is the worst I have ever seen.” He said, “I got some whiskey in my quarters. If you boys want a drink, come to my quarters and I’ll give you one.” I didn’t drink then and Bowlds didn’t either, and I said, “I’m okay, Lieutenant,” and he said the same thing. That’s how you tell it’s bad. He never offered us a whiskey for any of the other

missions we made, just that one. So I knew it must have been bad. Where I sat in the plane, I couldn’t see that much. It was that kind of a war.

**Question:** Tell me a little bit about when you find out the war’s over. Do you remember how you felt?

**Answer:** Yes, quite well. What happened was, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, they announced over the loudspeaker on the carrier that the Japanese had said they would surrender pending keeping the Emperor. So, we thought the war was over then. We had this false celebration, to wit, everybody who had booze got drunk. The pilots had their supply of whiskey. The crewmen didn’t. So get this: the flight surgeon had, if you came back from a mission and wanted a drink, he’d give you one to steady your nerves. I didn’t do that. So, he had this supply of booze, and he sometimes drank it himself. So, he comes into our ready room—there were 60 crewmen—with a deep tub filled with grapefruit juice and 180 proof alcohol. My god! Do you have any idea what that did? And these

G. William “Bill” Whitehurst poses with his TBM Avenger aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV 10) in 1945. (Image courtesy of Bill Whitehurst)





TBM Avengers from USS Yorktown's VT-88 cruise in formation in the waters off Japan on August 22, 1945. Radioman Second Class Whitehurst is in the belly of Number 123, the dark blue airplane in the upper right of this photograph. (United States Navy image)

boys hadn't had a drink—I didn't drink then, so I was a witness to it—they had not had a drink in months. So they dived into that . . . and about 10 o'clock, I was watching them knock this stuff back, and I went back to my bunk, and got in and slept. I got up about 6, 6:30 in the morning, went into the ready room, and it looked like a Mafia hit. These guys were on the floor, and this damn stuff—get this—had actually cut the paint on the deck, it was that bad. I went up on the flight deck, and in the airplanes, the pilots had climbed in. They were out cold. We couldn't launch a single plane that day. If the Japs had come over, oh, we could've shot the guns on the ship at them, but that's it. I said, "This is crazy!" Well, the people who commanded thought it was worse than crazy, but how're you going to punish a whole air group? You couldn't do it! So it was just pushed aside and nobody got punished for it.

Then, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, they scheduled these missions. And this mission was against this electric works in Tokyo, and we never hit Tokyo. It was a heavy bombing target like the B-29s. We only could carry 2,000 pounds, both the dive bombers and the torpedo bombers! We said, "Wait a minute, why don't we wait and see what they're going to do with the emperor?" "No, you gotta go and fly." That's when we took off, and this is the 13<sup>th</sup> of August. I was

really sweating it. I didn't want to die—well, who does?—but I thought, "This is terrible, so near the end." We knew they were going to give it up. We thought, "Yeah, keep the emperor, who cares?" So we got almost to Japan, to Tokyo Bay, and they said, "The target's closed in by fog. Drop your bombs on targets of opportunity." I thought, "Not gonna die today—that's great." So, fighters went over and strafed an airfield, and we lost a man from Norfolk named Dick Dozier [Wilson L. Dozier]. It was just a waste.

The morning of August the 15<sup>th</sup>, there was a strike scheduled. That was the last place we wanted to go, but the flight got off the carrier, was on the way. I was to make the afternoon strike, and while they were on their way, the bombers got the message, "The war's over, drop your bombs in the ocean and come back to the ship." We had five [six] fighters that had gone ahead. They were jumped by twenty Japanese fighters out of Atsugi, and one man [two men] got back. I saw his airplane—it had bullet holes all through it. The others were lost, literally in the last hour of the war. We couldn't celebrate that night. There was just relief that the whole thing was over with and nobody else was going to get killed.

# World War II at Sea in Books

We asked four prominent naval historians (Walter Borneman, Jim Hornfischer, Craig Symonds, and Ian Toll) to share their top five books about the Navy's role in the Second World War. In this article, each historian has written a description of his recommendations and why these books made his list. Hopefully these suggestions will give our readers ideas for something new to read. Here's what these historians have to say:

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy and its British, Dutch, and Australian allies waged a largely unsung and losing battle against the Japanese onslaught to control the natural resources of the Netherlands East Indies. *Rising Sun, Falling Skies*, by Jeffrey R. Cox, scrutinizes the learning curve of allied command, the hopelessness of facing numerical superiority, and the grim awakening that airpower would play a decisive role no matter how powerful the fleet. Cox's portraits of admirals Thomas Hart and Karl Doorman beg a host intriguing "what ifs."



**Walter R. Borneman** is the author of *The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy, and King*, a *New York Times* bestseller released in 2012. Borneman's other titles include *Brothers Down: Pearl Harbor and the Fate of the Many Brothers Aboard the USS Arizona*; *MacArthur at War: World War II in the Pacific*; and *1812: The War That Forged a Nation*.

#### Borneman recommends:

1. *Rising Sun, Falling Skies: The Disastrous Java Sea Campaign of World War II*  
By Jeffrey Cox

Perceptions of the first months of the Pacific War usually focus on MacArthur's actions in the Philippines.

2. *The Battle of Midway*  
By Craig Symonds

There is no dearth of literature about Midway. With due deference to Parshall and Tully's *Shattered Sword*, Craig L. Symonds in *The Battle of Midway* chronicles the Pacific campaign from Nimitz assuming command through the first week of June 1942. Symonds does a superb job of placing the Midway battle within the context of those months, particularly with regard to the morale-boosting counterattacks against the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and *Lexington's* often overlooked raid against Lae. The latter operation forced postponement of the Japanese thrust at Port Moresby and proved a confidence builder for fleet air operations that reaped dividends at Coral Sea and ultimately Midway.

3. *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral: Frank Jack Fletcher at Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal*  
By John Lundstrom

Ask the general public to name favorite admirals and Frank Jack Fletcher is rarely mentioned. Fletcher's reputation long took hard knocks: King never forgave him the loss of *Lexington* at Coral Sea and events at Midway gave Spruance credit that even Spruance

thought Fletcher deserved to share. In *Black Shoe Carrier Admiral*, John Lundstrom resurrects Fletcher’s reputation and underscores that in those tenuous months of 1942, staid and solid was far more important than flashy and flamboyant. Equally fascinating is Lundstrom’s keen eye for developing carrier tactics.

4. *Neptune’s Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal*  
By James Hornfischer

All of James Hornfischer’s histories deserve to be on this list, but *Neptune’s Inferno* is my personal favorite. Guadalcanal is justifiably thought of as the heroic struggle of Marines to take and hold the island, but they could not have done so without the sacrifices of thousands of sailors in the surrounding waters. Hornfischer’s smooth and engaged style guides one through multiple battles over a four-month campaign, including two of the darkest moments in U.S. naval history: the fiery nighttime battle of Savo Island that initially saved the beachhead and the opening round of the climactic battles of mid-November 1942 that numbered two rear admirals among the American dead.

5. *Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan*  
By Clay Blair, Jr.

Having cut my teeth on the 1950s television show “The Silent Service,” I found myself coming back time and again to Clay Blair, Jr.’s *Silent Victory*. There may be more compelling stories of individual boats, including those of Dick O’Kane, Dudley “Mush” Morton, and the *Wahoo*, but Blair is the go-to-first source for any questions about submarine actions in the Pacific. The boats, their commanders and crews, the agony of faulty torpedoes, and the terror of relentless depth charge attacks are all here. This is a reliable desktop reference, but also a gripping straight read. *Silent Victory* stands the test of time.



**James D. Hornfischer** is the author of several books about the Navy in the Second World War, including *The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*; *Ship of Ghosts*; *Neptune’s Inferno*; and *The Fleet at Flood Tide*. He is currently working on a book about the Navy during the Cold War.

**Hornfischer recommends:**

1. *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*

By Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully

For historians who study the Pacific War, it is notoriously difficult to develop the Japanese side of things. Here, the authors bring to life the Japanese story of the Battle of Midway. Enthusiasts of operational level naval aviation will relish the groundbreaking account of what the Japanese carriers and pilots were doing on those fateful days in early June 1942. The reasons for the American victory relate to superior intelligence, operational arts, and doctrine. The authors bring all of it vividly to life in this thrilling narrative of naval history’s biggest day.

2. *Fleet against Japan*

By Fletcher Pratt

The *Time* magazine military analyst was unsurpassed for his ability to understand and appreciate seapower, ships, naval warfare and the sailors, officers, and strategists who aged it. And then there’s the matter of his writing style—vigorous, sharp, precise, evocative, and inspiring. *Fleet against Japan*, published in 1946, is out of print and available only on the used market, like most of his books, sadly. Do yourself a treat, go forth in search of it, and enhance your library tremendously.

3. *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*  
By Richard B. Frank

No conversation about the manner in which World War II in the Pacific ended can be fully informed without extensive reference to this important book. Richard Frank brings to life the American predicament in the summer of 1945—to continue a strategy of blockade and bombardment of Japan, carry out a massive, bloody invasion of the home islands, or drop the atomic bombs. The book puts to rest the unsubstantiated accusations of the atomic bomb revisionists, who describe all types of chicanery and cynical dealing on the part of the Truman administration. Frank takes readers inside the Japanese Imperial Chambers to show them what the Japanese were thinking and doing in the fateful weeks prior to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

4. *World War II at Sea: A Global History*  
By Craig L. Symonds

Blending a keen understanding of the naval operational arts as well as global politics, salted with crisply drawn portraits of the key leaders on all sides, this valuable, readable, engaging, and authoritative one volume history of World War II at Sea deserves to supplant Samuel Morison’s *The Two-Ocean War* on its sturdy roots of original and current research.

5. *The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy, and King—the Five-Star Admirals Who Won the War at Sea*  
By Walter R. Borneman

This is a masterly study of naval leadership and top-level command focusing on the only four men to achieve five-star rank during World War II—Leahy, King, Nimitz, and Halsey. Borneman has produced an exceptionally fine study of training, education, and the practice of naval command, during a war in which the art of naval warfare itself was forever transformed.



**Dr. Craig Symonds** is Professor Emeritus at the U.S. Naval Academy, where he served as chair of the history department. He has written many works about naval history, including *Lincoln and His Admirals*; *Neptune: The Allied Invasion of Europe and the D-Day Landings*; *World War II at Sea*; and *The Battle of Midway*. Recently, he served as a technical advisor for the movie “Greyhound.”

**Symonds recommends:**

1. *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War*  
By Samuel Eliot Morison

When the war broke out, Morison, a history professor at Harvard and a well-regarded historian of maritime history, prevailed on Franklin Roosevelt to give him a commission in the Navy so he could go to sea and record the events of the war in near real time. He could not be everywhere at once, of course, so he also enlisted scores of others to observe and record the events almost as they happened. The result was a 15-volume set of books published after the war and which remain in print today. The book recommended here is a one-volume abridgment of that longer work. Despite its ambitious coverage, it remains quite readable and is an appropriate starting point for a student of the war at sea.

2. *Neptune’s Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal and Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*  
By James D. Hornfischer

Hornfischer is both a wonderful historian and a gifted writer—a combination rarer than many of us like to admit. He has written several books on naval aspects of the Second World War including *Neptune’s Inferno*,

which is an account of the many, and often confusing, battles that were part of the Solomon Islands campaign. He is also the author of *Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors*, which covers the heroic stand of a small group of overmatched destroyers and destroyer escorts against the battleships and heavy cruisers of a Japanese force that was bearing down on Leyte Gulf. Even though we know the outcome, the pace of the action, and the heroism of the participants makes the book a true page-turner.

3. *Pacific War Trilogy: Pacific Crucible, The Conquering Tide, and Twilight of the Gods*  
By Ian Toll

Toll is the author of three books that collectively recount the naval action in the Pacific War from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay. The first volume, *Pacific Crucible*, carries the story through mid-1942; *The Conquering Tide* then carries the narrative through the great battles of 1943 and into 1944; and the third volume, published this year, completes the story. Though they are three separate books that can be read individually, they are listed here as a single work. They are comprehensive without being tedious and, like Hornfischer's books, eminently readable.

4. *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*  
By Richard Frank

One of the great stories of the Second World War at Sea is the lengthy campaign for the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. The Americans embarked on this campaign on the proverbial "wing and a prayer" since it was early in the war and the U.S. had not yet accumulated the resources needed. The Japanese struck back at once and the result was a grinding and often precarious campaign for control of the island and its tiny airstrip that lasted for most of five months. Richard B. Frank's book on the campaign, titled simply *Guadalcanal*, is subtitled *The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*. And it is.

5. *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*

By Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully

The Battle of Midway was the turning point in the Pacific War, and there are a number of excellent histories of this astonishing tale. Only one book, however, covers the Japanese side of the battle and that is the one by Jon Parshall and Anthony Tully entitled *Shattered Sword*. By plumbing Japanese as well as American sources, they greatly expanded our understanding of what happened, especially during those crucial 5-8 minutes on the morning of June 4, 1942, when the war tipped.



**Ian Toll** is an author and military historian who has written several books about the U.S. Navy, beginning with *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy*. More recently, he has written a trilogy of the Navy in the Pacific War. The books are: *Pacific Crucible*, *The Conquering Tide*, and *Twilight of the Gods*.

**Toll recommends:**

1. *Dauntless Helldivers*  
by Harold L. Buell

This is the personal memoir of a senior naval aviator who flew dive bombers in all five of the carrier duels of the Pacific War. Flying more than a hundred combat missions on Guadalcanal and four different carriers, Buell eventually rose to serve as air group commander on the USS *Hornet* (CV-12). Buell's detailed and expert account of carrier dive bombing is worth the price of admission, but his book also includes colorful descriptions of R&R on

the home front and on rear-area bases in the South Pacific. His account of the navy's rocky wartime transition from the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber to the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver is especially valuable, and provides the subtext for this fine memoir's title.

2. *Wahoo: The Patrols of America's Most Famous World War II Submarine*  
by Richard H. O'Kane

O'Kane, one of the most celebrated submariners of the Pacific War, was executive officer of the USS *Wahoo* during several of her early commerce-raiding cruises. This is both an entertaining personal memoir and a vitally important record of the submarine campaign, as it evolved under the legendary and risk-taking skipper Dudley W. "Mush" Morton. This gripping story often reads like a thriller. A fine writer, O'Kane depicts the tension and camaraderie shared by men serving under the sea in a long steel tube. But the book is also a penetrating analysis of technology and tactics, and how they changed in the course of the war. O'Kane went on to command his own boat, the *Tang*, which rose to the top of the league tables in enemy sinkings before being destroyed by one of her own torpedoes in October 1944.

3. *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*  
by Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully

Parshall and Tully's account of the Battle of Midway revised and deepened my understanding of the subject. Drawing deeply on Japanese primary sources, this groundbreaking study is a very detailed, hour-by-hour and even minute-by-minute narrative of the battle as seen through the eyes of the Japanese commanders. The authors correct various errors that had crept into previous American accounts of the battle, many by way of Mitsuo Fuchida's book *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan*. *Shattered Sword* also makes better use of illustrations and diagrams than any other work of naval history I have ever read, proving the axiom that a picture is worth a thousand words.

4. *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*  
by Samuel Eliot Morison

I may be cheating by adding this immense work, which comes in 15 volumes, but Morison's quasi-official history remains the cornerstone of any library on the Pacific War. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Morison, a professor at Harvard, petitioned President Roosevelt to put him in charge of producing an official history of the naval war, and FDR agreed. The professor was commissioned as a Lieutenant Commander and provided a budget and a team of assistants. He traveled widely with the fleet during the war, and was thus a direct eyewitness to some of the events he chronicles. Published between 1947 and 1962, Morison's history has in many respects been superseded by more recent scholarship, but reading and digesting these volumes is the price of entry for anyone hoping to master the subject.

5. *Sailor from Oklahoma: One Man's Two-Ocean War*  
by Floyd Beaver

Floyd Beaver enlisted in the Navy before the attack on Pearl Harbor, as he once told me, because he "wanted to get something to eat." He had grown up poor in Oklahoma during the hardscrabble years of the Great Depression. He served the entire war as an enlisted man, in various roles and on many different types of ships, and retired as a chief petty officer. His eyewitness accounts of the Battle of the Coral Sea, where he served on the *Lexington* as a signalman on Admiral Fitch's flag allowance, through the vicissitudes of the Solomons campaign, and his keen observations of the great wartime advances of carrier aviation, are a treasure. I believe personal memoirs are among the most valuable records of World War II at sea.

Back Cover: Sailors celebrate V-J Day in Hawaii.  
(United States Navy image)



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