



**Cocktails with  
the Admiral:**

*Drinks,  
Espionage  
And the  
Secret History of  
The American Century*



By Vic Socotra

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History of The American Century*

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**Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 16-XXXXX  
ISBN: pending**

**First printing 2016**

**Cover Photo: U.S. Navy**

Published by  
Socotra House Publishing LLC  
Culpeper, VA  
E-edition by Socotra House

## ***Introduction***

*RADM Donald McCollister Showers started life as a farm boy in Depression-era Iowa. He once explained how his family survived the bank closures that locked up all the ready cash. His family traded farm animals for house-calls by the Doctor, who shared the same problem of liquidity as everyone else.*

*As the New Deal was changing the face of America, Mac could see the war clouds looming. After completing college (journalism and bagpipes) in 1940, he had to ask his mother for permission to join the other 90-day-wonders in Navy Officer Training in Chicago and arrived at his first duty station in Hawaii in February of 1942, when the great capital ships of the Pacific Fleet still rested on the bottom of Pearl Harbor.*

*Through pure chance, he was assigned to the staff of Station HYPO, the code-breakers led by CDR Joe Rochefort, and whose wizardry enabled the Navy's greatest maritime victory at Midway Atoll.*

*The rest of his war in the Pacific was on the personal staff of Chester Nimitz, and serving as Chief of Estimates at the forward headquarters, produced the forecast of American casualties in the impending invasion of the Home Island of Japan.*

*His numbers helped support the decision to open the Atomic Age.*

*He then strode the streets of Yokosuka five days after Japan's surrender.*

*Despite the rapid demobilization, he decided to stay in the Navy, since he had no civilian job held for him back home.*

*Along the way, he met all the five-star Flag Officers, dined with Marshall Tito and chatted up the Queen of England. He rose to make Admiral himself against the backdrop of the conflict in Vietnam. Retiring from active service, he became a trouble-shooter for the Director of Central Intelligence, and had a ring-side seat for Watergate and the excesses of America's Intelligence Community.*

*He and his lovely wife Billie raised great family, and in the end, he became his wife's caregiver for a decade after her illness was revealed. His support to other families in dealing with the 36-hour-day of dementia helped me immensely as my Father succumbed to the same awful disease.*

*He was a man in full, and his story is one that encompasses the dizzying moments of the American Century. Let's take the journey with him, in his own words.*

*- Vic Socotra  
Arlington, VA*

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### **The Day After**



**(Saying farewell at Arlington National Cemetery)**

It was April 16th, the Day After the funeral. The pictures had been posted, the toasts were raised at the wake at Willow. The haunting sound of the highland pipes covered the retreat of hundreds of officers and Sailors from the grave site. Mac's earthly remains were given over to the soil, and to the patient presence of his beloved Sara V., better known as Billie. The Boston Bombers who hit the Marathon finish line were still on the loose.

Mac had passed late the previous year, Oct 19th 2012, at peace and with his family all around. I was in Colorado at the time, and I got the news it speared me with regret, though I must say Mac's final transition was conducted in the way that he preferred. His heart was giving out, the cardio experts at the Virginia Medical Center could not intervene surgically due to Mac's age. He was alert, and asked what his options were. The Doctors said "Hospice," and with that, Mac made his decision and was at peace. It was his choice all the way, just as it had been all his life.

There is a lag of months between the memorial services at Arlington and the actual interment. On this crisp day in April, the Old Guard scheduled the funeral, and Mac's earthly remains were brought, by turns, to the Old Post Chapel at Fort Myer and then to Section 66, Lot 7135 on the flat plain of the lower cemetery. The Office of Naval Intelligence turned out in force, and the honor guard of enlisted sailors and officers were led by three Vice Admirals.

I took a hundred or so and posted them to social media. Pictures are not reality, of course, but the pageant, dignity and tradition displayed is clear enough from those images. I have attended far too many of these funerals and will probably attend only one more, one in which I do not anticipate a speaking part. This was one for the ages, and is going to stand in memory for all of us.

The haunting sound of Amazing Grace and Scotland The Brave were the last echoes of the official ceremony. Mac had been a piper in his youth, and this completed another circle per his detailed instructions. The Piper is a physicist in his day job, by the way, and a good man. But his day trade is just as relevant as his skill on the pipes.



But of course there were a lot of good women and men there that gray afternoon to say farewell and Godspeed. They paid tribute to a man whose like and endurance does not come along very often. He became, with the passing of so many of his generation, an icon of his age. And a very good friend to many.

The world being what it is, we did not know of the outrage at the Boston Marathon until we got to Willow after the internment to join family and friends to celebrate what will stand in my mind as the finest example of a private interment at the Nation's place of ultimate honor.

Mac would have been proud, I think. Now we have to turn back to the events of the world we have all made, and it will be another grim bit of business. Mac would have had something to say about it, but his cares are not now of this world.

We are on our own now. But there is more to this. A lot more. Why don't you join me for a drink and we can talk about it.

### WRITTEN APPROVAL

**NOTICE**  
To authenticate the information on the reverse side hereof the below form will be executed.

Race	Color Eyes	Weight	Right Index Finger Print
white	blue	150	
Height	Color Hair	Age, Yrs.	
5'7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	black	21	

Signature: *Donald MacPherson*  
Signature of official taking print: *Lawrence N. Kane*  
Title and official agency: *Captain, Police*  
City: *Iowa City* State: *Iowa*

Back of Mac's first Navy ID card, Iowa City, Pay Entry Base Date 15 Aug 1940  
Photo at Willow, Socotra

The wine was chill in the dimness of the Willow Bar. They turn the lights down at 5:15 each afternoon to encourage the enthusiasm of the regulars. The pork spring rolls from the neighborhood restaurant menu were hot.

Humidity was down on the sun-drenched streets outside. Jake was doing some business at

the bar, and Mac and I were at one of the little tall cocktail tables that line the deep brown wooden divider that separates fine dining from the usual suspects in the lounge.

I was scribbling like mad, since I have everything out of order. Mac brought some documents and books to review. He had the CIA monograph on the end of the Pacific War, and the new book on the Berlin Airlift. Just what I needed, more books, but the craving to understand is an ongoing imperative, as insistent as thirst at the end of a summer business day.

“Charles Nathan” were the Christian names of Mac’s father, but he was on travel someplace. His Mom, Hedwig (“Hattie”) Showers came to the door, and Captain of Police Laurence N. Ham told her why he had driven her son over from the field house at Iowa State University. The Draft Act had not been passed yet, and there were some legal niceties that had to be accommodated, even though they would soon be swept away on the road to global war.

Lieutenant Ham cleared his throat. “Your son is just ten days away from his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Ma’am. I need to get your written authorization for him to join the Navy.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Hattie asked with a Mother’s concern. The world, or at least the rolling low hills of Iowa was at peace. The trouble in Europe was someone else’s problem for the moment. Mac nodded, and she went ahead and signed her name.

With that, Lieutenant Ham was one body closer to meeting his prodigious quota list for August, and Mac smeared his thumbprint on the faded document that Mac produced from an envelope and placed on the table in front of me.

I was careful not to drip the savory dipping sauce from the spring rolls on it, or on his draft registration that he produced as a companion piece a moment later.

“My Dad was president of the Johnson County Draft Board, and when the Draft Act was passed the next month, he insisted that I sign up, even though I was already in the Navy,” he said, taking a sip of his savory red beverage. “He said no son of mine is going to be accused of not doing his duty.” He shook his head at the ancient remark. “I was long gone before anyone could utter a word.

## DUMB LUCK



This was at the beginning of my fifteen-year friendship with Mac, and just at the time we started to take on the project of looking at his amazing life with an eye to telling the story. It had been a strange day in Arlington, though things are strange enough in Washington that only the addition of nuclear weapons could really give it some pizzazz. The Nuclear Conference wrapped up downtown at the convention center. The First Lady made a dramatic appearance in devastated Port au Prince. The talking heads are speculating on the impact of the retirement of Associate Justice John Paul Stevens from the high court. Mac and I got seats half-way down the Willow's bar, being just a bit ahead of the rush. The place is quite fashionable these days, and maybe it is a sign the Recession is fading. It was mild in impact around here, though it is hard to say if the people drinking exotic vintages ever noticed it much.

I asked him about Justice Stevens, and remarkably, it turned out he was a wartime colleague in Hawaii. I asked about his involvement in the shoot-down of Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, which featured prominently in the published biography.

“OPERATION VENGEANCE,” Mac said, nodding, “and it was a long-range intercept of the Admiral's personal aircraft. The mission was based on intelligence derived from decrypted Japanese communications that outlined the itinerary for the Admiral's inspection trip to several bases in the Solomon Islands on April 18, 1943. Army Air Corps P-38s operating from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal successfully shot him down.”



**(Associate Justice John Paul Stevens. Mac used to dine with him at lunch the O Club near the Pacific Fleet Headquarters in Makalapa Crater).**

“It was a terrible blow to the morale of the Japanese Fleet,” said the Admiral, “once they had to admit it happened. They kept it secret for a while.”



Justice Steven's bio notes his contributions to the effort, though Mac doesn't remember it quite that way, and he is almost the last one in a position to know. He was a Lieutenant with Stevens, who he remembers as a polished lawyer and gentleman from Chicago. They were in the same unit at Pearl during the war, and often had lunch at the bar at the club attached to the Bachelor Officer's Quarters.

Admiral Mac is approaching his 91st summer in this world, and is still chugging merrily along. He broke his elbow in a fall a month or so ago, which resulted in surgery and a marked diminution of his communications, since he was reduced to one-handed typing. He does not drink any more, on orders from his oncologist, though he doesn't mind watching. He enjoys a Virgin Mary with olives and lime and horseradish, or just a ginger ale. We had begun to meet to talk about the events of his distinguished and highly secret career, since most of the great events may still remain classified but are hardly a threat to anyone left alive.

I picked him up in the covered circle at the front door to The Madison high-rise assisted living facility where he lives, and we drove across the street to the Willow.

"Stevens was a good man," said Mac. "Though I have to say the modern story of his involvement in the Intelligence Community is a little overblown. I know something about that, since I helped establish the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Courts later in the 1970s."

Mac went to say that Stevens might have been recruited to be an Air Intelligence Officer rather than a cloak-and-dagger Spook like the published biography implies.

Mac looked thoughtful as he recalled and I dodged pedestrians to try to get parking at the curb directly in front of the door to the bar.

"Admiral Forrest Sherman created the whole air intelligence program," he said. "Sherman believed that the perfect AI was a lawyer by training, and he was right. They know how to listen, take depositions, and speak succinctly in a briefing. Admiral Forrest Sherman wanted orderly legal minds to take care of his cadre wearing the Wings of Gold. That is probably why they approached John Paul. I don't recall him being around in early 1943, but it is possible."

"It is probably why they all got out at the end of the war to go back to lawyering," I said with a laugh.



**(Fleet Admiral Yamamoto)**

“You might be right. LT Stevens was a new guy when I was there, and I had literally months of experience. I had reported to the code-breaking unit at Pearl (Station HYPO) in February of 1942 when the ships were still on the bottom of the harbor. That unit’s unclassified name was the Fleet Radio Unit Pacific (FRUPAC) and was already humming when Mac arrived in February 1942.

Mac hadn’t mentioned the dumb luck of it all. I started jotting notes on bar napkins, which surround me now. Long story short, he had never been ‘destined’ for anything like the illustrious career he had. It was completely by chance that he was selected to go to the six-week Investigations Course at Seattle after commissioning on 12 September of 1941. The 90-wonder course in Chicago was intended to produce Deck Officers for the growing Fleet, and it was complete chance he did not get orders to a ship, as most did. Some of them had enough time after commissioning to arrive at their first duty stations in Hawaii to die under the Japanese bombs.

The December 7th attack happened just after he completed the investigations course; he served briefly in the Public Affairs office in Seattle. His duties included resettling Alaskan families in the Pacific Northwest, due to the threat of war. And then it began in earnest. All the Ensigns immediately were given orders west, toward the crisis. Half were assigned to the 16th Naval District in Manila, the other half to the 14th ND in Honolulu. Dumb luck, or it could have been the alphabetic order in which they were issued.

“Showers” fell in the second tranche of orders, and he was headed for Honolulu

The 16th Naval District was in Manila. The kids who got those orders took the train down the coast to the Sea Port of Embarkation (SPOE) at San Francisco to the Philippines, and arrived just in time to proceed directly from the docks at Manila into Japanese prison camps- the hellholes of the South China Sea.

Some of them lived. Just Dumb Luck that Mac did not have to endure the horrors.

Mac instead got orders to the 14th Naval district in Honolulu. There was no Waikiki in those days; that was just a swamp west of Downtown and the Aloha Tower and the Matson passenger terminal. He was billeted in the YMCA near Hotel Street and the Aloha Tower where the Matson Liners landed.

The day after arrival, he walked in the soft breeze amid the scent of flowers from the Y to report to the District Intelligence Officer as ordered.

The District Intelligence Office was in a hotel the Navy had requisitioned to accommodate wartime needs, and Mac was startled to note that the Assistant DIO who received him wore two pearl-handled pistols on his belt due to his perceived threat of domestic Japanese terrorists.

“The guy was a regular Cowboy,” said Mac. “He got right to the point, too. He asked me how much field investigation experience I had. I told him I had successfully completed the six-week course in Seattle, but otherwise had none. The Cowboy positively fumed.” Mac chuckled, remembering the interview. “It was a guy named CDR Pease, and he was the Deputy in charge of counterintelligence, among other things.

“So, the Cowboy kind of sneered at me, saying “I need men with experience, and you are worthless to me.” Mac said he rocked back in his chair and the pearl handles of the pistol poked out. “He said he had a billet out at the Shipyard he had not been able to fill since he needed all the experienced help downtown. Then he said he had just found someone he didn’t need.”

Next morning, Mac had orders to the Shipyard, and found Station Hypo in the basement of the Administration Building, near the bustle of the recovery efforts to salvage the stricken ships that leaned crazily at the piers or had capsized at their berths in the harbor.

By noon, Mac found himself reporting to a Navy Commander named Joe Rochefort, one of the small handful of men who understood radio, codes and the Japanese language and culture. His little unit made critical breakthroughs on the Japanese JN- 25 code system, but it came at a cost.

Mac was put to work immediately, experience or no. There was a war on, after all. As mid-1942 approached, FRUPAC was literally under the gun. There were periods of round-the-clock work on intercepted messages.



**(Charleton Heston (l) and Hal Holbrook as Joe Rochefort (r) in the 1976 film “Midway”).**

“Did Commander Rochefort work in his bathrobe, showing up for briefings at the CINCPACFLT HQ up at Makalapa Crater late and disheveled, like actor Hal Holbrook

played him in the movie “Midway?””

“We did what we had to do in The Dungeon,” replied Mac. “But do not make the mistake of thinking that Joe Rochefort was anything like the crypto-mystic Holbrook made him out to be. Joe was a pro.”

I kept writing on the growing pile of napkins in front of me. Mac sipped ginger ale and told me he had been working there about three months when the frantic effort climaxed with the decryption of just enough JN-25 traffic to understand the objective of the Japanese attack. Washington thought the Japanese were headed for Alaska, having detected the movement of a diversionary force intended attack American interest away from the actual objective. Washington had it wrong, and that was going to be the basis of animosity and jealousy that would last decades.

If you had not heard, Washington hates to be wrong.

The main body of the Japanese Navy was going to strike and seize Midway Island, and establish a bastion from which they could threaten the Hawaiian Islands.

Rochefort, with Fleet Intelligence Officer Edwin Layton, convinced Admiral Nimitz that Midway Island was the real objective. In an act of serene confidence, the Admiral gambled on the ambush that resulted in the Battle of Midway, 4-7 June, 1942. In the fight, the Japanese lost four carriers and most of their skilled naval aviators.

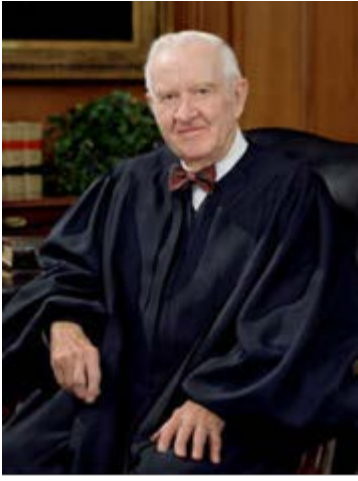
It was the turning point of the Pacific War.

Mac eventually transferred from FRUPAC to be Eddie Layton’s assistant, and to deploy forward to Admiral Nimitz’ forward HQ at Guam. He worked as chief of the forward Estimates Section on what would happen with the land invasion of the Home Islands, that helped make the decision to debut the use of the (atomic) Gadgets against Japan.

Five days after the surrender, with the help of his Boss CAPT Layton, Mac made a visit to Yokosuka Naval Base, from which the Imperial Navy ships had departed to strike Pearl four years before.

He was awarded the Bronze Star for his work with the code breakers. It was all just dumb luck that he was not in the half of his class that reported direct to be prisoners of the Japanese.

LT John Paul Stevens, USNR, finished up his time at FRUPAC, which had moved from the basement at the shipyard to the temporary building in back of the PACFLT Headquarters. He demobilized and got on with his life as a lawyer. As it turns out, he did pretty well. Mac stayed in the Navy, of course, and joined the people at Langley after he retired, and then retired again, and is busier in the third part of his life’s work than he ever was.



**(Justice John Paul Stevens on the High Court).**

He is still occasionally in touch with his old wartime buddy, and told me when I dropped him off at The Madison that he would ask him how he was planning on enjoying his retirement.

I smiled and was already compiling another list of questions. This had been a stratosphere-level. Now, we could come back and get into the weeds. I said: “We need to get together again soon, if you would be willing.”

“I would be happy to,” said Mac.

“I have some follow-on questions, Sir, and I want to ask them one at a time, rather than a whole war in just a few drinks. Or ginger ales, as the case might be. The one I will leave you with is this: was it all just dumb luck?”

“You don’t know the half of it, Vic,” said Mac. “I would be happy to continue to get together. There are a couple things I would like to get straight, while there is still time.” Then he turned and walked briskly into the lobby of the Madison, his posture perfect, except for the slight list from the weight of the cast on his arm.

**Welcome Aboard**



**(USS *Oklahoma* capsized at her berth in Pearl Harbor. Official US Navy Photo.)**

I looked with dismay at the plastic bag from Bed Bath and Beyond that Mac placed on the tall cocktail table. There was a book about the Berlin Airlift I don't have time to read, and the CIA monograph that I will make time for. I waved at Peter to get a glass of the loss-leader Pino Grigio.

“The CIA publication only has about fifty pages of text,” said Mac. “But the exhibits in the back are reproductions of the original documents- minutes of meetings and policy memos- they are fascinating. It shows how Truman made his decisions to use The Bomb against the Japanese. Our estimates played a key role in that process, even if we are mentioned by name.”

“Yeah,” I said, smiling as Peter filled the bubble-shaped wine glass to precisely one-third of its depth. “But we talked about the end last week and missed the beginning. I want to hear about 1942, when you first got to Pearl. I want to know what you did, what the job was like, what your battle rhythm was.”

Mac nodded and took a sip of his Virgin Mary. “Did you know that at one point I had four military identification cards with four different colors of eyes?” He took off his glasses and leaned forward. His blue eyes sparkled with amusement. “Blue, Gray, Brown and Hazel. What do you think?”

“I would say blue,” I said, wondering if the pork spring rolls were on the neighborhood bar

bistro menu. “Though I suppose they could be hazel or gray. I have never understood the color hazel.”

Sara-with-no-H wandered by, pert and trim in her black shirt and slacks, and asked if we were hungry, and we were. Her eyes were dark as coal and just as mysterious. Really a cute gal. We ordered a couple of the tapa-sized snacks. “So we have done the big stuff, the pivot points of history and all that. What was life like? What did you really do?”

Mac contemplated the question, since he was usually asked about the matters of primary interest for those of use who came after, the sinking of mighty aircraft carriers and the mushroom clouds. “Well, after I was abruptly dismissed by that cowboy Officer in Charge of the Honolulu detachment of the Navy Investigation Service, I was sent out to the Shipyard at Pearl. The Cowboy figured he could use me to fill a lingering requirement levied by the staff of Admiral Nimitz.

It was February, 1942, you know. The big boats are still on the bottom of the harbor. USS *Oklahoma* still presented her keel and one massive brass propeller pointing to the puffy clouds. Nevada was just being re-floated, and came back into the harbor for dry-docking in the middle of the month. I arrived at the Admin Building at the shipyard, presented my orders in triplicate at the quarterdeck, and was eventually shown down to the basement and presented to Commander Joe Rochefort, the OIC.”



(USS *Nevada* entering dry dock, 18 Feb 1942 near the 14th Naval District HQ and CIU/Station HYPO. Official Navy Photo.)

My ears perked up. “So you went to work for him?” I made a note on the napkin in front of me, nearly knocking over the wineglass, which was wedged against the plates and cloth

napkins and silverware we don't use to eat the snacks. "At the Fleet Radio Unit- Pacific?"

"No," said Mac with mild irritation, as though he was talking to a slow-learner. "We were known as the Combat Intelligence Unit, the CIU. No, Joe Rochefort just said "Welcome Aboard, Ensign. He knew that I didn't have any Japanese language training or expertise with the IBM ECM Mark III punch-card tabulating machines. CDR Rochefort gave me over to Jasper Holmes, and I started to make files."

"Files?"

"Yes. Ditto files. Do you know what that is?"

"Like mimeograph machines? I remember those from grade school. And the smell." I wrinkled my nose with the memory.

"Our fingers were purple at the end of the day from the fluid. I will get to how we eventually got inside the Japanese code system, but I need to explain how this all worked."

I nodded. "That would be useful," I said and winced as I bit into a spring roll that was still blazing from the hot oil of the wok in the kitchen. *Damn*, those things are tasty.

"The Japs had introduced what we called the JN-25 code system in mid-1939. It consisted of about 33,000 words, phrases, and letters and was the primary code they used to send military, as opposed to diplomatic, messages. After Pearl Harbor, the CIU focused on cracking that code, though we also had success with a lower-grade code they used for controlling their merchant ships. That is what we gave to the submarine force."

"When did the CIU get into the code?" I asked, swirling a little of the dry white wine in my mouth to assuage the burn. I noticed there were some very attractive women at the bar, concentrating exclusively on one another and I wondered if Willow was attracting the lipstick lesbian crowd. If it was, I was all in favor of it.

"CIU had some success starting the month before I got there, in January. But it was hard. That is why the files were so important. But let me explain the way it worked. OP-20-G was the staff number assigned to the Code and Signal Section of the OpNav staff at Main Navy back in Washington. It changed to the Radio Intelligence Section the month I was welcomed aboard. We were station HYPO, named for the first letter in Hawaii. Station



CAST was on Corregidor Island in the Philippines, and so on. NEGAT was at the former girl's school on Nebraska Avenue in Washington. There were over seven hundred people assigned to the effort.”

“Was it NEGAT that got the “East Wind Rain” message that signaled the attack?”

Mac snorted. “There never was an East Wind message. That is all nonsense. Commander Safford was the only one who testified that he got it, and that was after the war in the testimony to Congress about who was responsible for the Pearl Harbor attack.”

“OK, I know the target code, and the big issues. I am interested in what it was like to work at HYPO and what you did, how you got around, what the hours were like. You know, what it was like to be at war with the Japanese looking invincible.”

“Well, to do that I will have to tell you about how I made a Frankenstein sedan, and a little about Jasper Holmes, who had quite a career writing for the Saturday Evening Post.”

I knew it was time to get a fresh napkin, and waved past the pretty ladies to Peter to see if I could get some more wine.

## **Pacific Winds**



**Bar, Arlington, VA.)**

**(Willow Restaurant and**

Mac was intent about the Winds messages. I had not meant to get into it, since it was an intellectual fight of long standing for a lot of people who are no longer alive, It was always in the background during the war, part of the long battle between the Navy and the Army code-breakers, and it burst out again, when the battle for reputation and honor was re-fought in Washington before the Joint Committee of Congress when the actual fighting was finally over.

I pushed the empty plate aside that had held the springs rolls and dipping sauce. Willow has its clock-work internal mechanisms tied to the lives of the people in the towers around it, and this afternoon was no exception. Jim the Curmudgeon Consultant came in and planted himself at the corner stool. He drinks Bud, even though Tracy's vision of her place is an upscale wine bar.

He is more than a but like Norm on the epic bar-fly classic television show Cheers. I sometimes wonder what character I resemble, and hope it is not Cliff.

He waved, and distracted, I waved back. The line-up along the bar was decidedly more diverse than I remember the one being on television, what with the business guys and elegant ladies talking earnestly to one another, but I like it.

“Captain Safford testified that he got the famous “East Wind, Rain” message, and that it was intercepted at the Security Group Station at Bainbridge Island. That was the message

that was supposed to direct the diplomatic stations to burn their codes, and it was war.”

He crinkled his brow. “West Wind Cloudy was supposed to mean war with Great Britain. North was the Soviet Union, I think. Doesn’t matter. The message was never sent, or if it was, we didn’t get it. There was a chief petty officer who was going to testify that he got the message and got it to Safford, but he was never called. The historical record is not what you think it is.”

“I know that from personal experience,” I said. I took a sip of pinot Grigio as Willow continued its deliberate rhythm and the lights went down precisely at 5:15, even if there was plenty of daylight outside. The sudden dimness caused us to move closer, which I suppose is the point.

“See, the Combat Intelligence Unit, working from cramped spaces in the basement of the Naval District Headquarters at the shipyard was on the defensive from the day of the attack until they started to ramp up. What Joe Rochefort and Eddie Layton and Jasper Holmes did was create OPINTEL.”

I nodded in agreement. I am an acolyte of the craft of operational intelligence, indoctrinated into the cult by the legendary CDR Mikey, the best naval analyst of his generation. He taught our generation the craft that had been perfected there in Pearl in the months that Allis reeled backwards from the inexorable onslaught of the Japanese war machine.

You had to combine overhead imagery, acoustic data, sensitive and not-so-sensitive SIGINT and blend it with highly classified HUMINT to get a clue as to where the Soviets were sending their Boomers. We were pretty good at the craft, and directing our maritime patrol aircraft to count coup on them. But the basic methodology was nothing new, and came from the basement of the Admin Building at Pearl.

The quick success of that effort enabled Admiral Nimitz to meet and decisively defeat the Japanese Navy at Midway in June 1942, just six months after the crushing defeat. It was pretty remarkable, and I have never had a good explanation of how it worked.

“So what did you do? What was your job? What were your hours?” I asked. I get all the big stuff, but I wanted the texture. I have stood watch when bad shit went down, and I remember senior people breathing down my back demanding answers when there were only questions.

Mac was a bit disconcerted. He lectures about Admiral Nimitz all the time, and the big strategic issues he was part of that are old enough to not still be secret. He is self-effacing, and sometimes reluctant to take credit for what he did so long ago as a supporting cast player with giants. Then he smiled.

“It is like the cars in Hawaii. You have to remember that everything was going to the war effort. Tires were precious. So were engines. Nothing new was being made for the duration. Sometimes an automobile was worth how much tread there was on the tires.”

“That is the way it was in Japan,” I said, remembering the 1969 Toyota Publica station wagon I painted up in squadron colors in Yokohama. “A departing shipmate sold it to me for exactly the value of the months remaining on the Japan Compulsory Insurance policy. The vehicle itself had no worth at all, since under the Status of Forces Agreement we had an exception to the Beautification Law that forced the locals to purchase a new car every three years or pay an increasingly steep tax.”

“It wasn’t taxes in the war, Vic. It was just that there wasn’t anything available to buy. So there was a place that made Frankensteins. I got an old Ford that had decent tires but no engine. One of the mechanics spliced in an old Chevy engine, and re-worked the mounts and I was rolling. It was not much different from OPINTEL, Everything went together to make a rolling package.”

Mac fished one of the two remaining colossal olives out of the bottom of his Virgin Mary.

“So what exactly did you do?” I was determined to get to the texture of what it was like as the Pacific war lurched to the tipping point.

“I did files. Files and the overlay. We came in at all hours. There were a few officers that had families on the island, and they had something like normal hours. Most of us had nothing to do except work. Some of the linguists came in early and stayed late, sometimes around the clock.” He chewed the olive and contemplated the last of the three that remained, still on the toothpick.

“The watch worked on big onion-skin paper overlay that was placed over a map of the Pacific. They annotated everything that happened over the course of the day in pencil. When the attack happened, the map only went to the edge of the Hawaiian Sea Frontier, but

after the war started it was the whole Pacific. We had one in the basement that was the same as the one over at the Sub Base, where Admiral Nimitz had his HQ before they moved up to Makalapa Crater.”

Mac was looking in the direction of Jim, who was talking to Ray, the former Marine, as Jim’s long-suffering wife Chanteuse Mary looked on. He wasn’t looking at them, though. He was looking into a morning long ago.

“I only went with the overlay a couple times, so I would know, just in case. Jasper Holmes took it away for the 0800 briefing every morning. The HQ was on the second floor of the building, and you got up to the second floor by an exterior staircase.”

“I remember the building. Didn’t it become SUBPAC later?”



(Pearl Harbor Shipyard, with the 14th Naval District HQ and Submarine Base, 1942. Official Navy photo.)

Mac nodded. "Eddie Layton’s assistant was a linguist named Bob Hudson. He was a lieutenant and I was an ensign. I was in the intelligence office, waiting for Jasper to get done with posting the overlay and Dunbar looked at me and said I didn’t have a reason to be there and I should go out in the passageway to wait. He was a pal later, but I thought he was a first class asshole then. Probably not a very good linguist, either, since he wasn’t doing anything to contribute to the code-breaking. The guys that had been trained in Japanese thought they were the kings over us reservists, whether they were any good or not.”

“So you were on watch in 1942, producing the overlay?”

“Well, yes, the overlay was the big product. I understand they may actually have all of them down at the Cryptologic Museum at Corey Station down in Pensacola. They disappeared for many years, if that is where they were. They were all ULTRA classified, the best OPINTEL compendium we had, day by day.” He frowned, wistfully. “I don’t imagine I will ever see them again, if that is where they are.”

“So aside from the daily overlay, what were people doing in the basement?”

“We were doing files. We had boxes and boxes of them. Jasper had two yeomen working for him. A First Class named Bill Dunbar, and a Second Class named Irving-something, a nice Jewish kid. That made up the Information Section of the CIU.”

Jim was waving for reinforcement Budweiser. Ray was looking at his watch. Jon with no “h” was tugging at his bow tie. I wear them, too, though mine are all clip-ons, an affectation I use as a political statement. Jon ties his own, of course. A couple of attractive women walked by our table, looking like they were together and happy about it.

Mac warmed to the memory. “The linguists would get the raw traffic from the cryptanalysts, and they would translate as much of it as they could, leaving blanks where they couldn’t fill in the meaning. Then they brought it to us. I would then take the message and underline words of significance. I looked for the address, who it was from, who it was sent to, ship names, dates, place names, every base and every command. Then I counted up the number of underlines and wrote it on the top of the message. Bill and Irving would then make that number of ditto copies and we would put a copy into each file that matched the category. Our fingers were purple from the ditto fluid at the end of the day, and we had to scrub up with some kind of evil-smelling gunk to get it off. Over those months we built an enormous cross-reference system. When the linguists couldn’t make something out, we could go to the date or the place or the unit and figure things out in context.”

I chewed on the end of my pen, looking at the bedraggled napkin in front of me. “I understand the Japanese had a high level of confidence in the security of the JN-25 system. Aside from daily key changes, they never altered the code groups in the internal system, right?”

The Admiral smiled. “Yep. Our system was much better, actually an *improvement* over the

German Enigma machine encryption that the Brits cracked at Bletchley Park. The confidence level over time increased with the volume of Japanese messages we cross-indexed, since they used a manual methodology. We rated our analysis of the identification as “D” at first guess, and as we became more confidence, that would increase to “A” when it was a dead certain. We would then annotate the overlay and compile estimates for transmission on the Fleet Broadcast to the operating forces.”

I finished my glass of wine and nodded when Sara-with-no-“h” came by and arced one of her fabulous eyebrows. “That is not much different from the way I learned the business.”

“It was just OPINTEL. Brute force analysis supported by cross-indexing and a massive filing system. No one told us how to do it. We did it as a matter of vital necessity to try to win a war. Joe Rochefort had the concept, Eddie Layton masterminded the execution, and Jasper Holmes was the genial genius who made it all work.”

“So, did you feel the tide beginning to turn? Jimmy Doolittle's raid on Tokyo happened in April, and the OPINTEL picture gave you a draw at Coral Sea.”

“And then Jasper came up with the idea that let us figure out the target of the last big Japanese offensive at Midway. After than, we went on the attack, and we never looked back. Oklahoma and Arizona were still on the bottom of the harbor.”

Arizona still is, I thought. “When I lived there, I never begrudged going to work on Sunday at Ford Island, since the ferry from Mainside took us right past her memorial.”

“Her rusting hulk is still bleeding drops of fuel into Pearl’s placid waters,” said Mac. “She was topped up and ready to go in December of '41. She is still bleeding, just like she did when we worked in the basement of the Admin Building.”



(Turret mount of the USS Arizona with oil sheen, 2010)

## Up Periscope



(Dawn at Refuge Farm. Rays of the rising sun mimic those of the Imperial Japanese Naval Battle Flag. Photo Socotra)

Ever have that sense of dislocation, like not knowing where you are? Makes you queasy, like the aftermath of some great and rapid tectonic shift that slides a 7-11 Store up over its parking lot and into the middle of an intersection.



Like my pal Mike says, the top of Everest is sedimentary rock, and as high as it is now, was once at the bottom of a primordial sea, way below periscope depth. He and his daughter were at Refuge Farm briefly yesterday, and having them here was as disorienting as waking up in the wrong county.

Got me big time this morning. I realized a few moments into consciousness that I was not in my bed, but in another, also mine, but someplace else. It was as if I had come to periscope depth abruptly from the vasty deep.

I crept downstairs in the darkness and decided to stay awake. I am agitated about people I love, parents and others, and scanned the messages for portents and omens.

I discovered nothing about one situation and more than I needed on another. I have to help my brother and sister to convince my Mom to give up her home and move into something smaller and more manageable where we can get Dad the help he needs.

There is no instruction manual; how the hell is this supposed to work?

I sighed. I had this big scheme for this morning. I brought my notes from the long conversation at Willow with Mac down to the farm, and was going to tell you this morning about the guy who saved his life so long ago. Jasper Holmes was the guy, who if the world was sane, would be remembered as a writer of fiction.



(LT Jasper Homes)

But of course the world is not sane, and Jasper wound up tricking the inscrutable East into the biggest screw-up in the military history of the 20th Century, which is going a fair piece.

Mac knew him well, and Jasper wrote his own book about their time together. “Double Edged Secrets” was the title, and it will say everything you need to know, like Eddie Layton’s memoir that Roger Pineau and John Costello had to finish. Admiral Layton was sick at the end, and held his tongue until the ULTRA secret was finally declassified.

He savaged some of the alleged heroes of the big war, but the most guilty of them were

already dead taking their medals and reputations with them. That is why my friendship with Mac means so much. When we talk, they are all still alive, heroes and villains alike.

We are sworn to silence about the middle parts of our lives, and I doubt if I will last as long as Mac to be able to speak openly about the coolest parts.

That was the subject of that long discussion the other day. Six months after Pearl Harbor, Jasper Holmes got a scheme to fill in some of the blanks in all the files that Mac was cross-indexing with YN1 Bill Dunbar.

Mac has told the story of the Midway Miracle maybe a thousand times, but it never ceases to amaze me. But you need to understand a little about LT Holmes, so bear with me.

Jasper was not a career intelligence officer, but like Mac, pure chance propelled him into the most vital area of intelligence, Radio Intelligence and cryptography.

He was a line officer, originally, and a bold one. In the 1930s, he was assigned to an S-Boat, one of the original main-line USN submarines. Mac told me about them. Not much of an improvement over the German *unterzee* boats of World War One.



(Model of an S-Class diesel submarine like Jasper's)

Mac says the S-Class were dank and chilly craft, which exasperated a bad case of osteoarthritis, and LT Holmes found himself medically retired and on the beach in lovely Hawaii. There are worse things in life, and Jasper used his unexpected change of career to reinvent himself. He wrote, beautifully, as it turned out, and out of deference to his day job at the University of Hawaii, wrote under a pen name he dreamed up.

“Alec Hudson” was what he chose, and as you might imagine, a naval officer with a bogus identity is something that resonates closely here at Refuge Farm. He wrote compelling accounts of life in the Submarine Force. He was published in the Saturday Evening Post, among other less prestigious places, and he was read avidly by those later caught up in the

terror and excitement of the war.

His best known works of fiction are compilations of his shorter works “Up Periscope!” and “Battle Stations.”

A casual reading will betray the fact that they directly inspired the young Gene Roddenberry. The charismatic Scotsman of Star Trek (“I dinna can change the laws of Fizziks, Captain!”) and Jasper’s Captain Jaimeson and Roddenberry’s Captain Kirk are unmistakable.

Jasper was recalled to active duty in mid-1941 with the anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific. His original duties were shore-based at the headquarters of the 14th Naval District. He essentially assigned himself with the tracking of merchant vessels in the Pacific. In peacetime, it is simple enough to use ship's weather reports to provide locational data, and this association brought him closer and closer to the Spooks.

The Big Surprise on December 7th was naturally a shock. Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lt. General Short were fingered for the blame, and relieved for cause. Chief Naval Personnel Chester Nimitz was tagged to command the battered Pacific Fleet over dozens of officers more senior.

Washington would not admit that it was bitter rivalries between Army and Navy, and within the Navy itself that exacerbated the blind spot that permitted the Japanese to land a knock-out blow on the Pacific Fleet.

Jasper was propelled into the maelstrom of the response in the Combat Intelligence Unit-Station HYPO. While not initially allowed access to the sensitive COMINT mission, he swiftly became integral to it and was one of the handful of people indoctrinated into the ULTRA program.

Because he had no direct cryptographic or Japanese language experience, CDR Joe Rochefort decided Jasper’s experience as a submarine officer would best be harnessed in assessing various sources of intelligence to determine the strength, composition and movements of various Japanese military units . LT Holmes became chief of the Information Section of the CIU- later known as the Estimates Branch.

That is where Ensign Mac met the man who was going to save his life. He had copies of the

books that Jasper wrote, both inscribed to him, but they are long gone in the constant shuffle of belongings in a Navy life.



Edward “Ned” Beach, was a Naval Academy midshipman who went on to command submarines and have a distinguished writing career (“Run Silent, Run Deep!”) of his own. He recognized “Alec Hudson” as the pen name of a naval officer, and made a point of finding out who exactly he was. He wrote about Jasper many years later, saying:

*...[he] had become an intelligence officer at Pearl Harbor and, after the attack on the Day of Infamy, had taken on himself the particular and personal dedication to see the destruction of every ship that had participated in it. During the war, from time to time, commanders of submarines would receive by messenger, without explanation, a bottle of fine whiskey. Little by little the word got around that one of the Japanese ships sunk on a recent patrol had carried special significance for someone. In this way Jasper Holmes never left out submarines. It was through him that we would receive orders to be somewhere at a certain time – and on occasion there was a bottle of booze at the end of the trail.”*

That is what Jasper was up to, and with Mac and his two Petty Officers, he was going to do it with complete success.

Oh, yeah, I could tell you the story about how Jasper foxed the Japanese at Midway, and got several of the bastards, but you could always just look it up.

## The Bomb Plot

[12] From: Tokyo (Toyoda)  
To: Honolulu  
September 24, 1941  
J-19  
#83  
Strictly secret.  
Henceforth, we would like to have you make reports concerning vessels along the following lines insofar as possible:  
1. The waters (of Pearl Harbor) are to be divided roughly into five sub-areas. (We have no objections to your abbreviating as much as you like.)  
Area A. Waters between Ford Island and the Arsenal.  
Area B. Waters adjacent to the Island south and west of Ford Island. (This area is on the opposite side of the Island from Area A.)  
Area C. East Loch.  
Area D. Middle Loch.  
Area E. West Loch and the communicating water routes.  
2. With regard to warships and aircraft carriers, we would like to have you report on those at anchor, (these are not so important) tied up at wharves, buoys and in docks. (Designate types and classes briefly. If possible we would like to have you make mention of the fact when there are two or more vessels along side the same wharf.)  
ARMY 23260 Trans. 10/9/41 (S)

**(The image is a little fuzzy, but this is the decrypted and translated message to the Japanese Consulate ordering daily surveillance of the American fleet in Pearl Harbor).**

There have been discussions for seven decades about how we got clobbered at Pearl Harbor. Mac did not arrive there until February of 1942, so he could not comment authoritatively on what was true or not about the claim that Washington short-sheeted the Pacific Fleet Commander on decrypted Japanese messages tracking the mooring locations of the American capital ships in the harbor.

Mac talked to Joe Rochefort about it when memories were still fresh and victory was far from certain. He said Joe wasn't sure that knowing about the message stream would have

changed anything in particular, but I was reading about it again. I had time- we got snow last night, most of this winter, and Washington is Predictably Paralyzed. Willow is closed for an unprecedented second night in a row, and I officially have cabin fever. In the meantime, the memories of the placid waters of Pearl Harbor will not leave me alone. This morning it was the Bomb Plot message.

No, it doesn't refer to some nefarious scheme or plan. "Plot" is Navy-speak for information placed on a map. Like targets you might want to bomb sometime.

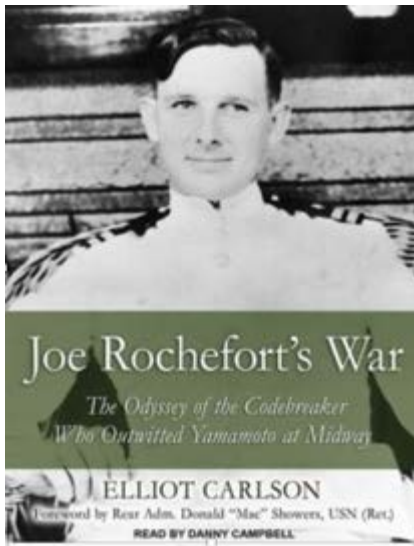
That is the intercepted message that might- or might not- have provided the advance information that the Japanese were interested in the precise locations of the American fleet. It might- or might not- have resulted in a different outcome in the attack. Some say that if the fleet was at sea, and might have tried to engage the attacking Japanese and been sunk in deep water, with thousands more casualties, and the proud ships lost forever, not salvaged as they were.

I got a note a week or so ago from a documentary filmmaker in the UK who is married to a pal who is a journalist based in the UK. Vicki Barker is the voice I trust on the CBS radio network. Her husband is interested in doing a documentary on the appalling way that Admiral Husband Kimmel, commander of the Pacific Fleet, and Lt. General Walter Short were hung out to dry in the wake of the disastrous attack on Pearl Harbor.

As I have told you (over and over) I lived and worked in the buildings that survived the Day of Infamy, and I was fortunate to have been a drinking buddy and tipsy Boswell to RADM Donald "Mac" Showers, the last of the JN-25 code-breakers at Station HYPO in Pearl.

My stories are sincere, but were never intended to be documentary history. I always liked to get to the loopy aspects of history- like, what was the party like at the quarters of chief code-breaker Joe Rochefort after the amazing results of the battle of Midway became known? (Answer: *It was a good one*).

Elliot Carlson is a professional historian who was working on his extraordinary biography of Rochefort through the same period, and detailed the scandalous story of Joe's removal from command of HYPO by ankle-biting careerist hacks in the moment of his greatest triumph.



There is still a lot of emotion in all this. I know a pompous jackass here in town who was going around trying to discredit the story of how Joe's band of Japanese linguists and cryptologists identified the target of the attack on Midway.

As you may recall, ENS Mac Showers was sitting at his desk in the Dungeon when Jasper Holmes outlined his scheme to tell the Commander at Midway (by way of secure submarine cable) to report by unencrypted radio that the fresh water plant on the coral atoll was malfunctioning. Holmes said that when the Japanese copied the radio transmission, it might reveal the identity of the target for the coming attack, and permit decisive action by the American Fleet.

Joe Rochefort liked the idea, and it worked. Within a few days, an encrypted Japanese message was de-coded that revealed the target- "AF"- was having fresh water problems.

It wasn't perfect intelligence, but that is about as good as it gets in the world of COMINT. Joe was wary of the testy relations he had with the radio intelligence people back in Washington. He didn't want the conclusion of the elegant subterfuge to be compromised by suspicion of who figured it out. So he provided the information to the Fleet Radio Unit in Melbourne, Australia, (FRUMEL) to have *them* report it.

Joe had a sign behind his desk that read: "There is no limit to what **you** can do, so long as **you don't care who gets the credit.**" And so, sixty years after the fight, people were still fighting about stealing credit for what Jasper and Joe did in the basement of the 14<sup>th</sup> Naval District.

With things like that going on, Elliot relied heavily on Mac's razor-sharp recollections to keep things straight. We are still attempting to get Mac's 26-hour oral history transcribed and declassified- money and personnel bandwidth has been a challenge but we continue to press.

Elliot's interviews with Mac were conducted in a much more focused manner than the ones I was doing, but they were complementary in nature.

I have asserted that the real villain in all this was Admiral Richmond Kelly "Terrible" Turner, who had been Chief of War Plans at Main Navy before the war had been instrumental in denying Hawaii access to the high-level Japanese Diplomatic messages in the Purple intelligence stream. That, and the famous Bomb Plot message are described In "Joe Rochefort's War."

The Bomb Plot message is presented on page 154 and onward in the book. The question from the filmmaker was about exactly that. I wrote him back that "*Arlington Hall Station (across from where I now live) was where the Army conducted its code-breaking. Their charter- and part of the division of labor with Navy- was to attack the Japanese high-level diplomatic code (Purple) as well as less important cypher systems used by the Japanese diplomatic corps.*"

HYPO's mission was only to track Japanese Naval ships. The Bomb Plot message was in a different cypher system than Purple, known as "J-19," and was considered a secondary priority to breaking Purple traffic. The message had originally been copied on 24 September at the Army intercept site at Fort Shafter on Oahu. They lacked translators and machine support at Monitoring Station-5 (MS-5), and so the cable in question was shipped back to Washington for processing.

According to Elliot, the message was eventually deciphered a few weeks later and circulated to the Army and Navy Radio Intelligence brass. They determined the request for detailed anchorage positions was routine and the message was then filed away without action.

It did not come to light until the Pearl Harbor inquiries were held- the first in the wake of the attack, and the second, more elaborate one, after the war was over and the sense of urgency slightly less.



Later, when the existence of the messages were revealed, Rochefort himself was not confident that he would have recognized the Bomb Plot message as significant. He remarked that he might have just chalked it up to the obsessive nature of Japanese collection philosophy.

That was emphatically not true for Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lt. Gen. Short were, since they had already been railroaded and scapegoated. Both were back in Washington before the existence of the Bomb Plot message was revealed to either. Eddie Layton would probably have been the one to bring it to Kimmel as his Fleet Intelligence Officer, but it never made it back to Hawaii.

Nor did the high level Japanese diplomatic traffic transmitted in the Purple system. Richmond Kelly Turner made sure those messages did not get to Admiral Kimmel- including the ones that directed Japanese diplomatic staff to have things wrapped up by the end of November 1941. The Kido Butai, the IJN Main Body, sortied for Pearl on the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month.

At the dawn of the age of machine encryption, special machines had been constructed to assist the laborious process of breaking the contents of the messages- there are some great stories to tell about black-bag jobs and the like conducted by Naval Intelligence to enable the penetration of the codes. Station CAST in the Philippines had one. Station NEGAT in Washington had one.

The one intended for Pearl was in Bletchley Park in the UK. There is a story about that, too, and maybe we will get back to Beach Gradients one of these mornings soon.

But if anyone tells you that Joe Rochefort was wrong, or that the guys in Australia had anything to do with Jasper Holmes and his great idea, just tell them they are pompous partisan windbags.

Oh, and it is good to have friends. Thanks to that, I can give you a look at two of the Great Americans who labored in The Dungeon in the basement of the 14th Naval District at Pearl Harbor:



Joseph Finnegan



Wesley A. Wright

## Foxing the Sun



**(Old Japanese Comic Book, “Army of Mickey’s following the battle flag.” Image courtesy Jennifer).**

The trick to understanding how Jasper Holmes foxed the Empire of the Sun is contained in the methodology they used to create OPINTEL. It was a fusion of methodologies: an ‘all-source’ approach to integrate communications intercept, code breaking, photographic, open source information, topographic, hydrographic and human intelligence, all cooked up in the processing unit of the Combat Intelligence Unit in the basement of Building One at the Shipyard at Pearl.

Of course, it started literally the day of the attack in December 1941. Commander Joe Rochefort was Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Radio Intelligence Unit (Station HYPO). The riddle was wrapped in an enigma as is common. The whole thing was covered by the euphemism of the CIU.

Mac told me at the Willow bar that the Navy cryptanalysts were not able to read operational Japanese Navy message traffic- the JN-25 code system at the beginning. Jasper Holmes had made some progress tracking merchant ships, the information on which was available through Lloyds before the war swept all the commercial activity into the *levee en mass* war efforts of the respective belligerents.

Mac joined Holmes and his two yeomen in February, by chance, and some significant progress had been made, though trial and error. Joe Rochefort was to devote all his efforts

to breaking the JN-25 code, and enlisting the support of the growing mountain of cross-indexed messages to glean the true meaning of each five-digit code group within them.

Once enough sense was made out of an intercept, it was turned into actionable information to support the pencil annotations on the daily onion-skin overlay that went to Admiral Nimitz each morning, and to transmit to the Fleet.

“That is pretty crazy, Admiral. A stream of coded messages going out from the Japanese to their Fleet being copied by us, decrypted to the degree you could, and then re-encrypted and sent out to US units.”

“Our system was pretty good,” said Mac, as I was trying to catch Peter’s eye and get the tab so we could take Willow’s moveable feast on the road home. I had dozens of napkins in front of me, all covered with cryptic pen strokes. “We called our machine code system the ECM- literally the Electric Coding Machine. As far as we could tell, it was unbreakable.”

“That is a useful thing in a code system,” I said. “When we found out the Walker assholes had been feeding the Soviets our codes for years, and that the machines themselves had been compromised by the North Koreans and Vietnamese, we realize how badly we were screwed.”



(Traitor John Walker)

“It is just good that we did not have to go to war with the Russians. But John Walker started supplying code material to them in 1967, and there is evidence that the Pueblo incident was a result of them wanting the machine enciphering equipment to run the keying material. The North Koreans were happy to help.”

“Everyone is upset about Bradley Manning and the Wiki-leaks thing, but Walker compromised millions of naval messages.”

“Yep,” said Mac, looking a little wistfully at the remains of his Virgin Mary. “And some good people died and many bad people didn’t because of those traitors. Communications security is how you save lives and win wars.”

Eventually, I got home and thought I might swim, and placed the stack of napkins next to the computer to try to work my own style of decryption in the morning. I was about to head down to the pool before Joanna the Polish Lifeguard locked up for the night when my pal the attorney called me up with a question. He was still at the office, on San Diego time.

“I have been reading about your conversations, and you know I have a legal mind. So, I was wondering what our Morse code operators actually copied down when listening on their intercept radios? It just occurred to me that Japanese is an ideograph language, so instead of words, even in plain text, they would have to have a series of cipher groups to stand for individual ideographs.”



(Enigma Code Machine. Courtesy National Cryptologic Museum)

“I don’t know,” I said. “I am much more familiar with the attacks on the German Enigma machines and the algorithms based on machine encryption. I am a liberal arts guy, but my understanding of that process is that when the rotors were set to the daily key setting, the operator would type in words in plain text and the machine would scramble it up into hundreds of thousands of variations. It would arrive at the distant end and be processed by a

machine with the same rotor settings and come out in the original text.”

My attorney was not satisfied. “So did the COMINT operators copy something like would look like a string?”

He rattled off a string of numbers as an example: “59442 break 66999 break 30522 break 99911 00456. That would produce an ideograph cipher-group that meant “Proceed full speed Point A”?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “I will have to ask Mac.” I made a note to call him on Sunday. The Attorney has a reason to take this seriously. He had spent a year in Vietnam, right on the Cambodian Border, and walked into a Soviet COMINT site that had been located on one of the islands next to Vietnamese waters, eavesdropping on US battlefield communications.

The North Korean capture of Pueblo and the treasonous Walker disclosures ensured that they got great information.

By Sunday, and I was already depressed with the prospect of starting another working week. The pool had been unusually chilly when I swam, and the clouds had gathered in the afternoon and even this early in August there was the hint of the Fall to come.

I realized I was going to have to start planning shortly for an exercise activity that did not include the Big Pink pool.

To get my mind off the gloom of Black Sunday, I called up Mac at his apartment at the Madison where he lives. He was catching up on correspondence anyway and happy to talk. After some pleasantries, and making a tentative date for our next trip to Willow, I tried to paraphrase the attorney’s question.

“So, were there actually three steps in the decryption process of the JN-25 Naval Code. First to copy it accurately, then break the numerical codes that stood for Japanese ideographs, then to translate those ideographs into English?”

Mac hesitated briefly. “I’m not qualified to give a complete answer, Vic. I was neither a cryptologist nor a linguist. I was a Deck Officer with the basic investigations course as professional background. But here is how it worked in the basement of Building One. Our intercept operators copied JN-25 five-digit code groups, as your friend guessed.”

There a pause on the line as Mac recalled. “These were not actual code groups, but were five digit groups taken from the code dictionary of 40,000 to 50,000 groups. Then, to encipher the message, the Japanese communications clerk would go to an Additive Table of random five digit groups that were added to the basic code group, with no carrying to the

adjacent digit.”

“Then, to decipher the text, the receiving clerk would take the incoming encrypted message and go to the same table and subtract the additives to expose the clear text of the message, which can then be read from the code groups in the code dictionary.

“That doesn’t sound so hard,” I said.

“That was a very simplistic description of what the Japanese operators had to do, Mac snorted. “When we got the five-digit groups of the message through the intercept operators, the processing unit where I worked began to attack it. Our first task was to determine the additive numbers that were used and subtract them from the transmitted text. We called that step “stripping the additives,” and it got us to the basic code group. Then we would apply cryptographic skills to determine the possible meaning of each code group, one by painful one. Over time, with luck, some good guesses, and maybe an occasional crypto error by a Japanese clerk, the linguists could begin to recover the meaning of each individual code group.

“After months of effort, we could begin to read fragments of messages, and then things became easier. Greater volume of traffic, a few more operator errors, and greater familiarity with the system all contributed toward being able to read messages in greater detail. Of course, then the Japanese would change the additive tables, and we’d have to start all over again. The one thing that made all the difference was that the basic code group dictionary wasn’t changed during the entire war.”

I thought about that for a moment. “So when Jasper Holmes thought up his little plan to make the Japanese tell us the point of attack in their last major offensive, there was a missing code group for Midway island?”

Mac nodded. “Yep. Washington was convinced that the Japanese were going to land at Dutch Harbor in Alaska. Jasper thought the communications activity that suggested a northern attack was a ruse, and that the main battle force would try to take Midway. So, he convinced Rochefort and Eddie Layton to send a message via the secure underwater cable get the naval station on the island to broadcast that they had problems with their water evaporators.”

“Which was then copied by the Japanese, who reported the five digit code group of the place of attack had water problems.”

“Correct. It happened right by my desk in The Dungeon. Then all Eddie Layton had to do was convince Nimitz to gamble everything he had on the chance that Jasper was right.”

“What a story,” I said, looking at the increasingly cloudy sky.



(Japanese heavy cruiser of the *Mogame* Class on fire after attack by planes of Task Force 16, 6 June, 1942).

Mac cleared his throat. He quit smoking years and years ago, but he enjoyed his Lucky Strikes during the war. “I am not a linguist or a cryppie, so I cannot give you a more technical description of the process, and all the persons I worked with during WWII who could do so are six feet under. Someone at NSA might be able to do so, but you’d probably have to be cleared into his domain before he’d tell you, and then he might have to shoot you afterward. The Fort is kinda funny about such things, you know.”

I thought about the Walkers, and a war that was won, and one that was lost, and thanked Mac for his time. He may have told the story about Jasper Holmes a thousand times, but I will never lose my amazement for it.

“Next time at Willow we need to talk about how things changed after Midway at the Combat Intelligence Unit.”

“OK,” said Mac. “I’ll tell you how it worked at the Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area when we went on the offensive.”

“Cool,” I said.

Meanwhile, this episode with Mac at Willow is one of the crucial turning points in the affairs of the Nation and of the people who serve it. Or profess to do so, anyway. This is one of the central issues in the history of the American Intelligence Community, and about why Mac felt so strongly about getting Joe Rochefort the recognition he deserved, and for which Mac and Jasper Holmes and so many others tried to rectify. In the end, Mac succeeded, but the wars within the secret world continue. In view of all that has happened lately, it would appear that we are still in for a wild ride, and some of the echoes of long ago events continue to reverberate in our own times.



## With the Golden Pelicans at Midway



Photo # 80-G-19974 PBY crew who discovered Japanese fleet, Battle of Midway.

When I was interviewing Mac, it was seventy odd years from the exact time the Golden Pelicans of VP-44 were manning up their PBY *Catalina* and going out to see if Eddie Layton's bold prediction about the location of the main Japanese battleforce headed for the invasion of Midway Island was going to be true.

I am going to be headed out to Pearl next week, just missing the ceremonies, for a perfectly good reason.

My 92-year-old drinking buddy is one of the last survivors, and considering the significance of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great battle, and the fact that so few of the participants are left, Mac is going to take his family out there. My boss Jake has been asked to make a speech, along with Mikey, who was the Big DNI for a few years.

I worked for a couple times in his amazing career. I am going to tag along to pay tribute and see once again the Islands where my sons were born.

Jake had an interesting story. He made one-star while on the USCINCPAC Staff, and was the "duty Admiral" one weekend when a special flight was laid on to scatter the ashes of

ENS George Gay, the “sole survivor of Torpedo EIGHT,” from the CINC’s dedicated P-3 Orion aircraft on the waves where the battle was fought so long ago. After he was shot down with the rest of his squadron, he spent an eventful day amid the Japanese fleet. It was Gay’s colorful eyewitness account of the sinking of three IJN Carriers that electrified the nation on the cover of Life Magazine.

Of course, it wasn’t completely true. Gay’s story was useful in that it provided the Combat Intelligence Unit an alternative explanation to why Admiral Nimitz knew so much about the devastating results of the battle. George had a story that did not include the vulnerability of the JN-25 coding system used by the Japanese.

I met ENS Gay at one of the big fly-ins at Oshkosh years ago, and he signed a copy of his book about the battle, “Sole Survivor.” He actually made LCDR before the war was over, and despite a follow-on career flying for Trans World Airways, he would always be “ENS Gay,” the only one of thirty squadron mates to survive the battle.

Jake noticed two older gentlemen who were on the CINC’s plane. For the life of him, he could not recall their names, but the event of the day were interesting. A stone was dedicated at Midway, and a harrowing event followed on a long flight 700 miles to the west as an aircrewman attempted to deposit ENS Gay out the hatch. He asked me to check it out—he thought the old guys might have been the pilot and co-pilot of the PBY whose contact with the Japanese provided plausible cover for the JN-25 intercepts that enabled Mac and station HYPO to offer Chester Nimitz the chance to bushwhack the Japanese.

The flight Jake was on covered the thousand nautical miles to the northwest of O’ahu. Midway, outer rampart of the Hawaiian Island chain, had been recognized to be strategic as early as 1867 when the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, directed that Brooks Island, as it was then known, be claimed and surveyed for the United States. In 1869, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for dredging an entrance channel to the lagoon. Over time, the atoll became a relay station for the trans-Pacific cable that linked the American colony of the Philippines to the Mainland.

Pan Am used the lagoon for a refueling station, and created a modest R&R and hotel facility in Mid-Pac. Pan Am was a great institution. I am sorry it is gone, though we saw remnants of their Pacific operations all over. I bought a copy of “Shattered Sword,” the latest in the long series of the history of the battle by Parshall and Tully, using extensive Japanese sources.

I personally found “Joe Rochefort’s War” by Elliott Carlson published later to be much more approachable and human scale.

Anyway, there are remarks to be drafted and stories to be told, so I thought I would take a whirl through the fight and get oriented so I could ask some pertinent questions to Mac, who was still alive and sitting at the Willow Bar, since he lived the experience.

By 1942, Midway had become the front line of the expanding area of the Japanese-controlled Pacific Ocean. Wake island, the next of the string of pearls across the broad blue waves, was a thousand nautical miles to the WSW. It was occupied by the Imperial Army in the opening days of the Pacific conflict, the Navy and Marine Garrison fighting hard before surrendering to overwhelming force.

The American spine had stiffened in the months of reeling defeat since the attack on Pearl- and the work of Station Hypo contributed to the ability to put maximum fire-power at the point of attack. The fight at Coral Sea was inconclusive, but shored up the route of the vital re-supply lines to Australia.

In May 1942, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, was prepared to shift his offensive operations north and east from Coral Sea and knock out the USN once and for all.

His staff devised an intricate plan called Operation *MI*, to draw out the U.S. Pacific Fleet by attacking Midway. Using Midway as bait and gathering a vast naval armada of eight aircraft carriers, 11 battleships, 23 cruisers, 65 destroyers and several hundred fighters, bombers and torpedo planes, Yamamoto planned to crush the Pacific Fleet once and for all.

He would ambush the mauled American Fleet at Midway Island, and then secure a base for land-based aviation to regularly strike Pearl Harbor.

Alerted by his code-breakers that the Japanese planned to seize Midway, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief, Pacific Command, flew to the atoll on May 2, 1942, to make a personal inspection. He wanted to size up the defensive posture and the character of his Navy and Marine commanders on scene. Commander Cyril T. Simard, USN, was the air component commander, and Lt. Col. Harold D. Shannon was the Marine ground commander.

They gave the Admiral the grand tour.

Following his personal inspection, Nimitz took Simard and Shannon aside and asked them what they needed to defend Midway. They told him their requirements.

"If I get you all these things, can you hold Midway against a major amphibious assault?" Nimitz asked the two officers. "Yes, sir!" Shannon replied.

It was good enough for Nimitz, who returned to Oahu. On May 20, Shannon and Simard received a letter from Admiral Nimitz, praising their fine work and promoting them to captain and full colonel, respectively. Then Nimitz informed them that the Japanese were planning to attack Midway on May 28; he outlined the Japanese strategy and promised all possible aid.

There were issues in the massive build-up. On May 22, a sailor accidentally set off a demolition charge under Midway's fuel farm. The explosion destroyed 400,000 gallons of aviation fuel, and also damaged the distribution system, forcing the defenders to refuel planes by hand from 55-gallon drums.

All the while the Marines continued digging gun emplacements, laying sandbags and preparing shelters on both islands.

Barbed wire sprouted along Midway's coral beaches. Shannon believed that it would stop the Japanese as it had stopped the Germans in World War I. He ordered so much strung that one Marine exclaimed: "Barbed wire, barbed wire! Cripes, the old man thinks we can stop planes with barbed wire!" The defenders also had a large supply of blasting gelatin, which was used to make anti-boat mines and booby traps.

On May 25, while the work continued, Shannon and Simard got some good news, courtesy of Joe Rochefort's band of code-breakers at Station Hypo. The Japanese attack would come between June 3 and 5, giving them another week to prepare.

That same day, the light cruiser St. Louis arrived, to deliver an eight-gun, 37mm anti-aircraft battery from the Marine 3rd Defense Battalion and two rifle companies from the 2nd Raider Battalion. Beginning on May 30, Midway's planes began searching for the Japanese. Twenty-two PBYs from Lt. Cmdr. Robert Brixner's Patrol Squadron 44 (VP-44)

and Commander Massie Hughes' VP-23 took off from Midway lagoon, then headed out in an arc stretching 700 miles from Midway in search of the main body of the invasion force.



**(Midway Island- actually three small islands in a middling-large lagoon. Now administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the island was a key mid-Pacific naval bastion for a century.)**

By June 1, both Sand and Eastern islands were ringed with coastal defenses. Six 5-inch guns, 22 3-inch guns and four old Navy 7-inch guns were placed along the coasts of both islands for use as anti-aircraft and anti-boat guns. As many as 1,500 mines and booby traps were laid underwater and along the beaches. Ammunition dumps were placed all around the islands, along with caches of food for pockets of resistance and an emergency supply of 250 55-gallon gasoline drums.

Six new Grumman TBF torpedo bombers arrived on the island that day, commanded by Lieutenant Langdon K. Fieberling. None of the TBF pilots had ever been in combat, and only a few had ever flown out of sight of land before. The TBF would later be named *Avenger* in honor of its combat introduction at Midway

Midway had practically everything it needed for its defense. Along with the 121 aircraft crowding Eastern Island's runways, Midway had 11 PT-boats in the lagoon to assist the ground forces with anti-aircraft fire. A yacht and four converted tuna boats stood by for rescue operations, and 19 submarines guarded Midway's approaches.



**(CAPT Jack Reid, USN-Ret.)**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, a VP-44 Consolidated PBY commanded by ENS. "Jack" Reid, was assigned sector search west by southwest, which was in the general area for a possible encounter with the IJN twin-engine "*Betty*" bombers that flew out of captured Wake Island. The crew hoped for an encounter with one of the Japanese aircraft. The night before one of the crew members had traded some beer for 5 new explosive .50 caliber shells from a B-17 crew. The ordnancemen on the crew had loaded them on the port waist gun.

The flight came to the end of their outbound 600 mile leg with no sightings. The crew urged Jack Reid to go further to see if they couldn't make contact with a "*Betty*.". Jack checked with navigator Bob Swan and was assured that they still had plenty of fuel to go another 20 or 30 minutes on the present course. Jack agreed to the plan and told Bob, "just give me as heading when we get to the end of the time limit."

The flight continued on for the allotted time and as Bob was about to give Jack the new heading for the dogleg and at that instant Jack spotted specks on the horizon. He gave the binoculars to the second pilot Gerald Hardeman saying: "*Are those ships? I think we've hit the jackpot.*"

Hardemen concurred. Moments later John Gammell, in the nose turret, sang out "*Ships dead ahead, about 30 miles dead ahead.*" a radio message was immediately sent to Pearl Harbor saying, "*Sighted main body*", minutes later, a second message, "*Bearing 262, distance 700 miles.*"

Nimitz' headquarters at Pearl Harbor and Fletcher's carriers also received Reid's "Main Body" message. Since they expected Nagumo to be coming from the northwest, not west/southwest, this message briefly posed a problem. But Nimitz stuck with his intelligence forecast, and radioed back to the carriers *"The force sighted is not, repeat not, the Main Body."*

That is the essence of this story, the necessity of covering the vulnerability of the codes with plausible deniability.

Jack Reid scouted the force for another two hours, not knowing which part of the elephant of the huge Japanese formation he was observing. He kept the Catalina at low altitudes and came up from different positions, counting the sightings at each one and radioing the results. The long wakes in the ocean from the armada led him to either port or starboard of the ships. He knew full well, if detected, they would be hit by swarming Zero-sen fighters.

The force Jack's crew had sighted consisted of 17 ships, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and transports headed for Midway. It was not the target that Joe Rochefort predicted carried the largest threat to the island- the fast carriers.

Commander Robert A. Swan, of Santa Rosa, California, was the navigator on 44-P-4. He always had a familiar smile, with a personality to match. A Naval Reserve PBY pilot in 1942, Bob was the navigator on Jack Reid's Catalina.

44-P-4 landed back at Midway with little fuel to spare, and one of the two massive engines sputtered out after they landed in the lagoon. When asked why they were able to stay aloft for an additional 3 hours, Bob replied, "Raymond Derouin (the plane captain) has three dependents-a wife and two daughters. He always puts in an extra 50 gallons for each one."

Bob continued in patrol aircraft for the remainder of the war and stayed in the Naval Reserve after its conclusion, retiring as a commander.

VP-44's greatest contribution to victory had been made, but the battle was only now being joined. On June 4, Reid and Hardeman flew more than 14 hours, again providing important contact reports. Indeed, he had become an important set of "eyes" for the US Fleet. His PBY was attacked by Zeros and by AAA on a Japanese cruiser, but Jack got his aircraft and crew to safety up in the clouds. Later he landed in the lagoon at Midway, and as he taxied

toward Sand Island, one of his engines sputtered out for lack of fuel. Nonetheless, he was up and flying the next day, searching the Pacific for lost pilots and crews.

Jack Reid stayed in the Navy after the war and retired with more than 30 years services as a Captain, setting up his home in Aptos, CA.

The last members of 44-P-4 have passed on. Jake got a chance to meet them, and shoot the shit in the plane on the long flight west. I wish I had the chance, but you have to take what you can get. I still think about ENS Gay, and his card table at the Oshkosh Air Show, and the way he returned to the Battle of Midway from the back of the CINC's plane.



(Battle of Midway National Memorial on the atoll).

On September 13, 2000, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt designated the lands and waters of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge as the Battle of Midway National Memorial, “so that the heroic courage and sacrifice of those who fought against overwhelming odds to win an incredible victory will never be forgotten.”

The monument reads, in part: “They had no right to win. Yet they did, and in doing so, changed the course of a war.”

This is the first National Memorial to be designated on a National Wildlife Refuge. Numerous historic sites portraying man's history on the islands since the early 1900's are protected by the Fish and Wildlife Service, including several World War II defensive positions that were designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

The murals from the old Base Theater are on loan to the Pacific Aviation Museum on Ford Island, and they are spectacular. And now you don't have to go to a wildlife refuge to see them.



**None Dare Call It....**



**“JAP FLEET SMASHED BY U.S.  
2 CARRIERS SUNK AT MIDWAY  
NAVY HAD WORD OF JAP PLAN TO STRIKE AT SEA KNEW DUTCH HARBOR  
WAS A FEINT”**

– Chicago Tribune Headline, Sunday 7 June 1942 that disclosed ULTRA information and may have tipped the Japanese that they had some real security problems.

I got stuck on something that might be treason this morning, not the Bergdahl thing, but one that happened in the months after the victory at Midway. I am happy the wandering Sergeant is back in U.S. hands, and I am also expecting the Army to do the right thing, and bring him up before a Court Marshal on Article 85 or 86 charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). I don't really care what the verdict is. It is not the first time some really ambiguous things have happened, and I am content with the rough justice the military deals out. All of use who served in Korea know about another one. U.S. Army Sergeant Robert Jenkins was assigned to the Republic of Korea back during the Vietnam War, decided he did not want to participate, and defected to North Korea.

Bad career move- it took him 40 years to get out. The Army tried him when he came home, slapped his wrist with 24 days in the Stockade and gave him a bad conduct discharge, or what we knew as the Big Chicken Dinner (BCD). At least it saved the taxpayers from having to shovel out the back pay, and if Sergeant Bergdahl deserted or went AWOL, we ought not to have to pay him for it.

But it is funny that it is always the troops who wind up in these situations. I was looking at the daunting pile of manuscript associated with Mac's story this morning and realized there are a lot of officers who never paid jack-squat for anything. Some of you may recall the essence of the rest of this rant from August of 2010. Mac and I were wrapping up 1943 in discussions at Willow, but we came back to the matter of how Joe Rochefort, the gifted cryptologist, was hung out to dry by the Rear Echelon MFs.

I should stay away from ancient evil, but I need to get to it to describe the burgeoning intelligence effort that took Mac from underlining message and arranging IBM punch cards to making rubber topographic maps of remote islands that no one ever heard about.

I spent the first hour waking re-reading parts of CAPT Eddie Layton's book, "And I Was There" in preparation for today's outing, which was intended to talk about 1943. But there are some unburied dead from the period after June, 1942.

I chuckled as I read about Joe Rochefort's Deputy in the Combat Information Unit, Thomas "Tommy" Dyer. Layton said that he had the best collection of pin-ups in the Pacific under the glass on his desk. I made a note to ask Mac about how lurid they really were.

Of course, what was on the top of Dyer's desk obscured the pictures most of the time. He said later that Rochefort and the other analysts, including himself, kept most of the five-digit code groups in their heads, and the desks were covered with hundreds of partial decrypts. They worked port-and starboard watches most days, and around the clock before the Midway break that identified Admiral Yamamoto's target.

A newly arrived Yeoman once cleaned off the desk when Dyer was sleeping, and there was holy hell to pay, since like the code groups that floated in endless strings through his brain, he knew where every page that lay above the pin-ups was. The effort paid off. With Jasper Holmes trick, the target was identified, and with superhuman effort, a Lieutenant named Joe Finnegan managed to construct a table that cracked the super-encryption on the date of the attack.

Admiral Nimitz crossed the Rubicon at a major inter-service conference on the 27th of May; he believed Eddie Layton's prediction that the Japanese carrier would launch the attack "on the morning of 04 June, from the northwest on a bearing of 325 degrees."

Eddie was spot-on, though there was uncertainty up to the last moment. The Japanese had made a pre-invasion change of additives, and HYPO was in the dark on the eve of battle.

I won't attempt an account of the struggle itself, since better people have done that. In The Dungeon, Mac was placed on a desk under a bunny tube that would deliver messages by pneumatic pressure. Those quaint delivery systems were still in the fleet when I arrived

decades later and the rattle of the arrival of the hollow projectile was always exciting. But only a few intercepts arrived as the titanic struggle raged.

What interests me as a Spook is what happened afterward.



(CAPT Joe Rocheford. Official US Navy Picture).

Washington had been predicting that the attack could happen in the middle of June, and fall upon either Alaska, or perhaps to the south. Had anyone in the Pacific paid attention to their better-resourced predictions, the Japanese would have been using the Fleet Post Office code they had assigned to Midway Island.

It is said that victory has many fathers, and defeat only one.

The Redman Brothers, Joe and John, in the Office of Naval Communications and OP-20G (Radio Intelligence Section), respectively, had immediate access to the senior brass of the Navy and took credit for providing the intelligence that enabled the victory.

Anyone who has been forward and afloat knows that the Shore Establishment always wins, and the chance of victory is enhanced the closer your desk is to the flagpole at the Pentagon, or in Mac's time, at Main Navy.

Once victory was certain, historian Stephen Budiansky quotes Joe Rocheford told everyone at Station Hypo that he "didn't want to see them for three or four days." He expected everyone would just go home and catch some sleep.

Instead, a house party on Diamond Head was convened. Budiansky quotes Rocheford as saying it was a "straight out-and-out drunken brawl" that lasted the entire three days. Then everyone shook off their hangovers and went right back to twenty- and twenty-two-hour shifts to tackle the new code book and additives that the enemy had introduced into JN-25 before the battle.

I need to ask Mac about that. Or retiring Associate Justice of the Supreme Court John Paul Stevens.

I am much more likely to see Mac at Willow.

But the real battle was just beginning thousands of miles east of Midway. The assertion that Washington's Station NEGAT had been right was breathtaking enough, but there was an implied task contained in taking the credit for other people's success. They had to discredit Joe Rochefort and Eddie Layton.

The coup engineered by the Redmans to oust Joe Rochefort from his post in The Dungeon is quite extraordinary.

The Chicago Tribune Affair reveals the banality of institutional evil, personal ambition and the power of The Green Door, what we called the gateway from reality into the secret world that went on behind it. Here is the deal: a war correspondent named Stanley Johnson was embedded with the operating forces that went to Midway. He provided the article on which the re-write man in the Windy City based the headline slugs up above.

Johnson was a classic exemplar of the knock-about, wise-cracking newshound made popular when Time Magazine was edgy journalism three-quarters of a century ago. Born in Australia, he wore a big black mustache and had served in the Australian Army in World War I. He roamed Europe and Asia for years after the war, perhaps a victim of Hemingway's version of PTSD. I guess we are not supposed to use the "D" anymore, but sometimes I mess up. Johnson wound up as a stringer for the Tribune's London bureau. He came to the U.S. after the fall of France and married a former showgirl he had met in Paris years before.

He became a U.S. citizen, and his free-wheeling ways brought him to the attention of the virulent FDR-hating publisher of the Tribune, Robert Rutherford "Colonel" McCormick. The Colonel had several axes to grind with Washington, and publishing Johnson's florid dispatch was just part of his maverick campaign against it. He dispatched Johnson to cover the war in the Pacific, and Johnson wound up embarked in USS Lexington "CV-16/Lady Lex!" for the action.

The Ship's PAO may have failed to have him sign a secrecy agreement. In any event, Johnson was either shown or had inadvertent access to classified information, and did not view himself as being bound to protect it. It is funny that journalistic ethics have not changed a great deal when there is a scoop available for the taking.

Shudders ran through the Navy Department at the article's publication, and the chilling prospect that the Japanese would recognize the success at penetrating the JN-25 code would be apparent, based on the precise information about the Japanese order of battle contained in the sensational- and otherwise incorrect- article.

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox leaned on the Colonel to shut down the publicity on sources and methods, and the Colonel reluctantly agreed to spike the story. It is possible that the disclosure, picked up by a couple other major dailies, might have passed without issue if no one made a fuss over it.

The Redman brothers seized on the substance of Johnson's article, which they correctly deduced came from the classified 31 May "Fleet Intelligence Bulletin to Commanding Officers," identifying the disposition and identity of the Japanese forces defeated at Midway.

Eddie Layton, Mac's Boss, goes on in his memoirs to describe the following leaks to legendary radio newshawk Walter Winchell, who made two broadcasts decrying the compromise while explicitly talking about it. The Redmans pushed for an indictment in Federal Court against McCormick and Johnson, managing to keep the matter going, and a matter of public record.

The story broke out again on the 8th of August, 1942. Years later, Jasper Holmes wrote about the impact of the headlines and the following publicity engineered by the Redmans in his book "Double-Edged Secrets." It was published before the ULTRA secrets were declassified, so one has to read the book with an eye to what was *not* said. But as Jasper felt, it was true that "Any informed reader could only conclude that Japanese codes has been broken."

Eddie Layton's 1985 book "And I Was There," lays out a case of staggering mendacity that followed triumph. The Redmans wrote mutually re-enforcing memos up the chain accusing Joe Rochefort of insubordination, and recommending HYPO be brought to heel, and be placed under an officer more to their liking.

The younger Redman, John, managed to get himself assigned to the CINCPOA staff as communications officer, and used a private coded circuit belonging to Admiral Nimitz to keep Washington apprised of his progress on isolating the renegade code-breakers.

With all the news of compromised codes flying about, it should not have come of much surprise that the Japanese changed their version of the JN-25 code a week after the news of the Tribune indictments, and the work of the previous six months was rendered useless. It would take four months of round-the-clock work to recover the ground that was lost.

Fleet Admiral Bill Halsey always said it was the campaign in the Solomons that was the turning point of the war, not the battle of Midway. I suspect he felt that way because he was not there, being confined to his hospital bed during the fight.

But his point it taken. The see-saw battle to keep Henderson Field on Guadalcanal in American hands gave birth to the ironic unofficial motto of the Marines that the “Navy will always abandon you in a pinch.” The Tokyo Express roared in each evening by sea to re-supply the Japanese forces, and before it was done, two dozen men-of-war littered the floor of Iron Bottom Sound. When the battle was over, in February of 1943, the Imperial Fleet never advanced again.

I will ask Mac his professional opinion on whether the single-minded campaign by the Redmans to wage war on Joe Rochefort might have disclosed the success of Station HYPO against the codes to the watchful Japanese.

Joe Redman put on the rank of Rear Admiral, and John made Captain. I understand ambition, but this might be something else. If what they did had caused the Japanese to re-think their security, they might be guilty of something more than careerist aspirations.

You see, the Marines landed on Guadalcanal on the 7th of August, and when the JN-25 codebook changed the next week, the Americans were suddenly flying blind with forces in contact with the enemy. How many people died as a result?

(Marines in the Field, Guadalcanal, 1942. Semper Fi! Official US Navy picture).

## The War in the Navy



(Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, 1945. Official navy picture)

CDR Joe Rochefort had a sign behind his desk at Station Hypo:

“There’s no limit to what you can accomplish, so long as you don’t care who gets the credit!”

That was not true for others in the Pacific. Not the Redman Brothers, certainly, but at least their mendacity is understandable. They were not running the show when the deal went down. Sorry to back-track on you, but this is necessary.

If you want the man most responsible for the successful Japanese attack, you should not throw a pebble on the grave of poor Husband Kimmel, who watched his fleet being destroyed in the harbor on December 7th.



(Then-Captain Edward Layton. Official Navy Picture)

Eddie Layton was there. He said “Kimmel stood by the windows of his office at the submarine base... a spent .50 caliber machine gun bullet crashed through the glass.” It cut the front of his white blouse and bruised him on the chest. Layton reported the Pacific Fleet Commander said: “It would have been merciful had it killed me.”

Kimmel was prescient about that. The cover-your-ass drill began almost immediately back in Washington. Kimmel was sent packing ten days later and Chester Nimitz was brought in. Kimmel would spend the rest of his life defending his actions prior to the attack, accurately pointing out that crucial information had been withheld from him in the crucial months before the disaster.

The real culprits in the failure never paid a dime for what they did, and the culpability went right to the top.

The officer who was directly responsible for the failure of the Navy to be ready was a son-of-bitch named Richmond Kelly Turner. I will say it without emotion at this distance, but in the day, he was the Navy’s equivalent of George Patton: serenely confident of his own abilities and filled with a divine certainty of the correctness of his judgment.

He was a tall and imposing man with beetling brows, sharp intelligence and belligerent manner.

He was commissioned a regular deck officer, ranking fifth in the Annapolis Class of '08, and a force of nature. He rose through the Battleship Navy as a hard man, impatient of his subordinates but invaluable to weaker officers who were senior to him. That includes Admiral “Betty” Stark, the Chief of Naval Operations who became the kind of Flag officer that Eddie Layton was fond of saying “couldn’t go ashore without giving detailed



instructions to the coxswain.”

He was possessed of a self-generated vision. He observed that the future of naval warfare involved the airplane, and as a Commander, volunteered for flight training at Pensacola. He later commanded a seaplane tender and served as XO of the USS Saratoga (CV-3), one of the first modern big-deck (for the time) aircraft carriers.

Then and now, only rated aviation officers can command what were clearly becoming the queens of the Fleet, so as I said, Richmond Kelly Turner was not a stupid man.

He attended the Naval War College at Newport in 1935, and was kept on until 1938 as the head of the Strategy faculty. He never had a lick of intelligence training, but he was absolutely confident of his ability to craft strategy.

His last ship (he would command task groups as a Flag officer) was the heavy cruiser Astoria (CA-34), and therein lies a tale.



(USS Astoria (CA-34) underway off Hawaii, 1942. Official Navy picture)

Upon completion of exercise Fleet Problem XX in early 1939, Captain Turner and his sleek warship were summoned north to embark the ashes of Japanese Ambassador Hiroshi Saito for the journey back to his homeland. It was a gesture calculated to express America's gratitude Japan in a period of rising tensions, wrapped in the guise of reciprocity for the ceremonial return of the remains of United States Ambassador to Japan, Edgar A. Bancroft, who died on post in Tokyo, in 1926.

Brief stops for fuel and ceremony with local Japanese communities were conducted in Panama and Honolulu before proceeding west across the wide Pacific. On 17 April, escorted by IJN destroyers *Hibiki*, *Sagiri* and *Akatsuki*, Turner steamed slowly into Yokohama harbor with the United States ensign at half-staff and the Japanese flag at the fore.

A 21-gun salute from Astoria was returned by the light cruiser *Kiso*. American sailors carried the ceremonial urn ashore that afternoon, with a state funeral held the next day. After the ceremony, the Japanese turned on the hospitality for Turner and his sailors.

I have seen a picture of one of the parties that were held in honor of the visiting representatives of the Main Enemy of Japan. At the Tokyo Naval club party on April 19th, Captain Turner is seated in the front row, just a few seats away from then-VADM Isoroku Yamamoto, IJN, the architect of the strike on Pearl.

Eddie Layton used to play bridge with Admiral Yamamoto, when he was a language student there.

Captain Turner radiated charm and was praised by US Ambassador Joseph C. Grew for his grace in the diplomatic process. The whole visit went so well that Ambassador Saito's widow donated a pagoda to adorn the yard of Luce Hall at Annapolis.

Astoria departed Yokohama for a round of good-will port visits at Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, and Guam before returning to her home port at San Pedro. Clearly earmarked for flag rank, Turner reported to Main Navy to become Director of War Plans (OP-16), working for the 8th Chief of Naval Operations, Harold Raynsford "Betty" Stark.



(ADM Stark as CNO. Official navy Photo)

"Betty" Stark got his nickname as a plebe in the Class of '03, and you have to put him down as the other major enabler of the disaster at Pearl. An intelligent and insightful officer with a touse of gray hair, Stark hated controversy, and was grateful that the forceful Turner was able to take over the tough and mind-numbing job of generating the detailed plans that would be used to take the war to Europe and Japan.

The problem was that his portfolio in Op-16 had two parts: *plans* and *estimates*. The former would determine how the coming war would be waged. The latter contained the critical

elements of where and when. I told you Kelly Turner was a son-of-a-bitch earlier, and what is more, once he was out of his area of expertise as a line officer, he was wrong more often than he was right but incapable of admitting it.

Accordingly, when his Office didn't like the assessment from the Office of Naval Intelligence, he directed it to be changed. He used his Flag rank and access to Betty Stark to bulldoze all opposition. He seized control of the Naval Communications and the products of the Fleet Radio Units and wrenched the analysis over to his estimates section.

There he had three officers preparing the assessment of what the Japanese were going to do, and they were not intelligence officers, but they did know what their Boss wanted.

The war in Main Navy was as savage as anything that happened in the jungles of the Pacific later, and the graves of thousands of sailors and Marines from Pearl Harbor on are directly attributable to the staff wars that went on in Turner's time at War Plans.

Those are bold statements, I know, and the heavy secrecy that wrapped the ULTRA program enabled those who won the staff war and lost a Fleet on December 7th were able to pin their mistakes on others.

Thankfully, we say, it can't happen again. We learned our lesson, right?

Remember the sign over Joe Rochefort's desk. I do.

When I was ending my career in the Navy, I watched the new Administration of George W. Bush come to the Pentagon. Uncle Don Rumsfeld was a bureaucratic bully like Terrible Turner. He brooked no opposition to what he already knew to be true.

When the intelligence gang would not go along with revealed truth, he entrusted his Plans and Policy Chief Doug Feith to set up his own little analytic office to cull through the raw material to find nuggets that supported the position Uncle Don was convinced was right.

You know where *that* went.

Oh, and one other thing. In a stunning reorganization, the Navy has consolidated all of its "information" resources into a New OpCode. The former Radio Intelligence tribe that got de facto independence after World War Two is being jammed together with the Office of Naval Intelligence and Naval Communications. The CNO is making an intelligence officer walk point on the reorganization, but there is clearly going to be a sharing of leadership in the future. We will clearly someday have a Communications officer running the show. It is not 1940 all over again, I am sure.

But it certainly is back to the future, isn't it?

The secrets that Eddie Layton and my pal Mac kept finally came out in the 1970s, and Mac led the drive to get Joe Rochefort a posthumous Distinguished Service Medal. Eddie Layton died before completing his book, but it was finally published in 1985, giving the first account of how badly the Navy leadership had botched the analysis of Japanese intentions.

Kelly Turner died with his reputation intact on February 12, 1961. He is buried in Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, CA, alongside his wife Hattie, and near those of Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Raymond A. Spruance, and Charles A. Lockwood with their spouses.

It was an arrangement made by all of them when they were alive.



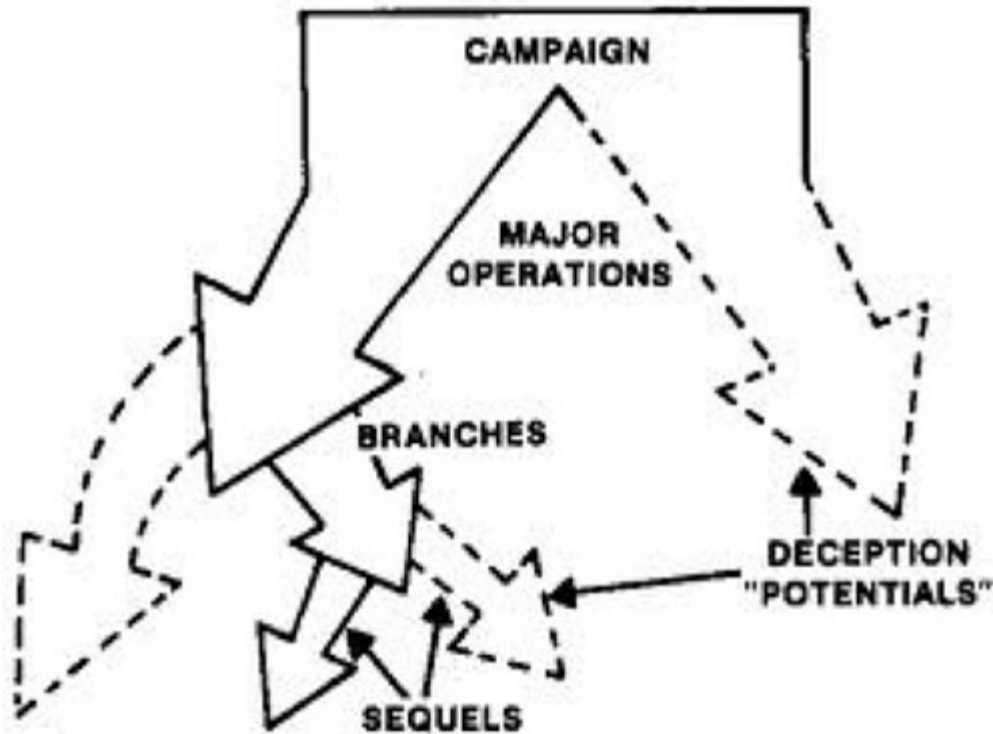
(Grave of Admiral R.K. Turner at San Bruno)

Spruance had his nomination to Fleet Admiral blocked by Congressman Carl Vinson, who got a Nimitz-class carrier named in his honor for serving as the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Vinson preferred that Bill Halsey get the honor. Lockwood was the architect of unrestricted submarine warfare that strangled the Home Islands.

And of course, after Kelly Turner was eased out of War Plans due his belligerent inability to work with the Army, he led the naval campaign at Guadalcanal. That was the one that began just as the Japanese changed their codes, and Kelly and his sailors and Marines had to fight in the blind.

What goes around, you know? But how many of them had to die for Turner's obstinacy at War Plans?

## Branches and Sequels



(Military Doctrine of "Shit Happens" from Joint Pub 1).

Preparations for offensive operations against Japan had been in place since the pre-conflict days of Plan Orange; there is nothing our military has learned how to do better than plan. Mac was part of all that, of course, and I have a couple of stories that Jasper Holmes used to tell about him.

The mission was spilling out of the Dungeon at Building One at the Pearl Harbor Shipyard and was changing as the requirements to support offensive amphibious operations in the Southwest Pacific emerged. It was in The Plan.

Six weeks after the Battle of Midway, the Intelligence Center Pacific (ICPOA) was established with CDR Joe Rochefort temporarily double-hatted as Officer in charge of both ICPOA and the operationally subordinate Station HYPO.

The first US doctrine of expeditionary warfare came with the development of War Plan Orange in 1890, long before the little war that stripped Spain of its possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific, and catapulted America into the ranks of the Colonial powers in 1898.



(Annexation Ceremony at the Iolani Palace, Honolulu, 1898).

Theodore Roosevelt modified War Plan Orange as a contingency for conflict with Japan. The annexation of Hawaii in 1898 relieved the immediate tension with the burgeoning Meiji empire, but the Navy and War Departments continued to plan.

Generally speaking, the Plan was inviolate, and was based on enduring principles and assumptions from the Spanish War that were a half-century old.

As rising senior officers in the joint schoolhouse, my generation was taught to deal with reality the Army way, with the going in assumption that “no plan survives first contact with the enemy,” which is military-speak for the civilian doctrine that “shit happens.”

To deal with an altered landscape after that first contact, alternative scenarios were always considered. We were taught to call these “Branches and Sequels” as consequences flowed downstream from events.

There were other plans, of course, a whole rainbow of colors. PLAN RED was the Atlantic Strategic War Plan, which originally was oriented against Great Britain, if you can imagine, though branches and sequels in 1914 resulted in the substitution of Germany for the UK. The First War branches and sequels created the RED-ORANGE PLAN, which hypothesized a two-theater war with initial emphasis on operations in the Atlantic.

(Edward Miller's War Plan Orange history)

War Plan Orange, which came in Navy and Army flavors, consisted three phases, adapted as new technology changed military capability being introduced to the Army and Navy. Plan Orange envisioned:

Phase I: The U.S. expected the loss of the lightly defended outposts south and west of Japan, which could not be defended. The Plan assumed the Navy would concentrate the Fleet at their homeports in order to surge forward.

Phase II: With superior naval and air power, the Navy and Marines would advance west. Small-scale attacks against Japanese occupied islands would capture them and establish supply routes and overseas basing for new long-range bombers like the B-29.

Phase III: The U.S. would then advance toward Japan utilizing islands that were parallel to and near Asia. These newly acquired bases could choke Japanese trade and allow air bombardment of Japanese cities and industry, leading to victory without invasion of the Japanese homeland.

The complex nature of the plan required close cooperation between the Army and Navy, and Army-Navy Board (better known as the Joint Board) was created in 1903 to de-conflict the efforts of two independent cabinet Departments.

We talked about Richmond Kelly Turner, whose high-handed and arrogant conduct as Chief of Navy War Plans (OP-16) was not limited to abusing the Office of Naval Intelligence. His contempt for the Army was so profound that George Marshall demanded he be removed from his position.

CNO "Betty" Stark had no stomach for a fight with Marshall, and despite Turner's success in devising a Rainbow palette of options based on Stark's "Plan Dog" memo of 1940. While he might have been indecisive, Stark was intelligent and subtle. He anticipated an expected two front war against Germany and Italy in Europe and Japan in the Pacific, with

Europe the first priority.

Turner was dispatched to cool his heels as a Deputy Chief of Staff under leathery Admiral Ernie King as the newly-created Commander in Chief US Fleet for six months.

Phase II of the plan provided a combat job for Turner as Commander of Amphibious Forces Southwest Pacific that could harness his truculent intelligence into something useful.

The Branches and Sequels created by the code-breakers who enabled the victory at Midway let Phase II of Plan Orange go forward. The plans existed for operations in the Solomons, and the Marines landed on Guadalcanal.

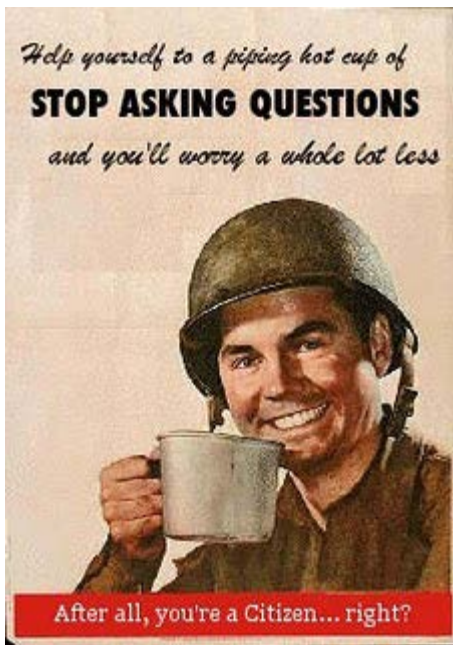
(Marines land at Guadalcanal, August, 1942).

Phase II required Eddie and Joe and Jasper and Mac to adapt to new Branches and Sequels, and that meant that the nature of intelligence support to the war had to change.

Part of going on the offensive was using the radio intelligence to interdict and foil Japanese operations while not disclosing the sensitive nature of our sources and methods. Which is how Eddie Layton came up with a novel plan to kill his old bridge partner, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. That is quite a story in its own right, but as they say, fortune favors the bold, right?

**Gag Rule**





There are a whole bunch of good reasons why the memo came down saying that I could not comment on it. You know what I am talking about, though I am not talking.

I thought it was a fairly reasonable bit of coverage, probably something the public ought to be aware of, but according to the memo, I can't even say what it is.

I support the memo, and I support the right of the Press to talk about whatever they want in this enduring constitutional democracy. I remember the last time I got a memo like that. A book about the submarine force was issued, and some retirees had let their tongues wag fiercely about the things they did and the places they did it.

The Brass was alarmed, and told us that secrets remained secrets. Even though the stories were out there in black and white, we were supposed to not talk about anything in the book. I bought it, of course, just to see what the authors had right and what they had wrong. I was impressed by the level of detail they had accumulated and dumped out on the prim white pages.

What the account lacked in strategic context it attempted to make up in sensation, just like what I am not supposed to talk about did, not that I am commenting on it.

Heaven forbid. Mac would understand perfectly well. We live in an elliptical world. Much of what we talk about at Willow, and will talk about again next week, was once fiercely classified.

The Great War against the Fascist powers forced all sorts of innovation. If you want to understand our world today, it is simple enough to go back to the secrets of yesterday and take my assurance that not a great deal has changed.

Sources and methods evolve, of course, but the way we work and the way we attempt to keep things secret do not. The article I am not talking about at the moment is clear enough about that, and even if the topic seems to be startling and sinister, the secrets are not nearly as big as other things.

I got a note, for example, from a colleague who wanted to know about the Redman Brothers. Who were those guys, he asked, and what did they do? I sighed when I wrote back. Joe Redman was a Rear Admiral and Director of Naval Communications twice, I wrote, and his little brother John was a Navy Captain. They both made their careers on the great victory at Midway in 1942, and they stole the credit from Joe Rochefort.

Then they had the *real* hero relieved in the manner of an NYPD Detective in Manhattan who is put back in uniform and sent to walk a beat on Staten Island. Imagine it; the best Japanese linguist and code-breaker in the Navy dismissed from his post, and placed on a drydock for the duration!

The perfidy of the Brothers was concealed by the 25-year gag rule on ultra-top secret of the ULTRA program. It was not until 1970 that the archives were cracked open on the now-ancient war, and while the historians were agog, the rest of the world had moved on.

Here is how the Redman brothers did it.

In separate memoranda to the Director of Naval Communications on 20 June 1942, less than three weeks after the victory at Midway, each of the Redmans criticized the work of Joe Rochefort and Eddie Layton. “Remember,” said Mac, “these were the guys who said the Japanese attack would come against Dutch Harbor in Alaska. If Admiral Nimitz had believed them, we would have lost Midway Island, and the Japanese would have consolidated an island perimeter that would have been hard to crack.”

The senior Redman’s memo snuck up on the real issue. After several paragraphs justifying why Radio Intelligence (the unclassified euphemism for ULTRA) should remain under *Communications* control rather than in the Office of Naval Intelligence.

Joe Redman wrote this about Rochefort and Layton: "... they just don't speak our language. The intercept material must be obtained by operators trained in the Kana code. The source of the operators is Naval Communications. . . the intercept equipment belongs to Communications ... the question of traffic analysis involves personnel and only those familiar with radio communications can properly administer this work."

Captain Redman then got down to the real business of his memo, which was the personal destruction of the men who cracked the Japanese battle plan. "(Rochefort and Layton) are not technically trained in naval communications, and my feeling is that radio traffic analysis, deception and tracking, etc., are suffering because the importance and possibilities of the phases of radio intelligence are not fully realized. ... I believe that a senior officer trained in radio intelligence should head up (a Radio Intelligence unit) rather than one whose background is Japanese language."

To put the finishing touches on the matter, Joe Redman's baby brother John signed a letter that pounced on a formal request from Admiral Nimitz letter of 28 May 42 addressed the "inadequacy of the present intelligence section of (my) staff."

Admiral Nimitz wanted additional resources to be placed under the intelligence department he already had, and he fully supported Eddie Layton, Jasper Holmes and Joe Rochefort. But he gave Washington the chance to twist his words. Rochefort did not get the medal he earned by handing Nimitz the greatest victory of the Pacific war.

No one could talk about what happened for twenty-five years, due to the gag order on the Big Secret. Mac looked over at me the other night and said that Captain Goggins showed up to replace Joe Rochefort.

"He was one of the Redman Brothers home boys, wasn't he?" I asked.

"Yep."

"How did you work for him under those circumstances?" I said. "That was outrageous, and the office politics in Washington could have cost American lives!"

"We had to go on. There was a war to win," said Mac, a little wistfully. "Layton and Holmes survived the coup, and Joe Rochefort was the sacrificial lamb to the Redman Brothers ambition. By the time Eddie Layton could talk about what happened, the official

story was already written. There is a building named for Joe Redman over at the Nebraska Avenue complex. I used to see it when I worked there after the war, and all I could do was mutter under my breath.”

That is all I can do about the other thing that I am not talking about, but I am a good sailor, and I can follow orders with the best of them.

**(Crew of B-29 “To Each His Own. Air Corps photo).**

Fronts

(JICPOA Building 1943, left. Mac says the Quonset to the right actually held mostly blank punch cards for the IBM machines and reams of onion skin and teletype paper the command went through. Mac's car is the four-door 1936 Ford (body) at this end of the row parked along the Quonset Hut. He says "body" because it had a 1932 V-8 engine in it -- first year of the V-8s. Official Navy photo.)

The hubbub at the bar had a sort of desperate merriment, like people were trying to forget the economic news, and the new guidance from Secretary Gates to trim Defense contracting. It made it hard to hear above the wine-fueled din.

I was determined to get through the big transition in the intelligence organizations that happened on Hawaii after the victory at Midway in 1942 and I was making slow going of it. It is not as exciting as the magic moment at Midway, but that was built on months of mind-numbing analysis.

Plus, the food at Willow was too good, and there is a lot of other stuff going on to talk about.

“OK, I said. “ It is 1942, the war is being taken- barely- to the enemy, as that stubborn jerk Richmond Kelly Turner landed the Marines on Guadalcanal, and then cut and ran on them.”

Mac nodded, patient with my disorganization.

“Turner had a lot of baggage on the war being the way it was then,” I ventured. “His stubborn determination to do his own analysis was a lot like Secretary Rumsfeld,” I said taking a sip of white wine at the little table, moving the Senate notepad around a stack of books and the plates that went along with the fish-and-chips.

“His control of Radio Intelligence and the decision to withhold information from Admiral Kimmel and his intelligence Officer Eddie Layton at Pearl unquestionably contributed significantly to the disaster,” replied Mac.

“Then, the revelations of the Redman Brothers, who were determined to destroy Joe Rochefort...”

“And Eddie,” Mac reminded me. “Admiral King wanted Nimitz to fire him, too, but he wouldn’t. Another villain in all this was Admiral Russell Willson- two ll’s- who was Chief of Staff to Ernie King back in Washington. He had a real mean streak and listened to the lying Redman brothers.”

Photo # NH 62013 RAdm. Willson relieves RAdm. Nimitz as ComBatDivONE



(RADM Russel Willson relieves Chester Nimitz as BatDiv 1 on USS Arizona, 1939. Official Navy picture.)

“Could it have something to do with the fact that Admiral Nimitz was advanced ahead of him to command the Pacific theater? I understood Willson relieved Nimitz on Arizona before the war.”

“Could be. But he was a son-of-a-bitch. The Redmans used him to pursue the leak of the code-breaking revealed in the Chicago papers until it was all in the papers again. They had to have a Grand Jury and a publicity circus.”

“The Japanese may have got the hint that way, or it could have been something else. But if the codes were changed because of those bastards, four American cruisers were sunk in The Slot because there was no warning available for them.” Mac furrowed his brow, and his eyes misted at the loss of hundreds of sailors on those proud ships.

“The change in the JN-25 code system meant that Station Hypo had to start over, almost

from scratch. The Marines in the jungle, and the fleet at sea, were in the dark except for what they could see themselves.”

I scribbled madly. “OK- now, you got to that point still working in the basement?”

“Yes,” said Mac. “We were growing. We had a space over in the Supply building. That was mostly the Air Intelligence folks coming in, but things were definitely growing. In response to a Marine Corps requirement, Admiral Nimitz directed the establishment of the Intelligence Center Pacific, or ICPOA, about six weeks after the battle.”

(Joe Rochefort. Official Navy Picture)

“Joe Rochefort was the first Officer in Charge, right?”

“Yes. That was before the summons came from Washington for a short Temporary Duty period. We all knew he would not be back. He turned over the keys to his desk before he left. At the time, he was dual-hatted as the OIC of FRUPAC and ICPOA. “

“Jasper Holmes wrote that there really wasn’t any such thing in the early days.”

“He was quite right. In the beginning, Station HYPO took the cover name “Combat Intelligence Unit” (CIU) to deflect speculation about the sensitive work performed there. As more people arrived to augment HYPO, those not engaged in strictly Radio Intelligence functions were assigned all-source analysis duties under Jasper, involving enemy ord. That

group assumed the CIU name, while still located in the same place.

“It was a cover, then.”

Mac chuckled. “Yep. That meant there were some other issues. I was a deck officer, remember, and the Bureau tried to send me to sea twice, since the Fleet was growing like Topsy. They wanted me to go on a minesweeper, but it was a case of me knowing too much about something the Bureau didn’t. Jasper managed to get me ordered to the Hawaiian Sea Frontier, but I never changed my desk.”

“That was about the time the official name FRUPAC actually was used, right?”

Mac nodded. “Later on, after Joe left and Captain Goggins showed up to relieve him. He got there before the orders did, and we thought he was supposed to command ICPAO, not replace Joe.”

Mac looked off in the general direction of Peter, who was doing one of those graceful pours from a bottle into a tulip glass at the amusement of two attractive ladies who were seated close together at the bar.

“Goggins was no cryptologist,” He said. “he had some communications background, but he was really a line officer, which made the lies of the Redman brothers that slandered Joe so hard to take. Goggins had been XO on *Marblehead* at the Battle of Makkassar Strait, and he was badly burned when the Japs hit her. He was still recovering when he reported.”

I looked at my notes. “They added a “J” to ICPOA to reflect Admiral Nimitz’s role as the



joint force commander,” I read.

“Correct. Eddie Layton found an Army topographic unit over at Fort Shafter that wasn’t doing anything, and to accommodate the new composition of the unit, they ordered in Colonel Twiddy. He was the outside guy, always with a big cigar. Jasper Holmes would work at the Estimates section in the morning, and then spend the afternoon as the XO at JICPAO. Jasper did all the heavy lifting.”

“And what happened to CIU?”

“It became the Estimates Section, organizationally part of the JIC, but remaining in the same building with Radio Intelligence, using their decrypts and traffic analysis to formulate an all-source intelligence picture for the daily onion-skin overlay for Admiral Nimitz plot, and the weekly Intelligence Bulletin.”

“Did they report to Eddie as the Fleet Intelligence Officer?” I asked.

“Nope. FRUPAC always reported to the CINCPACFLT communications Officer,” said Mac.

“Isn’t that a bitch!” I exclaimed. That was that asshole John Redman!” How did Eddie put up with him? You must have known him.”

“Nope. I was not on the CINCPACFLT staff until we went forward to Guam. John Redman stayed in Hawaii.”

“That doesn’t surprise me in the slightest,” I said, putting down my pen and raising my empty glass to signal Jim behind the bar for reinforcements.

“I don’t know what Eddie thought about him,” said Mac. “But he doesn’t appear anywhere in his book about the rest of the war, except to note that he was probably responsible for the change in the codes.

“And the deaths of a bunch of sailors in The Slot,” I said. “No wonder there has been bad blood between the Cryppies and the Intel guys for all these years. What a story.”

“We ignored that, and most of us were not intelligence anyway, at the time. But let me tell you how it worked when Eddie shot his poker buddy Yamamoto.”

I could see there was more wine on the way. It was a good thing, because this was going to be a *hell* of a story.

## **SEATED UNDER A TREE**

Big Jim filled my wineglass to the precise point in the Tulip where the air could mingle sufficiently with the ambient air to produce a delightful aroma while not encouraging the alcohol to evaporate. I was getting to the point that I did not care, pleasantly warm in all my appendages, but the ritual was a comfort.

Mac contemplated another Virgin Mary, which could only evaporate the essence of tomato and olive, and decided he had enough vegetables for the day. I knew we were about to draw to the end of this session at Willow, so I underlined the notes about Pearl getting surprised again — or better, warnings ignored — and asked the question.



**Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, 1942**  
photo Wikicommons

“Well, they lost their Empire,” said Mac. “I suppose we have to get used to it as well, and hope to do it with the same sort of grace.”

“I don’t know,” I said. “They want to call that new building in New York the Cordoba Center. Putting up with a Mosque at Ground Zero named for the capital of Islamic-occupied Spain seems pretty darned tolerant, don’t you think?”

Mac just smiled, and shook his head.

“They found the Admiral seated under a tree, from what I have read.”

Mac nodded, shifting gears from his earliest months in Hawaii to nearly a year later. A

fresh new-guy fish in the Dungeon basement under Joe Rochefort and Jasper Holmes to a seasoned analyst, thousands of dittoed cross-indexed files, looking at other fresh fish arriving each day with veteran eyes.

“Yes,” he said. “There are conflicting reports about it. Some say the initial Army patrol to the crash site found Isoroku Yamamoto still in his seat, very peaceful looking, holding his *katana* sword by the hilt. Thrown clear of the wreckage of the Betty bomber, they say. Other accounts had him with a couple flesh wounds. But he was dead, all right. Maybe shock.”

“They did not try to recover the body?” I asked with surprise.

“They sent a Navy patrol the next morning, at first light. There was a great deal of service deference. The Army connection was useful,” Mac said, swirling the ice in the bottom of his highball glass. “The message notifying the local commands of Yamamoto’s inspection visit was passed to the Army in a less secure code than the Naval JN-25, and the Japanese assumed that was the way we were able to intercept the flight. The katana and the insignia of rank were missing by the time the Navy patrol got there. Someone got some great souvenirs, but they have never turned up.”

“I will look on eBay,” I said. “This was April of 1943, right?”

“The 18th,” said Mac. “But we had been watching the traffic out of Rabaul very closely for months. We recovered all the traffic about the Combined Fleet moving its headquarters, and the comings and goings of fleet units in and out of Rabaul. The Harbormaster was a big help to us. He was meticulous about reporting everything that moved, and the merchant ships were on a lower-level cipher system that enabled us to recover the unit identities for some of the combatants.

“Keep Cool, fool, it’s Rabaul.” I recited the old rhyme like a modern rapper.

The Admiral smiled. “It certainly was, then.”

“So, I understand there was a relationship between Eddie Layton and Yamamoto. His book recounts a bridge game.”

“There certainly was, but he told me it was poker, not bridge. The Navy estab- lished a

Japanese language program way back in 1910. Under the provisions of the plan, two officers a year who had completed five years of sea duty were sent on independent duty to learn the language. Eddie was sent in 1929, after serving his time on the destroyer USS *Stack* (DD-406).”

“Joe Rochefort was there at the same time, right?”

The Admiral nodded. “That is where they met for the first time, and that was one of the lies that the Redmans spread, that Joe was not a qualified linguist. He most certainly was.”

“Eddie actually knew Yamamoto, didn’t he? That makes the whole thing sort of creepy.”

“We didn’t look at it that way. “Terrible” Turner had his picture taken with Yamamoto when his ship called there. Eddie actually knew him pretty well. Yamamoto had participated in the Japanese equivalent of our language program, since we both knew there would ultimately be a show-down in the Pacific, and some familiarity would be useful in killing each other. Eddie first came in touch with the Admiral when he was Naval Vice-minister, and the search for Amelia Earhart was going on.”

“Did the Japanese kill her and her co-pilot Fred Noonan?” I asked.

“Won’t ever be known, for sure. Certainly they were very defensive about what they were doing in the former German colonies, pouring all that concrete.”

“Eddie and Isoroku were on a first-name basis. He told me they attended an evening of kabuki, which Eddie loved. Yamamoto seemed to appreciate Eddie’s interest in the cultural life of Japan, and mostly they stayed away from business.”

“Wasn’t there a strict prohibition on the Americans doing anything like intelligence collection?”

“Absolutely. The Japanese militarists were clamping down hard on security, and placed whole districts off limits to foreigners. But Yamamoto was always correct. He hosted a duck-netting party in the late thirties- maybe 1938- for the foreign attaches. It was one of those Japanese things where the outcome is ordained, and there will be duck sukiyaki whether everyone had netted a duck or not.”

“I have been to those,” I said, referring to my notes. “Eddie’s book says it was three rubbers of bridge after dinner with the Admiral, and he won all three. They were drinking ‘John Begg’ whiskey in square ceramic jugs.”

“It was Johnny Walker Black in my days in Yokosuka that the Japanese liked.”

Mac shook his head. “I always heard from Eddie that it was poker. He loved the game, and was a skilled player and usually won. I should tell you about his mission in China to play cards with the aircrew of the Warlord Chang Hsueh-liang’s Ford Tri-motor to get intelligence on his travel itinerary.”

“I would like to hear about that, but for now, the story about Eddie and the Admiral seems like it has a real personal element.”

“I suppose it did. I can only imagine what he really thought when Jasper called him on the secure line from the Dungeon and told him what we had. Jasper brought me the original message and told me to plot it out to see if it made sense, and our decrypts of the place names were correct.”

“NTF131755 was the message,” I said, peering at my scribbles, “and it was addressed to the commanders of Base Unit No. 1, the 11th Air Flotilla, and the 26th Air Flotilla.”

“Yes, it was copied by our Hypo personnel and two other stations in the Pacific.” Mac remembered it almost verbatim, and recited it, almost in a trance:

“On 18 April CINC Combined Fleet will visit RYZ, something something, In accordance with the following schedule:

“Depart RR at 0600 in a medium attack plane escorted by 6 fighters. Arrive RYZ at 0800. Proceed by minesweeper to somewhere else arriving at 0840.”

At each of the above places, commander in chief will make a tour of inspection and at unknown location he will visit the sick and wounded but current operations should continue.”

“That sounds like there were a lot of holes in it.”

“Yes, but Dick Emery managed to identify some of the outlying fields, and things began to come together. Jasper knew it was significant, and after he talked to Eddie, he was told to bring it with the plot I did to the Headquarters at the Sub Base.”

“Didn’t Justice John Paul Stevens work on the message?” I asked. “That is a remarkable part of his biography.”

“There were a lot of lawyers in the intelligence billets,” said Mac. “Stevens had just the sort of skills that Forest Sherman was looking for when he set up the air intelligence program. As far as Stevens being part of the decryption team, he was in Estimates with me, which is when we used to go to lunch at the Makalapa BOQ. But I don’t remember him being there at the time. I could be wrong. There are a lot of people who took credit for what happened next.”

“You don’t seem to be wrong about much,” I said.

“There are some things that just need time to get straight,” said Mac firmly. “And what happened to Admiral Yamamoto just gets to the point. It is like the Admiral told Eddie after the poker game: “Science and skill will always win over luck and superstition.”

Turns out the Admiral used the old Chinese trick of drinking water instead of whiskey.”

I sighed. Maybe I should try that for these sessions with Mac. I shrugged. Too late now. This was going to take another glass of wine, and my notes were starting to soak up the moisture from the bottom of the tulip glass. I waved to Jim at the bar, and signaled for more.

## **First to the Blackboard**

*Its better to have an  
Army of deer being led by a lion,  
rather an Army of Lions being led by a deer...*

What we do is what we do.

Jasper Holmes called Eddie on the secure line and told him what they had about Admiral



Yamamoto's schedule. Mac was told to plot it out, make sure the recovery of the place names made sense. It seemed to, and the decrypted message and the chart went over to the headquarters.

Then everyone went on to what they did, and what we all have done for all these years. Listening. Copying. Thinking.

Chester Nimitz thought about the impact of killing the architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, and the architect of the assault on Midway that brought disaster to the Combined Fleet and the loss of four fleet aircraft carriers, all their aircraft, and above all their precious cadre of pilots. Pluses and minuses. We do what we do.

Nimitz coordinated with SecNav Knox, who asked the President. I don't know for sure, but it is possible that FDR inserted a Chesterfield into his ivory holder and lit up before he nodded. With that, the mission to kill Fleet Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto began to roll.

The leaders weighed it against the risk of compromising the penetration of the JN-25 code system and then made the decision.

*Kill the bastard.*

Eddie knew the man, had played cards with him for modest stakes. In some ways, they were the mirror images of one another. Yamamoto the man, sent to America to soak in the language and the culture, Eddie, sent in the other direction to learn the all too scrutable East.

To kill the man and keep the secrets, they first needed some plausible deniability. The fiction that an Australian Coastwatcher had passed the information on the whereabouts of the Admiral of the Combined Fleet was passed to rambunctious Admiral Bill Halsey in the Southwest Pacific. The precise timing of Yamamoto's flight, escorted by nimble Zeros and accompanied by another Betty bomber with his chief of staff embarked, was too precious for words, an event in space and time in the future covered by a fiction from an imaginary past.

We have all been there in our line of work. "You had a pretty good handle on the code designators, right?" I asked Mac. "I mean, you were able to plot it out, from the partials in the recovered message?"

Mac nodded. “RR being Rabaul, the fortress island, RXZ was Ballale, and RXP was Buin on the southern tip of Bouganville. The first part of the itinerary looked like it might be in theoretical range of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. No Navy planes, of course. They did not have the legs for the mission.”

The Air Corps had a requirement for long-range escort of the bomber force in Europe, and had produced the remarkable P-38 Lightning, a twin-boomed long-legged two engine fighter that the pilots of the Luftwaffe called "Der Gabelschwanz Teufel," or The Forked-Tail Devil. The Japanese aviators called it “Two planes, one pilot.”

My former uncle-in-law Joe flew one out of the Aleutians in the two-thousand mile war there, a Texan in the wild swirling arctic weather of gales and clouds, and he said he was thankful for having two engines and drop tanks and plenty of vengeance in the nose.

The placement of the twin engines on either side of the cockpit meant that the nose of the aircraft could bristle with machine guns and cannons unobstructed by the arc of the propellers: a Hispano 20 mm cannon with 150 rounds, and four Browning 50-calibre machine guns, each with 500 shells in the magazine.

I gestured at the copy of Eddie Layton’s book on the table. “This is what you had in the decrypted message: Yamamoto planned to depart Rabaul at 0600 and land at Ballale Airfield at 0800. Then, proceed by subchaser to Shortland at 0840, then depart at 0945

aboard the same sub-chaser and return to Ballale at 1030, then depart at 1100 by G4M1 Betty and arrive at Buin Airfield (Kahili) at 1110. Finally at 1400 depart Buin Airfield (Kahili) by G4M1 Betty and arrive back at Rabaul at 1540.”

Mac nodded. “Yes, but with any luck, he would never land at Ballale.”

“Jasper had me plot it out to ensure that we had the places correct, and that the plot made sense. It did.”

I wrote that down on the notepad. “Jasper did not take a lot of credit for his role in this,” I said. “I read the passage on the shoot-down, and it seems like he barely had anything to do with it.”

Mac looked at me kindly. “He was literally the first to the blackboard, and Jasper was a gentleman, unlike some others in this story. The thing to remember about his book is that he was the first to publish anything about the secret history of the war. NSA reviewed his manuscript just after ULTRA was declassified after twenty-five years. It was a bit surprising at the time, since they said the whole manuscript was good-to-go, except they said he could not mention the code designation JN-25. For some reason the people at the Fort thought it was still sensitive. Of course, by the next year everyone was writing about the code system specifically, so you have to place the accounts in the context of the year they were published.

“So that is why the official history is wrong,” I said. “When I was in a fighter squadron I learned that the first ones to debrief the mission got to establish what the truth was, and who won and who lost.”

“You bet. It is a matter of when people are free to talk about things. When Samuel Elliot Morrison did his multi-volume history none of this information was available. All he said in his account was that Admiral Nimitz and Halsey “learned of the visit.”

Jim passed by and looked at me inquisitively. I glanced at the level of wine in my glass and shook my head. I didn't have far to navigate to get back to Big Pink, but in my old age I am taking fewer risks with the cops.

I signaled to the bar and called out: “Check, when you get a chance, Jim.”

“You got it, Vic,” he called back, topping off the glasses of the attractive women at the bar.

Mac resumed his story. “A thorough, detailed briefing including the cover story was provided for the pilots, but they were not specifically briefed that their target was Admiral Yamamoto. 16 P-38-G Lightnings were tasked with the long-range intercept mission. According to my plot of the message, they would have to fly 435 miles from Guadalcanal to catch the Japanese.”

“That is a remarkable gamble,” I said, fishing for my wallet. “Was it worth it?”

Mac laughed as Jim slipped the black folder with the tab on the edge of the little table, wedging it against the copy of Jasper's Holmes book.

“More than you know, Vic. They had to fly at extremely low level the whole way to avoid detection- less than fifty feet above the waves. The cockpit in the Lightning could not be opened, and you can imagine in the tropics it was hot. The pilots normally flew in shorts and sneakers because of the heat.”

“The Lightnings met Yamamoto's two Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" fast bomber transports and six escorting Zeros just as they arrived at Empress Augusta Bay. The Americans split into two groups as the Zeros spotted them, and first Betty with Yamamoto dove to the treetops. The second turned seaward.”

“That must have been some pretty intense adrenaline for everyone.”

“Don’t know. We were on to other things then, back in Hawaii. But there is an interesting story about what happened later.”

I slipped my Visa card into the black folder and chose not to look at the tab. Willow takes care of us pretty well, and whatever they thought was fair was OK by me.

“And that was?”



**Rex Barber after receiving the Navy Cross** Official Navy picture

“The first lighting to recover at Henderson Field was flow by a Major named Thomas Lanphier. He claimed credit for the kill on Yamamoto’s Betty. It was bullshit, but he was first to the blackboard on the mission debriefing. Yamamoto was actually killed by Rex Barber, who had sole credit for it. The Admiral was thrown from the aircraft still in his seat. The autopsy indicated that he might have survived the crash, since he had no visible wounds aside from a small cut above his eye.”

“Now, none of that was known until long after the war, right?”

“True. We were back to doing what we did. We didn’t know for sure what happened until May, when news of Yamamoto's death was officially reported to the Japanese press. In the meantime, Barber and Lanphier were both awarded the Navy Cross, if you can imagine a couple Air Corps pilots wearing them.

## Fish and Chips



(Willow Miniature fish and Chips from the Neighborhood Bar Menu, with Mac's Colossal Olive. Photo by Droid Smart Phone via Socotra).

There were a ton of people from the Company at Willow. They clogged the passage past the near end of the bar.

They were not my division, so I didn't know any of them, and they seemed happy enough probably not knowing what Secretary of Defense Gates effectively did to the whole vendor community this week.

I don't imagine they are going to realize until a couple quarters down the road, so I smiled thinly and edged my way through the crowd.

Mac was already seated at one of the little tables across the aisle from the bar. I snagged the seat next to him.

"Someone from your company must have let the cat out of the bag," he said with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

“Face it, Admiral,” I said. “You are a rock star!”

We laughed, and he handed me a pad of notepaper.

“I thought you might like this,” he said. I looked at the letterhead, which read: “United States Senate” in the fancy old English script, sub-headed “Committee on the Armed Services” with tiny letters at the upper left, saying “Strom Thurmond, Chairman.”

I gave a low whistle. “I met the Chairman a few times. He would cruise around on his own, even when he was in his late 90s. I introduced him to my parents one time when I had credentials to be on the Hill and played the big shot when family came to town.”

“He was an active fellow. I swiped the pad when I was testifying up there on the years ago. You know that he landed at Normandy at D-Day in one of those gliders. He was authentic, regardless of what you thought of his politics.”

“I heard in his later years he would go to the buffets and put meatballs and shrimp in his pockets. His staff was appalled. I didn’t see anything leaking the last time I saw him, though.”

Mac laughed, and I saw the long line of people he had known and with whom he had interacted. He handed me a pen to go with the pad.

“I thought you could use this instead of napkins,” he said.

“Thanks.. I am still a little fried from the hours on the road.” I blinked from fatigue and the oppressive heat outside. Mac looked cool and crisp as always.

“Let’s see, I wanted to talk about 1943, and the last quarter of the year as things changed. We landed on Guadalcanal two months after the battle of Midway with that asshole Richmond Turner in command of the amphibious forces. You don’t mind if I call him an asshole, do you?”

“I do myself,” said Mac. “The Marines still hate him. We lost access to the JN-25 code right around the time of the landings, and we had no warning to pass when the Japs came down the slot. Turner took off and left the Marines behind, not even waiting to unload the cargo ships with the supplies the Jarheads needed. They don’t forget that he cut and ran on them.”

“I suppose he had a good argument,” I said. “Hard times and hard choices.” I waved at Jim, who brought a delightful bottle of Spanish white and a tulip glass that he filled halfway up. I asked him if he could possibly put in a request for the \$5 neighborhood bar menu of the miniature fish and chips for us. He said he would think about it and floated off into the



crowd of earnest company people.

I gestured at his retreating back with the pen that Mac had given me. “There is a lot of stuff that is going to change around here. I heard on the radio that they are talking about \$3.5 billion in defense contract cancellations in Fairfax County alone,” I said.

Mac nodded gravely. “That is what happens when things end. He produced a truncated copy of an ancient typed memo. “You asked one time what we did when we got back from Guam after the war ended. A guy writing a book found this in the archives. I don’t recommend you go there. All that paper will just suck you in.” He gazed at it before sliding it over. “This was in RG-38, Box 94 in the Naval Security Group Archives.”

I looked at the ancient paper curiously. It was dated 8 September 1945, and was addressed to the Flag Secretary, and the subject line was “Report of additional Orders and Plans destroyed by Burning.” It contained the list of things Mac had made disappear in fire:

1. G-2 Estimate of the ‘Enemy Situation in Kyushu 25 April 1945
2. Com3rd Fleet Standard instructions, 1-45 Part one only
3. Command 2nd Carrier Task Force Pacific and TF 38 OpOrd #2-45, 25 June 1945
4. Secret Operations Instructions #88 SW Pacific Area

I whistled. “This is all Operation Olympic stuff, right, the real deal.”

Mac nodded. “That is what the few of us that were left did when we got back. Everyone else went home as fast as they could. We destroyed stuff.”

“Were these the only copies?”

“No, but I have no idea where or if it was all kept. That is why people have been arguing about everything ever since. Trust me, you don’t want to be in the middle of all those boxes of ancient papers.”

“I heard there was only one guy left at the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area,” I said. “Twelve hundred people down to a Lieutenant in a couple months.”

(The JICPOA Building, Makalapa Crater, Pearl Harbor circa 1944).

Mac smiled. “That was LT Wendy Furness,” he said. “He was left with two rooms of captured materiel. Pistols, binoculars, Samurai swords. He was told to get rid of it all and lock up the empty JICPOA building.”

“What did he do with it all?”

“Don’t know. I got a set of binoculars, though.”

“Well, that is a good thing about winning a war. Everyone gets a souvenir, even if it is just your life.”

“We are in the process of surrendering in the conflicts we are in now,” I said glumly. “And we are so stupid as a nation that we cannot even recognize when someone is building a victory monument in our greatest city that took the biggest hurt.”

“What do you mean, Vic?”

“They want to call that new building in New York the Cordoba Center, which was the capital of Islamic-occupied Spain. It is like putting the middle finger up at us and we don’t even recognize it.” I took a sip of the Spanish wine. “I was listening to an interview with one of the survivors of The Battle of Britain on the BBC this morning. Seventy years on from when he was a junior pilot launching against the Nazis, he is phlegmatic about his role in changing the world, just like you are.”

“Well, they lost their Empire,” said Mac. “I suppose we have to get used to it as well, and hope to do it with the same sort of grace.”

“I don’t know,” I said. “Putting up with a Mosque at Ground Zero dedicated to the last conquest of Europe seems pretty damned tolerant, don’t you think? Insh’allah.”

Mac just smiled, and shook his head.

“The greatest Naval leader in Japanese history, killed by a broken code and a high-tech aircraft flown by kids. Amazing,” I said, scrawling my name on the credit card receipt. “Great story, Sir.”

“Not as interesting as what happened in the wardroom of the USS *South Dakota* when Eddie ran into Terrible Turner.”

I looked up with interest. I may have paid the tab, but this conversation didn't appear to be over. "You know, Admiral," I said slowly. "There may be something to be said for being the *last one* to the blackboard, too"

Mac just smiled.

**Jasper, Mush and Mac**



(Legendary skipper of USS Wahoo, LCDR “Mush” Morton)

I don't think Lizzie or Meghan knew the details about the spy swap- the one in which a Russian sleeper cell of agents had been rounded up by the FBI, and ultimately exchanged with the Kremlin, just like the bad old days on that Bridge in Berlin.

Didn't matter; I was not privy to the nitty-gritty either, and certainly the Admiral didn't know. He was just back from the Outer Banks and a traditional summer week with his family at the beach.

The girls were more concerned with the growing anticipation about the final resolution of the LeBron James matter, which is much more important than a suddenly visible component of the secret world. I mean, the continued existence of Cleveland as a city was at stake, you know? It was more serious than someone uprooting the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and leaving town with it.

I was sitting at the corner of the Willow bar, just a few minutes early for my date with the Admiral. The girls were just getting settled at the end of the bar where old Jim normally holds court, pointedly drinking Bud in the upscale wine bar, and on the whole, I infinitely preferred the company.

Lizzie was a dark-haired beauty with an expectant look, no ring, and Meghan, ring, was a vivacious blonde.

The ladies arrived for a glass of wine, and a light snack from the neighborhood bar menu. As attractive as they were, I understood why Peter paid them special deference. Linen and pearls were the motif, and considering how sweltering hot it was outside, they looked cool and elegant.

(Russian Sleeper cell expelled in 2010. Ana Chapman at upper left became a media star back home).

It had been a busy day. The Russian spy ring had all pled guilty that morning in the Rocket Docket of Federal Court just down the Little River Turnpike from Big Pink that morning, and the lot of them, ten spies, spouses and kids, and were boarding a Vision charter jet headed for Vienna by the time the Admiral drove over from the Madison in his champagne Jaguar and parked at the curb in front of Willow.

I forget what I was doing, except I seemed to be on the phone a lot trying to find the services of a hydrographic engineer with a Top Secret Clearance and working knowledge of the Empty Quarter of Arabia. I made a note on the office pad to check and see if Vision was a wholly-owned subsidiary of an agency where I used to work or the other side. You never know when you might need a charter with a certain understanding of how things work.

Four alleged intelligence operatives were being processed in Moscow, but they had a shorter flight to Austria, and there was a lesser sense of urgency about it. I thought of my pal Ed, who had been detained by the FSB in some trumped-up charges for nearly a year when the kleptocracy was reasserting itself in the Kremlin, and on the whole, decided I was much better off in the commercial side of the business.

Of course, in this screwy decade, who knows what that is anymore? Except for the Jihadis, I forget who the enemy is. And Sara, the dark-eyed knock-out waitress from a Lebanese family, could make you forget about the threat from the Middle East in a heartbeat.

Then the Admiral appeared beside me, looking tanned and ready after his time at the beach. As we settled in for our interview, the spies were getting on planes, and we were about to

talk about the targeting issue for the 313th Bomb Wing and the B-29 campaign against Japan.

But first I pulled a napkin off the stack to start taking notes, and borrowed a pen from the Admiral.

I told Meghan that she was sitting next to one of the people who made the victory in the Pacific possible, and that the Admiral had been part of code-breaking team that made the battle of Midway a winning proposition.

The Admiral leaned over and said that he didn't think the ladies were old enough to know what the battle of Midway was, and Meghan sat up tall and took umbrage.

She certainly did know, and wanted to know precisely how the thing was done. The Admiral told her, and she looked at him with wonder. "Have you ever told that story before?"

He smiled, and his eyes twinkled behind his glasses. "Only about 10,000 times," he said.



We all laughed, and the ladies eventually moved on to do something else while the sun was still shining, and the Admiral and I got down to the business of targeting the Japanese petroleum reserves, and the matter of why he is not entombed with "Mush" Morton and the entire crew of the USS Wahoo at the bottom of the La Perouse Strait, the northern entrance to the Sea of Japan.

This is going to take a minute, so you might want to go get a fresh drink.

The girls had been interested in whether we were married, being on the topic themselves, and Mac made quite an impression on Lizzie and Meghan when he announced that we were both eligible, not that they were. But being of the age when everyone seems to be pairing off, they were interested in all the possibilities.

Mac told the story of his beloved Billie, whose given name was Sarah, like the dark-eyed waitress who melts my heart, but who drops the "h." She hovered down the bar beyond Peter as the crowd thickened, causing other males to ooze interest.

Mac told us that Billie's Dad had been committed to the idea that she would be born a boy, and though it did not work out that way, he never stopped calling her "Bill." Her friends

softened it to “Billie,” and that is what Mac called her all through the marriage, and the long decline that she suffered, starting at the age of 59.

That got Meghan’s attention. Mac said he had three careers; one as a Naval Officer, one as a senior member of the Intelligence Community, and twenty years caring for Billie. It was an interesting perspective, given that the girls were just starting lives as married or about-to-be, and me dealing with what is happening with the decline of my folks back home in Michigan.

Mac has sailed through all the storms save the last and was bright as a new penny. It was with disappointment that we watched them leave; there was Liz’s wedding coming up, and the ladies were focused on the various errands they needed run to make the nuptials perfect.

Once they were gone and our brains could concentrate on something else we got down to the topic I wanted to address, which was his interaction with Major General Curtis “Iron Pants” Lemay.



The cigar-chomping XXth Air Force Commander on Guam was having trouble putting the Empire of the Sun to the torch in the winter of 1944 and the long, hot spring and summer of 1945. Mac had been part of a significant change in target strategy that helped remove the Japanese sanctuary in the Inland Sea.

Mac told me the CINCPACFLT staff moved incrementally forward in January of the last year of the war.

I have a dozen or more cocktail napkins piled up next to the computer about the bombing campaign, and the hidden story of the 313th Bomb Wing, but it isn’t that neat. In fact, it is as messy as the blurred ink on the absorptive paper. We had to pop back to Makalapa Crater, since that is where Jasper Holmes saved Mac’s life.



It is a little confusing, since Mac was there during the big war, and then back again as the intel chief during Vietnam, and I was there in the early 1980s. The blur of things and slow change of adamant institutions caused many more napkins to be covered with spidery diagrams.

If you are not in our little tribe, I will have to digress for a minute. Bear with me. Wilfred J. “Jasper” Holmes was an intelligence officer in charge of the Estimates Section of the Fleet Radio Unit Pacific (FRUPAC). The whole enterprise was about code-breaking, and was intensely secret. So secret that a special Army unit was established, controlled directly by the Joint Staff in the Pentagon, to control the distribution of the intelligence derived from it.

Mac was one of the handful of officers on Oahu who interpreted and analyzed intelligence derived from the breaking of the Japanese naval encryption code designated “JN-25,” and handled by the ULTRA control system by the Army unit’s special security officers.

Holmes was neither a code- breaker- cryptologist, in the term of art- nor an intelligence officer. Jasper was an unrestricted line officer, a submariner, and had commanded S-30 at Pearl Harbor in the 1930s before severe arthritis put him on the beach in medical retirement. Jasper had an engineering degree and joined the faculty of the University of Hawaii. He also was facile with the typewriter, and was a published author in the Saturday Evening Post.

He was called back to active service as tensions rose in the Pacific. His natural aptitude brought him to FRUPAC and the Estimates Section, where his experience as a line officer would be best used to interpret what the code-breakers were producing. The alliance between submarines and spooks has been profound down the years, and most of us still have signed oaths in dusty safes that swear us to secrecy about the depth of it.

The Estimates Section was the first prototype of “all source” fusion intelligence that



brought together the best information drawn from code-breakers, spies, aerial reconnaissance and operational reporting to determine the strength, composition and movements of the Japanese military machine as it stretched across the Pacific.

Mac was not an intelligence officer either. He had been commissioned as a deck officer, and was working as Deputy Fleet Intelligence by talent, of course, but in that position by the sheer luck of the draw.

Luck is a funny thing.

There were two elite groups who served as the poster children of glory for the war years. The first were the Fly Boys of both services, bombers and fighters roaring across the wild blue, silk-scarved and goggles against the foe.

The other was the Silent Service of the Pacific war, the submariners who took the fight to the Japanese when everyone else was falling back.

Naturally, Mac chafed a bit at staff duty, and by 1943 was interested in getting in the fight. Well, let me be a bit more precise. The earnest officers at the Hawaii Sea Frontier were periodically inquisitive why a junior Deck Officer appeared to have a cushy shore billet on O'ahu while the war raged. Mac could not tell them what he was doing, and periodically, Jasper Holmes or Eddie Layton would have to reach out and say "Never mind." Still, the Sea Frontier folks did have a point that Mac did not contest. The way things worked in those days was that the submarine force interviewed prospective officers sending them on a war cruise. Mac put in his request, hoping that a war cruise would put the matter of sea duty to rest, and was approved to join the crew of "Mush" Morton's USS Wahoo (SS 238).



(Fleet Radio Unit Pacific, also known as Station HYPO, the code-breaking and intelligence station at Pearl Harbor).

Mac remembers the bold young skipper well. "He had the biggest hands I have ever seen." Annapolis class of 1930, Morton was a capable and highly aggressive submariner with ice-cold seawater in his veins. Arriving at SUBPAC, he convinced Admiral Charles Lockwood

that his next cruise would be to the Inland Sea to remedy the deficiencies of existing torpedoes with the new Mark 18 electric model that was still being de-bugged.

Wahoo departed Pearl Harbor on September 9, 1943 with a mixture of each weapon.

She left without Mac. Jasper Holmes decided the day before sailing that impending Japanese operations in the Solomons required the most experienced analysts to be at their desks supporting Estimates, and he turned off Mac's orders.

Jack Griggs was the Wahoo officer that Mac was supposed to replace, and he missed the deployment, too. There was not enough time to find a suitable replacement, and the sub left for the SOJ with her wardroom one officer short.

Mush topped off fuel tanks at Midway Island, and proceeded west to enter the Sea of Japan via the northern neck at the La Perouse Strait around September 20th, and patrolled below the 43rd parallel for about four weeks. The Estimates section at FRUPAC followed his progress in the usual looking-glass manner: based on Japanese navy internal reporting.

*Wahoo* was able to sink four ships in the area, including the 8,000-ton steamer *Konron Maru*, which sank with a loss of 544 souls. The other three ships that Morton sank totaled 5,300 tons.

Mush Morton and his 79 crewmembers were never heard from again. Japanese reporting indicates he tried to break out of the SOJ via the La Perouse on the morning of October 11, 1943. Why he chose to make the run on the surface is unknown, but possibly associated with combat damage.

A coastal artillery battery engaged Wahoo, and later patrol aircraft and surface units piled on as Mush took Wahoo below, trailing an oil slick. A submarine chaser arrived in the vicinity and dropped 16 depth charges. An expanding sheen of diesel fuel two hundred feet wide and three miles long was the last thing anyone saw of Mush the Magnificent and the Wahoo until a Russian hydrographic crew surveyed the wreckage in 2006.



(Wahoo on the bottom at a depth of 186ft. Discovered by a Russian crew in 2006).

The loss of Wahoo sent shock waves throughout the entire submarine force, and Admiral Lockwood immediately ceased patrol operations in the Inland Sea. The Japanese then had that body of water as an effective sanctuary, at least until Mac had a chance to talk to Iron Pants Lemay on Guam 18 months later.

This is a complicated business, and was clearly going to take another session to unravel. I had a second glass of wine as Mac contemplated having another Virgin Mary, one of the special ones that Peter makes with so many vegetables that it is almost a salad.

“So,” I said. “Sixty-six years ago, if Jasper Holmes hadn’t stepped on your orders, you would have been bones at the bottom of the La Perouse Strait for seven decades?”

“Yep. Mush got the Navy Cross, posthumous. Jack Griggs and I lived. Luck of the draw.”

I was blown away by the revelation and took a sip of a lively white chardonnay that Peter recommended. “Submarines are still relevant today,” I said. “Did you hear that three Ohio-class boomers all showed up in Asia last week, appearing at Diego Garcia, Subic and Yokosuka? They have been modified to carry hundreds of Tomahawk cruise missiles. It was a signal to China, I think, and a warning to the North Koreans over the sinking of that destroyer.”

Mac smiled a thin smile. “My sources say the signal didn’t work. The big exercise that the Fleet was going to conduct in the Yellow Sea was moved to where the Chinese told us we could operate.”

“So the Chinese are telling us where we can go in international waters?”

“Appears to be true. They have established a sort of Red sanctuary, like the Japanese did in the Inland Sea in 1944, I guess.”

I shook my head. Where is Iron Pants Lemay when you need him?



(USS Wahoo Memorial overlooking the La Perouse Strait).

## Pear Pie



(A bad pie. Mac still hated the idea sixty years later).

“So what was it like when the Staff was directed to go forward?” I asked the Admiral.

“Leaving Hawaii for the combat zone must have been quite a change.”

“Well, yes, of course it was, but Admiral Nimitz wanted to lead from the front. I got Eddie Layton, the Fleet Intelligence Officer, to let me pick the four best analysts at JICPOA and a Yeoman Chief Petty Officer and a First Class and that was the intelligence section at the HQ forward. We got to Guam in January of 1945 and stayed for the duration.”

“That isn’t much in the way of a staff. Were you the Deputy N2 or the J2?”

“Neither. We were just Fleet Intelligence, Estimates Section. The Navy didn’t start with the staff numbering system until after the war. The SeaBees had done a remarkable job is getting things set up. There was a nice Headquarters building on what we called CINCPAC Hill, and a messhall across the street.”

“So what did you do? I mean, what was your job like?”

“The first part of the staff day was the joint briefing. That was the one that Iron Pants Lemay from XX Air Force came to at 0900. I put it together based on the material that the Foreign Broadcast Intercept Service copied from unclassified Japanese media from their site on Saipan.”

“The briefings were all unclassified?”



(Chester Nimitz on Guam at CINCPAC Hill, later re-named in his honor).

“Yep, but that was the trick, to find the unclassified information that confirmed the classified material we got from FRUPAC. It was a sort of misdirection to keep the Japanese in the dark and still get high-quality intelligence to people who could use it without all the security bells-and-whistles. I still have copies of all the ones I gave in Guam. Admiral Nimitz did not travel much, but when he did we got him written copies and some of them have his initials on them. Never a comment, but he always signed off. YN1 Harry Truman would take dictation as fast as I could speak the words. He was quite incredible. Of course, even though the briefings were unclassified, they were colored by the ULTRA traffic we got courtesy of Army Captain Chuck Kingston, the Special Security Officer. We also had a direct line to the Estimates Section back at FRUPAC in Hawaii where Jasper Holmes and his staff could do research for us. We used it as a chatter line, too.”

“That didn’t change,” I said. “We still had a teletype line to the other intelligence centers when I was in Hawaii, and I still remember the tall keys and the springy feel to keyboard. The Operators hated us for having a way to talk to the world from the ship that they could not control. Where did you live?”

“I was billeted in a two-story Quonset hut. I shared it with another Lieutenant. It was comfortable. Beyond us were the Flag quarters. Admirals shared some places, and the Captains were there, too. We had a wine mess, too.”

“Was there a limit on alcohol?”

Mac shook his head. “No. Let your conscience be your guide was good enough. Plus, the officer’s club was on the point beyond that. When we were done with the compound we turned it over to Pan Am. They used it as a sort of R&R facility for lay-overs on the Clipper flights to the Far East once things got rolling again after the war.”



(C-rats).

“When I married Billie after the war was done, she asked me if there was anything she shouldn’t cook. She was pretty good in the kitchen, and after the days on Guam in 1945, I will tell you there was not a great deal I wouldn’t eat. I even liked that bulk Spam that cookie would cut up to look like pork chops and bread and fry them. But I drew the line at pear pie. That was my limit, and war or no war, I stuck to it.”

I glanced at the delicate pork spring rolls that came out of Tracy’s kitchen on the \$5 neighborhood bar menu. I love those things, and with the spicy dipping sauce, treat them like a meal.

“In Hawaii, Spam was a delicacy. So were those canned sausages- what were they?”



“Vienna sausage. They used to serve them with chili, too. Anything with enough hot sauce to kill the taste. Nothing out forward could beat those Local plate lunches we could get down on Hotel Street in Honolulu. Red hot dogs with chili and 2 scoops of mac sal.”

“When we lived there, I used to fry up slices of Spam and serve with eggs and hot sauce,” I said. “That was when we were on shift work at PACFLT and the Soviets had ballistic

missile subs continuously on patrol in EASTPAC.”



(Wartime production of canned Spam).

“Living on an island can yield some interesting culinary quirks,” said the Admiral, taking a sip of his Virgin Mary. I dipped a spring roll in the dark spicy sauce.

“Macaroni salad is usually just elbow macaroni and a heaping portion of mayonnaise, just like in the South.”

“On Guam, there wasn’t any mac sal. The CINCPAC Forward HQ dined on C-rats, exclusively.”

“What was it like?” I asked, thinking about eating out of cans for eight months.

“Well, specifically, the Type C ration was part of family of food types for the forces in the field. A-rations were fresh food. B-rations were packaged un-cooked food. C-rats were canned food that came in a monotonous variety of flavors. Meat and beans, vegetable stew, meat and spaghetti, ham-egg-and-potato. Pork and rice, franks and beans, which were just like Vienna sausage, and that awful ham and lima beans.”

“So when bulk food came in it was a big deal?”

“Oh, you bet. The problem was the fruit. Cookie didn’t have much in the way of desserts, so he settled on those cans of pears to fill his crusts of lard and flour.” Mac frowned. “They were as heavy as man-hole covers. He would make a pie out of those pears, and even sixty-five years later I can’t stomach the thought of it.”

I was going to ask the Admiral about how his unclassified briefings caused Iron Pants to mutiny against the Joint Target Board back in Washington and assign the 313th Bomber Wing to the Navy’s idea of targets, but I was having a hard time getting Peter’s attention to

get another glass of chardonnay. The very thought of fried Vienna sausage with a side of *mac sal* was making me hungry.

## **Under Construction**

I knew I was in for it when Mac's gold Jaguar saloon pulled up in front of my favorite kind of saloon. I don't know how he does it- but though he is only driving from the below-ground parking across the street, he prefers not to tempt fate waking across busy (insane) Fairfax Drive traffic. He always seems to get Rock Star parking, which is only his due. I was at my usual seat next to Old Jim, but I stood as the Admiral walked slowly into the bar. He was carrying a manila folder.

"I need to clarify a couple of subjects in your understanding of the way things were located in the Pearl Harbor complex during the war years" " He ordered a Virgin Mary from Boomer, with an array of garnish that made it more meal than a drink. Her brash energy behind the bar is contagious. It is Mac's current favorite of the non-alcoholic beverage family his doctor prescribes.

Mac pulled out what looked like an old-fashioned aeronautical area photo.

"I'll explain these, and you can put them into your own words for whatever you do with them after these interviews."

"First," he said. "The location of HYPO prior to its move to the two-story building in Makalapa sometime in the summer or fall of 1943:



“Prior to the beginning of the war, the CINCPACFLT headquarters were located on the second deck of a building on the Submarine Base, and it remained there through at least most of 1942 while the new building in was under construction.”

“The Combat Intelligence Unit (CIU (or HYPO) was located in the 14th ND Admin Building in the Navy Yard. After Rochefort arrived in June 1941, he insisted on non-visible and more secure spaces for the CIU, which had been co-located with 14ND operations on the second deck of the Admin Bldg. “

“The result was a move to the "unfinished" basement area of the Admin Bldg. That area had been a non-ventilated storage area, so it needed some work to convert part of it to office space where people could work. Primitive air conditioning equipment was installed, but it only cooled and did not de-humidify; hence, "smoking jackets" and sweaters were needed by most of the workers. That is where all those rumors about Joe dressing eccentrically. We called the place The Dungeon.”

“I have been down the stairs to the front door of the place,” I said, “but the nuke submariners use it for some kind of training and normally won’t let anyone in.”

“Not much to see now,” he mused. “HYPO remained in the basement spaces until the late summer or fall of 1943 while its new Makalapa building was under construction.”

“Late in 1942, ICPOA was formed. Rochefort was the first Acting OinC of ICPOA, but their offices were put into the adjacent supply building. Both the CIU (HYPO) and ICPOA were administratively part of the 14th ND because ADM Nimitz wanted to keep his immediate staff as small as possible. Thus, throughout the war both FRUPAC and JICPOA (totaling eventually near 5,000 persons). although located in Makalapa buildings, remained administratively subordinate to COM14 (equipping, housing, feeding, etc).

“Any confusion on who the customer was for your product?” I smiled and took a sip of chilled white.

“But, let there be no mistake; we were there to support CPF and his subordinate operating commands. Our administrative subordination posed no interference to that mission.

(((The beginning of the basement occupation is discussed in Chapter 7 of the Rochefort book, and there is a diagram in the first set of photos.)

“So, at the time of Midway, CPF was still at the Sub Base, the Makalapa headquarters was under construction, and the CIU was in the basement of the 14ND Admin Bldg. The only event I can associate with our move to Makalapa was the shoot-down of ADM Yamamoto on 18 April 1943. We were still in the Navy Yard basement at that "memorable" time.”

## **Rendezvous**

*“I have often said that an intelligence officer has one task, one job, one mission. This is to tell his commander, his superior, today, what the [enemies] are going to do tomorrow. This is his job. If he doesn't do this, then he's failed.”*

– Captain Joseph J. Rochefort, USN

I was having one of Willow's specials off the Lunch Counter menu- the turkey matzo ball stew- and talking to Brian about growing up in Honolulu. He brought a couple ancient yellowed articles with him, papers his Dad the Chief had saved to recall the events of people he knew during the war.

One of them was about the second attack on Pearl Harbor, the one that was a military secret at the time, and was largely lost to history for years. I understand the reasons at the time. No point in getting everyone worked up again, and from a military perspective, once they figured it out, the staging base for the seaplanes at French Frigate Shoals was patrolled and denied to the Japanese. That also might have contributed to the lack of long-range patrol aircraft to look for the American fleet before the battle of Midway.

I dealt with all sorts of secrets in my Navy years- some large and some small. Some came with a fifty-year seal on them, and my pal The Good Doctor put his history of the program he supported in the safe with a sigh, knowing no one would ever see the stories contained

within.

There are still some things about Pearl Harbor that are under seal- and one can only wonder what will pop out when the 75-year window of secrecy expires in 2020.

We looked at the yellowing article in the Honolulu Advertiser. I remember the first time I heard of the second Japanese attack like it was yesterday.

Mac was 91 that year. He drove over to the Willow in the champagne-colored jaguar sedan from his residence at the Madison across the street and got his million-dollar parking space out front. I looked over at him in his aloha shirt. “So tell me how it all went down, Sir, just for the record. You have told the story a thousand times, but I want to bounce it off what Jasper and Eddie wrote about it later, and the oral history Joe Rochefort did in 1969. You are the only one who can put it all in context now.”

I was feeling expansive, pleasantly lit up with Willow’s current vintage of an insouciantly dry Spanish white that Big Jim the bartender would top off periodically. I felt that we had beaten the year of 1942 about to death. We had talked about Midway, and the growing intelligence organization, and the treachery of the Washington Radio Intelligence Mafia (Wenger and the Redmans), and I was eager to get on to the Spring of 1943, since I was getting desperate to kill Admiral Yamamoto again.

“You know I went down to Honolulu on Christmas Day of 1942 and went through the barbed wire for a swim from the beach,” said Mac absently. “Then I wrote to the folks back in Iowa and told them about it. They would have been freezing then.”

American kids were dying in the jungles of the Solomon Islands. Hundreds of other kids had been blown to bits or drowned in The Slot in the see-saw battle for Guadalcanal as the Japanese ran the Tokyo Express in at night to bring reinforcements to the islands, and the Americans flew from Henderson Field by day. Back in Pearl, and Melbourne, Australia, the code-breakers labored eighteen and twenty hours a day to recover the values of the new five-group system imposed by the IJN.

The Admiral took a sip of his Virgin Mary and waved a colossal olive on the end of a toothpick at me. “They don’t talk about the second attack much, do they?”

I sighed. This interview was not going the way I had hoped. “What second attack? I know the Japs had used balloons to send incendiary devices to the Pacific Northwest to start forest fires, and they had submarine-carried seaplanes to attack the Panama Canal, but that didn’t happen.”

“Well, the second attack on Pearl Harbor did. It was on the 4th of March, 1942. Eddie

Layton did some research after the war and discovered what had gone down, and it might have been Jasper's fault."

"What on earth do you mean," I asked. "How could Jasper have helped the Japanese?"

"Well," said Mac. "You know that Jasper was a pretty successful author. He wrote for magazines like the Saturday Evening Post under the pen-name Alec Hudson."

"Yeah, I know. I ordered a copy of "Up Periscope" the other day, and just started it. He writes well."

"I have that one and his "Doubled-edged Secrets, both autographed," said Mac. He smiled and reached down to his briefcase and produced a book with a black cover, the title superimposed in lines of gray. "This is the one I gave to my mother, and I got it back after she passed." He opened it and showed me the inscription:

*"To Hattie Showers  
Whose son had a very  
important part in these  
events. With the compliments  
of the author.*

*W. J. Holmes"*

"So what about the second attack," I said after looking at the words. "I have never heard about that and I lived and worked in Pearl and thought I knew everything about it."

Mac smiled. "It was two months after I arrived in the basement of Building One. Joe Rochefort was anxious about the possibility that the Japs might come back, and he was right. There was an article about it in Proceedings a few years ago, based on some research that Eddie Layton did in the 1950s, and a series of interviews that Joe Rochefort did in 1969. It was embarrassing, and that might be the reason people don't talk about it much."

"What happened?" I said, mystified.

(Kawanishi H8K “Emily” class flying boat takes off. US Navy Photo.)

“The Japanese decided to mount a follow-on attack against the shipyard at Pearl to destroy the big Ten-Ten Dry-dock. That would delay the repairs to the battleships, and increase the paranoia on the island. They envisioned an attack by five big Kawanishi H8K “Emily” class flying boats.

“Jesus,” I said. “And they pulled it off? Why isn’t that part of the big history?”

“Well, that is the interesting part. Eddie located the Japanese OpOrders and the pilot reports of the mission after the war. As it turned out, only two seaplanes departed the Marshalls, and they did refuel from a submarine milk cow in the vicinity of French Frigate Shoals. They then launched for Oahu, to bomb and conduct what Joe Rochefort described as an ‘armed reconnaissance’ mission.”

“And there was no response, only four months after the biggest disaster in American military history? No warning?”

“Oh, there was warning all right. We had penetrated JN-25 enough at that point to know that something was up, but there was heavy overcast the night of the 4th of March and the Japanese got lost. The two Japanese planes wandered around over the island but the blackout was effective, and one of the planes dropped bombs on Tantalus, which produced a couple large craters and broke some windows at Roosevelt High School. Eddie thought the other plane must have dropped its bombs over the ocean.”

“That was it?” I asked. My wineglass stood empty next to the notepad. My pen was making exclamation points next to the words “Second Attack on Pearl: no response!!!!”

“The submarine I-23, the weather reporting unit, disappeared while on patrol and never arrived on station. So the weather was bad, the planes never found Pearl Harbor, and there were two explosions in the night that the next day the Navy and the Army blamed on each other for dumping ordnance irresponsibly.”

“Good God, that would have been hugely embarrassing if word got out that the Japanese

came back and were not intercepted.”

“Joe Rochefort said it this way,” Mac said, pulling a folded article out of the back of his copy of *Double Edged Secrets*. He unfolded it and peered over his glasses. “He had passed a warning to the 14th Naval District, the Hawaiian Sea Frontier Commander, and to CINCPAC. This is from the interview he did with Commander Ette-Belle Kitchen in 1969.”

He began to read in a voice just loud enough to be heard over the dignified din in the Willow bar:

“I was told later by informed people that the attack was made, as I say, more or less unmolested, because the Navy had no airplanes at that time capable of repelling this attack or destroying the incoming aircraft. The Army said that they only had one-place fighters, and who could expect a fighter pilot to not only fly the plane in darkness but also to approach and make an attack on any enemy plane. Therefore, nothing had been done about it, and no action was taken.”

“My God.” Mac smiled at me and handed the paper over. I looked at the rest of what Joe Rochefort felt then:

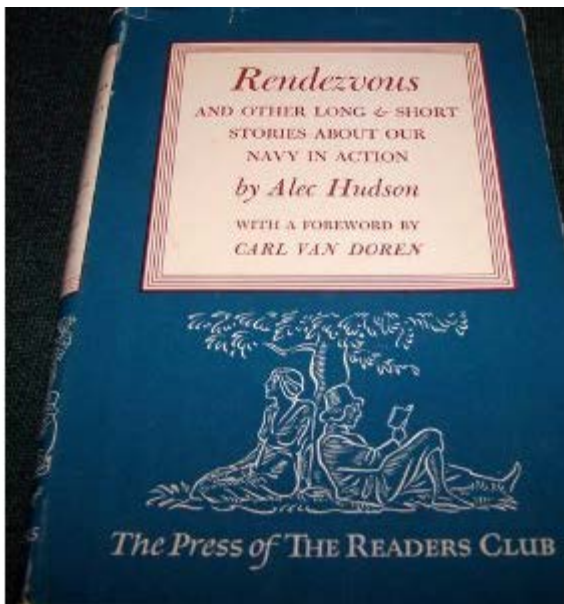
“I just threw up my hands and said it might be a good idea to remind everybody concerned that this nation was at war....It’s not a very glorious incident. You won’t find very many references to this anywhere along the line.”

I re-folded the article and slipped it back in the book.

“That certainly beats me,” I said. “So that was the end of it?”

“No,” said Mac. “They planned on trying it again before Midway, but Admiral Nimitz dispatched a couple seaplane tenders to French Frigate Shoals, and the Japanese wouldn’t risk it. That meant they lost a chance to see what we were doing before the Midway battle in June.”

“Amazing,” I said. “That is just one of the reasons I enjoy talking to you so much.”



“There was a sort of gallows humor about it on the CinCPac staff,” said Mac. “You will see that one of Jasper’s stories in “Up Periscope” is called “Rendezvous.” It was originally in the Saturday Evening Post just before the war. It outlines a plan by which submarines would refuel long-distance seaplanes for a sneak attack. There was quite a laugh about it on the staff, at least those that were cleared. Eddie Layton suggested that Jasper had planned the attack for the Japs, but it was not completely in jest. There was an investigation, and Jasper was exonerated.”

“That must have been sort of strange between pals,” I said.

“They weren’t,” said Mac. “Joe Rochefort and Eddie were very close. But Eddie couldn’t stand Jasper. I was one of his kids in the Estimates Section, and he was delighted when he finally got enough of us Lieutenants to stand up a real 24-hour watch. And he made Commander.”

“I imagine that would pick up anyone’s spirits,” I said. “It certainly did for me.”

“After I volunteered to go forward to Guam in ‘45, Jasper came out to make a visit. I told Eddie I was going to go out to the airfield and pick him up in my jeep. Eddie wanted to know why I was going to bother.”

I shook my head in wonder at the memory of a rendezvous so long ago and far away, vivid as if it were just yesterday.

It is a comfort to duck back into Mac Shower’s account of life at the forward headquarters, and how he and a mad Air Corps General cooked up a private plan to destroy the wartime economy of Japan. Things used to be a lot simpler.

## **Iron Pants and Cherry Pie**

I took a sip of chardonnay. Peter was pouring a very nice vintage, a hint of fruit but dry, without anything that seemed syrupy like canned pears.

I looked over at the Admiral in wonder. He had just described the entire intelligence staff that went forward with Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz. Captain Eddie Layton, Lieutenant Mac, four analysts from JICPOA, a Senior Chief Yeoman and First Class Petty Officer Harry Truman.

“So let me get this straight. You had a grand total of eight guys supporting a five-star staff that controlled a war effort of 2000 ships, 25,000 aircraft and 2.5 million men?”

The Admiral nodded. “Don’t forget, we had a secure telephone to talk to Jasper Holmes and his Estimates Section at FRUPAC.”

I was stunned that anything so complex could be accomplished without battalions of analysts and flat-screen panels. I had seen a request for hundreds of bodies to go forward to support operations in Afghanistan the other day, not fighters, mind you, just thinkers of great thoughts.

They must have been giants then, or rather, ordinary men who rose to extraordinary heights because there was no alternative.



Mac did the daily brief to Chester Nimitz's staff on CINCPAC Hill above the harbor at Agana, Guam. He pulled the neat trick of giving it at the unclassified level, which enabled Captain Layton to spin the message to the broadest possible audience. The unclassified message was fitted to the template of things that were known to be true from highly classified ULTRA sources and exploitation of the Navy and Army tactical codes.

It was pretty slick, and I have done that myself to be able to share information with third-party allies in time of crisis and conflict. 'Why' you know something to be true or not is not the point; sources and methods do not need to be revealed if the information is correct.

I had learned the lesson just as clearly long ago. One evening in the Yellow Sea I had labored long through the night to plot the intricacies of an exercise scenario that I had to present to the crews of the dawn launch from *Midway Maru*.

Two hours prior to commencement of flight operations I labored through the complexity of the scenario to the bleary men in green NOMEX flight suits sipping coffee and puffing on their second or third cigarette of the morning. I got through it and Santa, a lanky Radar Intercept Officer ('RIO') from the Rock Rivers Phantom Squadron, snarled at me: "Just tell me where we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to do when we get there?"

I got it, suddenly and completely. Don't explain how to build a watch when someone asks what time it is.

One guy who did not need to know about watch construction was Iron Pants Curtis Lemay. He was in the audience when Mac was briefing the staff at 0900 each day. Iron Pants commanded the XXth Air Force. It was the first such command not put under Theater command of officers like Eisenhower, McArthur or Nimitz. Instead General Curtis LeMay assumed direct command of the 20th Air Force. The mission of the 20th was to engage in the strategic destruction of Japan by air, with Iron Pants providing the direction under the

guidance of Washington. Which wasn't working for him. LeMay wanted to cut the legs out from under the Japanese economy, not just aircraft engine production.

Long afterward, that Whiz Kid Robert McNamara described LeMay's approach to addressing the abort rate by bomber crews in the European theater. The crews were no fools, and they exercised a certain discretion on "down gripes" on their birds that might enable them to return to home base and keep them out of meat-grinders like the raid on Schweinfurt.

MacNamara noted: "He was extraordinarily belligerent, many thought brutal. He got the report about the aborts. He issued an order. He said, 'I will be in the lead plane on every mission. Any plane that takes off will go over the target, or the crew will be court-martialed.' The abort rate dropped overnight. Now *that's* the kind of commander he was."

Iron Pants listened to what Mac said in the morning brief in Guam. Now commanding the 20th Air Force and hundreds of sleek Super Forts, he had been directed to improve the efficiency of the bombing campaign against the Japanese.

Eddie Layton and Mac knew that it was not the destruction of aircraft engines and ball bearings that would shut down the Japanese war machine. It would be a lack of oil and lubricants. The unclassified reports of distilling the roots of pines to make fuel were buttressed by highly classified intercepts of military communications. Eddie Layton and Mac knew the truth.

Iron Pants Lemay decided to ignore the idiots back in Washington, and gave an entire bomb group to the Navy to shut down the Inland Sea.

Mac agreed to tell me more about the 313th Bomb Wing, but I was busy. I was conducting an experiment in World War II cooking. I was attempting to deconstruct Mac's description of the hated recipe for Canned Pear Pie a la Cookie last night. I could not make a crust work with the crackers that used to come with C-Rations, even with laden with lard and smoothed with canned milk.

It was like Mac told me: "Canned pears are notoriously flavorless, grainy, and colorless. UGGGHHH. Just unappetizing & tasteless. Now for cherry pie. . . with real crust and the sweet tangy goodness of the cherries. But we had to get back home to experience that taste again."

## **Operation Starvation**

(313th Bomb Wing aircraft drops aerial mines, March 1945. US Army Air Corps Picture)

I nodded as Mac told me of the revolting matter of Pear Pie, made out of the grainy fruit contained in sugary syrup in gigantic cans and crushed crackers as a revolting crust.

I was having the neighborhood bar menu Spring Rolls with dipping sauce, and was considering getting an order of the mini Fish and Chips, which is not what you would think as prepared at the Willow Restaurant. Tracy O'Grady's kitchen team floats out a little fantasy plate that is more akin to the finest Japanese tempura, garnished with slender rings of onion in the same delicate batter.

“There is nothing that sailors care more about than their chow,” I said, after Mac described the constant searching for something decent to eat on Guam in 1945. When afloat, in war or peace, there is nothing to do except work, sleep or eat. Consequently, what Cookie manages to get on the mess line or down to the Dirty Shirt Wardroom is the only thing that marks the passing of the hours in the endless sameness of the ship's routine.

Bad food is bad morale. I remember vividly the stories of the Peanut Butter riots on the Coral Sea during the Vietnam conflict, when the wardroom treasurer ran short of funds, and the brown paste was the only thing for lunch for weeks.

Ashore, as Mac was on Guam, there was no adequate means of transporting fresh food, and the Staff forward was reduced to the dreary and numbing sameness of canned C-rations.

Mac said the driving from the Headquarters complex on CINCPAC Hill on Guam helped to vary the boredom. They could watch the strikes launch from Anderson Field in the morning and grab breakfast at the Air Corps mess when the tempo of operations permitted. The flyboys were able to get fresh food via cargo planes from Hawaii and they had things like real butter. Their mess was a treat, a taste of home in the forward area.

The ring was closing on Japan, and that is why Chester Nimitz took his command element forward. The main event, the invasion of the Japanese Home Islands was going to come in this pivotal year. There were other options, of course, but in January there was no certainty that a wonder weapon would appear that would change the course of history.

For the foreseeable future, it was going to be B-29 Super Forts in endless waves, putting the torch to the enemy from the new airbases in the Marianas.

Everyone had moved forward to join the fight. The Joint Radio Analysis Group, Forward Area (RAGFOR), set up shop as soon as the shooting died down in September of 1944.

The CINCPAC Staff began preparations to join them shortly thereafter.

In August 1944, Iron Pants LeMay transferred to the China-Burma-India theater and directed first the XX Bomber Command in China. In January, the disappointing results of Brigadier General Haywood Hansell's high-altitude precision campaign resulted in iron

Pants being transferred to relieve him in January, the same time Mac and the little Fleet Intelligence organization set up shop on CINCPAC Hill.

Iron Pants would henceforth command the XXI Bomber Command. In that role he was responsible for all strategic air operations against the Japanese home islands. Consequently, he attended the 0900 staff briefing at the CINCPAC HQ.

LT Mac scanned the classified traffic generated by RAGFOR and FRUPAC in Hawaii to which they had a direct line. Armed with the most sensitive communications information, he was able to shape the reporting collected from Japanese public radio stations to form a perfectly unclassified and uncannily accurate assessment of the conditions in Tokyo.

The shortage of petroleum products (POL) revealed in public media reports of was one of the key issues that Mac hammered home under the guidance of Fleet Intelligence Eddie Layton. Lemay heard each morning that the targets his aircrews were hitting were the wrong ones to put the squeeze directly on the Japanese war machine.

Mac would dictate the Foreign Broadcast Intercept reports that fit the all-source intelligence assessment to Yeoman First Class Harry Truman who typed up the notes as fast as the words were spoken.

Besides POL, the key issue for the Japanese was food, a large percentage of which arrived by ship across the Inland Sea, or from fishing grounds in the Sea of Okhotsk.

LeMay knew he had a hell of a problem. It was readily apparent that the tactics developed for use in Europe against the Luftwaffe were unsuitable against Japan. His bombers flying from China were dropping their bombs near their targets only 5% of the time. Operational losses of aircraft and crews were high, due to Japanese air defenses and the continuing mechanical problems with the B-29 engines.

In Washington, the Air Corps leadership viewed anything except high explosives against land targets as “the Navy’s job.” Even today, the aviators of both services still enjoy “visually pleasing destruction” as the direct feedback of a dangerous job well done.

I am sympathetic to that view, but it was not the answer to bringing down Japan.

Mac said that as an island nation, the Japanese relied on imports of nearly everything, including 80% of its oil, 90% of its iron ore, and food of course.

PACFLT submarines has carried the burden of attacking the Japanese merchant fleet since 1943, but with the loss of USS Wahoo, no offensive operations had been permitted by SUBPAC in the Inland Sea. It was an open road from the Asian mainland to the west coast

ports.

Bolstered by the assessments provided by Captain Layton and Mac, Chester Nimitz decided to push Japan over the edge. That meant an effective and complete blockade, but he needed Lemay's Super Forts to do it. He intended to use the bombers to deliver not bombs, but sea mines in the strategic choke-points that entered the inland sea. Submarines would continue to shut down the east coast ports.

Even the pointy-headed targeteers of the Committee of Operations Analysts in Washington took the Fleet Admiral's request seriously. They too were beginning to understand the assessment from Guam that the only way to shut down the Home Islands was an effective and complete blockade.

Iron Pants was a stubborn son-of-a-bitch, and was reluctant to give up control of any of his bombers. But Mac's briefings convinced him of the merit of mine-warfare. He agreed to devote the 313th bomb wing to strike what was euphemistically called "local targeting," which was a way to say "naval targets" without acknowledging that the Fleet Intelligence people were calling the shots.

The B-29 aerial mining campaign began in late March of 1945.

Mac dipped a spring roll in the dipping sauce and downed it in two bites.

"I never heard anything about this, Admiral," I said in wonder.

"You never will. The Air Force historians are not interested in the very brave performance of Air Corps crews that doesn't support the notion of an independent service. I have offered to tell them the story, but got no takers."

"Did the operation have a name?" I asked, looking back at the menu.

"Yep," he said quietly. "We called it Operation Starvation."



## **ERNIE (and Mac's) WAR**



**(WWI sailor and WWII War Correspondent Ernie Pyle, seen here on USS Cabot when he was making waves with the Navy Department. Mac met him on Guam with the CINCPAC forward staff. Photo US Navy.)**

This Spring Ahead nonsense with the clocks is kicking my butt. The computer is telling me it is past noon- and that is nonsense. Why do we not have the courage to leave the sun

alone? Who is it in Congress that believe themselves as King Canute, waving not at the ocean in this case, but the hurtling blazing orb of Old Sol?

Vanity, vanity, thy name is Congress. Or something. I felt jet lagged right at the dinner table where the laptop lives.

I tried to look at my notes from the last session with Mac at Willow and they are not making much sense. Topically, the conversation veered from:

*The delicious Gruyere Cheese puffs, and the crackling Peking Duck pancakes, a nurses report from INOVA Fairfax that revealed nothing wrong with Mac, 50 miles covered in the champagne Jaguar, gall bladders, fried chicken done to perfection early in the last century, the obits of two men I did not know, the status of traffic on I-66 eastbound, and what the six fire trucks and twenty-five police cruisers were up to, Section 66 of the Arlington National Cemetery, and in-ground placement of urns therein, the deficiencies of the original Columbarium at the National Cemetery, the status of bartender Katia's job offer from outside the food, beverage and hospitality industry; whether the consolidation of the weather guessers, Cyrppies, Public Affairs and Intelligence Officers in the Navy Corps of Information Dominance was 'back to the future,' since Mac had started as a special investigator who did PAO stuff at the Naval District in Seattle in 1941.*

I was not making much progress on my happy hour white, since we were all over the map. "So, you were really a Public Affairs officer before you were a codebreaker, right?"

Mac nodded. "It was part of the Office of Naval Intelligence," he said. "I guess they thought it was all information and pretty much the same thing."

"Maybe they do again," I said. I finally asked Mac about Chester Nimitz, the phlegmatic Texan who led the Navy's drive west across the Pacific.

Mac was much more focused on this, and it was a little unusual, since the mythic figure of the Fleet Admiral normally was part of the backdrop to *his* war.

Mac furrowed his brow, attempting to distill the legend from the man. "Well," he said slowly. "He took care of his Enlisted guys- the ones in the motor pool and the boat detail for the Flag Barge." He went on to describe his conduit to the troops, who was a Mustang Lieutenant who had enormous impact on the staff and the way it worked.



I made a note to find a roster of the staff from 1945, and see if I could track down who the officer had been, since he showed up again as an agent of influence who secured the Junior Officer BOQ across from the HQ after the war- where the chapel is now. It was a rare name that Mac did not remember, or did after I was scribbling something else. I made a note to check it out and ask more questions.

Mac was still contemplating the Public Affairs question. “It was interesting to see who came forward to Guam. Like Ernie Pyle, the legendary war correspondent.”

“He was the most famous correspondent of the War- probably more than Edward R. Murrow. Did you ever meet him?”

“Oh yes. He was on Guam before the invasion. Ernie was shot by a Japanese machine gunner on Ie Shima, Okinawa.”

“There is quite a display for him in the Hall of Correspondents in the Pentagon, and I would stop and read the panel display when I spent more time than I wanted walking to and from press conferences with The Joint Staff. Ernie was known as the soldier’s correspondent, according to the display. Did you ever have drinks with him?”

That is the way of these conversations- I had no inkling whatsoever that in the course of this session we would stumble across the most iconic and tragic media figures of the war in Europe and the Pacific, two theaters whose paths seemed rarely to cross.

“Not true,” said Mac. “Don’t forget Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, F-R-A-S-E-R. He came to the Pacific to command all British naval forces after commanding the group that sank the Nazi battleship *Scharnhorst* off Norway.”

“Point taken, Sir,” I said, and that led to a discussion of the wild four-day party that started on board Cagey Five, the battleship HMS *King George V*.

“But you actually met Ernie Pyle? That is incredible.”

The Admiral shrugged. “He was there, it was a small island. He had sort of prickly relations with the Navy, since he thought the sailors had it pretty cushy compared to the combat infantry of the ETO. He was a plain-spoken SOB and he wore his heart on his sleeve.”

“He might not have thought that if he saw the results of a running gunfight like the battle for the Slot,” I said indignantly. “I just read Neptune’s Fury, Jim Hornfischer’s account of the slaughter.”

Mac looked on with the cool perspective that only ten decades on the planet can give you, and know you are the last man standing from all the formations so long ago. “It is one thing to read about it and quite another to live it. Ernie had a point. He got bombed with our guys by the Army Air Corps at St. Lo, and was badly shaken. His heart was always with the riflemen of that war. In 1944, he wrote a column urging that soldiers in combat get "fight pay" just as airmen were paid "flight pay." Congress passed a law authorizing \$10 a month extra pay for combat infantrymen. The legislation was called ‘The Ernie Pyle Bill.’ *That* was the mark of the depth of fondness the troops had for him.”

“Sounds like Bill Mauldin and his Willie and Joe cartoons.”

“Close enough,” said Mac. “And you can throw Andy Rooney in that group, too. Andy was one of the angry young men, then. Ernie was an old man, though- he was 45 when he was shot. I remember thinking about that at the time- I was still in my mid-twenties and he was old enough to be my father.”

“Do you recall how you heard about his death? Did you have to clear the dispatches or the pictures before they went back to CONUS?”

Mac shook his head. “Not that I recall. There *was* a picture I might have seen at the time, but it never was published. I think it was the middle of April in ’45. He went from Guam to Okinawa to cover the action. These days, you would say he was ‘imbedded’ with the 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.”

“He took all the risks that the grunts did,” I said. “That is a commitment to the mission.”

“Yes, I think so. He was riding in a jeep with the CO on an infantry regiment and a couple other guys. Apparently, hundreds of vehicles had driven the same road, but for whatever reason, a Japanese machine gun opened up on them. They stopped the jeep and everyone jumped into the ditch. Apparently, Ernie raised his head to ask the Colonel if he was OK.”

“I think I heard he was killed by a sniper,” I said, stopping my scribbling.

“Nope, it was a Jap machine gun that had played possum, letting hundreds of other vehicles go by. Those were Ernie’s last words, though. He took a round in the temple, and was killed instantly right after he asked.”

“Maybe that is why the machine gunners waited, since they must have known that opening up would get them killed pretty quickly. That is a powerful argument for keeping your head down,” I said.

“Yes indeed. I am sure Ernie would have preferred for it to work out differently. They Army buried him with his helmet on with a bunch of the other combat dead. He was one of the few civilians to be awarded the Purple Heart.”

**(Ernie Pyle shortly after being killed. US Army photo by Alexander Roberts.)**

“Wait, I saw his grave at the Punchbowl in Honolulu!” I said.

“Ernie traveled a while after the war. They exhumed him from the grave in Ie Shima, and then buried him in the Army cemetery on Okinawa, and then finally they moved him to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific where you saw him.”

“That is amazing,” I said. “He was the most-read correspondent of the war.”

Mac nodded and finished his Bell’s Lager. “He even impacted the Japanese. When Okinawa was returned to Japan’s control after the war, Ernie’s monument was one of only three American memorials allowed to remain in place.”

“Huh.” I fished around in my wallet, and the Admiral picked up the tab, which was modest since he drinks for free now at Willow.

We settled up with Liz-S and Jasper, the best bowler on Guam, and went to find the

Admiral's walker. It is a high speed model, with hand-breaks brakes and quick action movement. I walked back across Fairfax Drive with him until he turned off at the entrance to the Madison. I retrieved the Bluesmobile from the Bat Cave under the hotel and drove home.

Once I opened the mail, I poured a tall one and logged onto the 'net. I checked out the Ernie Pyle Monument, in place for 67 years:

## **Heresy**

Mac took a sip of his Virgin Mary and scowled. "I think there are only two olives in this one." He peered into the dense red of the contents of the pint glass before him, rheumy blue eyes squinting behind his silver-framed glasses.

The long bar was filling up nicely. Old Jim was in his position at the apex of the Amen Corner, slowly and deliberately wrapping the cord of his media player around the small electronic rectangle. At precisely 5:15 pm, Peter dialed down the lighting in the Willow bar to increase the romantic ambiance with the rich dark wood and the little votive candles that suddenly increased their bright glitter along the long bar.

Andre-the-Waiter, phlegmatic and cool with his shaved head and impressively articulated physique, was most solicitous. He brought me the mildly insouciant white that Peter was flogging at happy hour prices without need of my beckoning. We continued the conversation about tightening the belt on Japan.

“Two things you need to understand. Iron Pants LeMay came up with incendiary bombing of Japan as a tactic on his own. He took over command of the strategic air campaign in January, when we got there. High altitude precision bombing was an oxymoron in the weather conditions over Japan.”

“Yeah,” I nodded, scribbling a note on a napkin. “It was usually cloudy when I lived in Yokosuka. I had the Flight Deck Integrity Watch one morning when it wasn’t, and I realized if it was clear you could see Mt. Fuji from the carrier pier, looming as an invisible presence most of the time. It wasn’t often you could see it, though.”



“Precisely. LeMay considered all the options. The climb up to 30,000 feet caused the Super Forts to burn so much fuel that their bomb loads were reduced in order to carry additional fuel tanks in the bomb bays. Plus, the engines were fragile, and less stress on them meant less maintenance. Iron Pants committed heresy, violating doctrine, and he had his crews train at low-level delivery, sometimes down only 5,000 feet. He also decided the only way to bring up accuracy was to transition away from iron bombs to incendiary devices.”

“That seems horrific,” I said. “It was a distinct change in approach. I read that Air Corps General Ira Eaker once said that the strategy was to kill skilled defense workers. Those are civilian targets.”

“It was horrific all around. The early incendiary devices were unstable, and one went off during unloading on the hard-stand and killed a bunch of ordnance men and wounded dozens. The Super Fort was a write-off. As to whether it was moral or not, the first firestorms were visited on the Germans, without any mercy. Same tactic. The Japanese cities just burned better.”

“Didn’t they start bombing at night, too, like the Brits in Europe?”

“Yes. Japanese air defenses made daytime bombing below the jet stream altitudes very dangerous. LeMay finally switched to low-altitude nighttime incendiary attacks as his bread-and-butter tactic, with daylight high-altitude strikes reserved only for special targets in clear air-mass. The first big night fire-raid went against Tokyo on the ninth of March, 1945.”

“You said there were two things I had to understand. What was the other one?”

“Eddie Layton said the Joint Target Board back in Washington couldn’t tell a warehouse from a whorehouse. We kept telling Admiral Nimitz in the morning brief that Petroleum-Oil-Lubricants (POL) were the key to ending the war. LeMay became a believer, and he asked Washington for permission to start attacking POL-related targets.”

Mac scowled. “They said: ‘No, we know best, and they continued to direct the target list against the things they thought were important, like industrial plants. KT. Johnson was one of the big-wigs back in the JTB, and he is still around. I hear from him once in a while. Anyway, Iron Pants asked for POL targets and K.T. wouldn’t give him any. That is when he decided to commit another act of heresy and gave the 313th bomb group to the Navy.’”

“That was the ‘local targeting’ euphemism, right?” I said scribbling away.

“Yep. The Ops guys were getting the idea that the Super Forts could be used to deliver aerial mines and seal up the Inland Sea, and then mine the harbors. Tighten the belt on them and starve them out. LeMay was reluctant at first, but he went along and the first mining missions were flown in late March. After that, the Shimonoseki Strait was effectively closed, and then Henashi Cape, Iwase and Seishin.

The Admiral looked off across the crowded bar, the lights of the votive candles reflecting off his glasses. He recited a litany in sing-song Japanese. “Oyama, Niigata, Miyazu, Maizuru, Tsuruga, Nezugaseki, Obama and Kobe-Osaka. They were mined and re-seeded as necessary by July. The Japs were being cut off.”

“No one knew about the Bomb, right? It must have come as quite a surprise.”

“That’s right. We were on Guam to manage the invasion of Kyushu, the southernmost of the Home Islands. That was Operation Olympic, which was put back a little, due to the controversy about casualties.”

“When was that supposed to happen?” I asked.

“November of ‘45.”

“What was the controversy?”

“We said it might take 2.5 million US casualties. MacArthur’s staff in Manila was saying it would only take 250,000. We eventually settled on a million.”

“A million Americans?” I said.

“That isn’t killed. The number includes those we expected to be wounded or maimed.”

“Only a million killed and wounded?” I echoed dumbly.

The Admiral smiled a thin smile. “The times were hard,” he said. “We didn’t look at things the way people do now. I’ll tell you about the estimates process if you would care for another glass of wine.”

I nodded, still stunned. That specific offensive would have ground up my Dad and all his buddies, and I might never have been born. More wine sounded swell.

## **You Have No Idea**



(Chief Petty Officer Graham Jackson playing "Going Home" as FDR's body leaves the Warm Springs Institute for the train station.)

The Willow bar was bustling. There were some very attractive ladies at the bar, and some self-important young men attempting to chat them up. Sara the lovely Lebanese waitress was smiling her perfect smile under her delicately curved eyebrows, her raven hair shining. Andre the waiter circled solicitously. Peter managed the long bar with aplomb.

Everyone in the bar was thoroughly in the moment, just as thoroughly as Mac and I were in another, a humid place with still sultry air and shadows sixty-five years long, almost to the day.

I was warming to the topic. “I would like to hear some more about that,” I said. “The whole estimates process. I mean, the decision to drop the Bomb on Japan was a result of Harry Truman making the business case about the cost-benefit in American lives, right?”

The Admiral pursed his lips and took a sip of his Virgin Mary. “I was just a junior officer, but I had unique access at the time and have done a lot of research since. I have a monograph about the end of the war that the CIA did. It is unclassified now, but it never published for public use. It is only about thirty page long, but the attachments are more than a hundred. I looked at it the other day, and read the minutes of the meeting at the White House that talked about options. Truman was there- he became President when FDR passed away in April. Not YN1 Harry Truman.”

“I got that, Sir.”

Mac smiled and counted the olives left in his glass. “Well, after Graham Jackson played “Nearer my God to Thee” on the accordion at Warm Springs and Harry S was sworn in, there was a lot for him to learn. He had never been in the loop for decisions like Vice Presidents are these days. In fact, he had only been in office for eighty days or so, and FDR didn’t talk to him about squat.”

“So, the Spooks come to him after he is sworn in and tell him about the Doomsday secret? Didn’t that mean Stalin knew more about the Bomb than the President did?”

“That is what I understand, based on the subsequent revelations of the Soviet penetration of the Manhattan Project. We kept our heads down and prepared for Operation Olympic, the land invasion of Japan.”

“But you mentioned the estimates process. Didn’t that shape what Truman eventually decided to do?”

“Oh yes. We worked with the plans division of CINCPAC forward under Admiral Forrest Sherman. Admiral Nimitz had two hats to wear. For the Navy, he was CINCPAC. For the joint forces he was Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area- CINCPOA. But of course he



had to deal with MacArthur, the Army Commander, whose HQ was in Manila. Sherman's guys had to go and coordinate with them as the air campaign ground on."

"So what did you do? What was your average day like?"

"We supported the estimates process and the planners. First, Okinawa had to fall. Most of that had been done before we got to Guam, and we couldn't bypass it."

"I remember the planning process. Sometimes the day of the big exercise would arrive and you realized something really important had to be done ninety days ago and you were totally screwed."

Mac laughed. "My roommate in the two-story Quonset hut on CINCPAC Hill was an army Captain named Hal Leathers. He did our ground estimates, and he thought there were 100,000 Jap troops waiting for us, and 2000 kamikaze aircraft ready to strike the Fleet. According to the traffic we decrypted, the biggest battleship in the world, IJN *Yamato*, was getting ready for a one-way mission to beach itself on the island and use its 18-inch guns as static artillery."

"The Japanese were determined to make this so costly for us that we would seek options other than complete victory, right?"

"You have no idea. The civilians on Okinawa, like on Saipan, were indoctrinated to believe that the Americans would kill everyone on the island. Admiral Nimitz sent 1,500 ships, including some Brit fast carriers and a half million men."

I pursed my lips. "Let me get the timing straight. The invasion started in April, didn't it?"

(IJN *Yamato*, dead in the water and damaged. USN Photo)

"April Fools Day. We found *Yamato* on the sixth, and sank her the next day. The Japs lost over 107,000 military and civilian on land and 4,000 sailors at sea. It cost us almost seven

thousand soldiers and another five thousand sailors to the kamikazes. It was something entirely new in battle, and it was a real problem. The running battle went on almost to the 4th of July, but once we had a decent foothold we had a place for tactical aviation to stage from, and the skies belonged to us.”

The Admiral reached in the pocket of his tan suit and pulled out a list. This is what we worked out with Iron Pants to hit the targets we thought were important.

I looked at the list, which seemed to be compiled from a Far East Air Force chronology. I studied some of the entries:

*“July 10: 83 Very Heavy Bombers bomb oil facilities at Amagasaki.*

*July 13/14: 30 B-29's mine Shimonoseki Strait and waters at Fukuoka, ports at Seishin, Masan, and Reisui.*

*July 15/16: 26 B-29's mine waters at Naoetsu, Niigata, Najin, Pusan, and Wonsan. 59 other B- 29's bomb Nippon Oil Company at Kudamatsu.*

*July 15/16: 26 B-29's mine waters at Naoetsu, Niigata, Najin, Pusan, and Wonsan. 59 other B- 29's bomb Nippon Oil Company at Kudamatsu.”*

The Admiral smiled. “Local Targeting. You have to break out our target list from the master activity chronology to understand what was happening. There was an awful lot of activity and our campaign gets lost in the static. The Air Force and the Joint Target Board prefer it that way, and the story of those brave aircrew that carried out the POL and mining campaigns.”

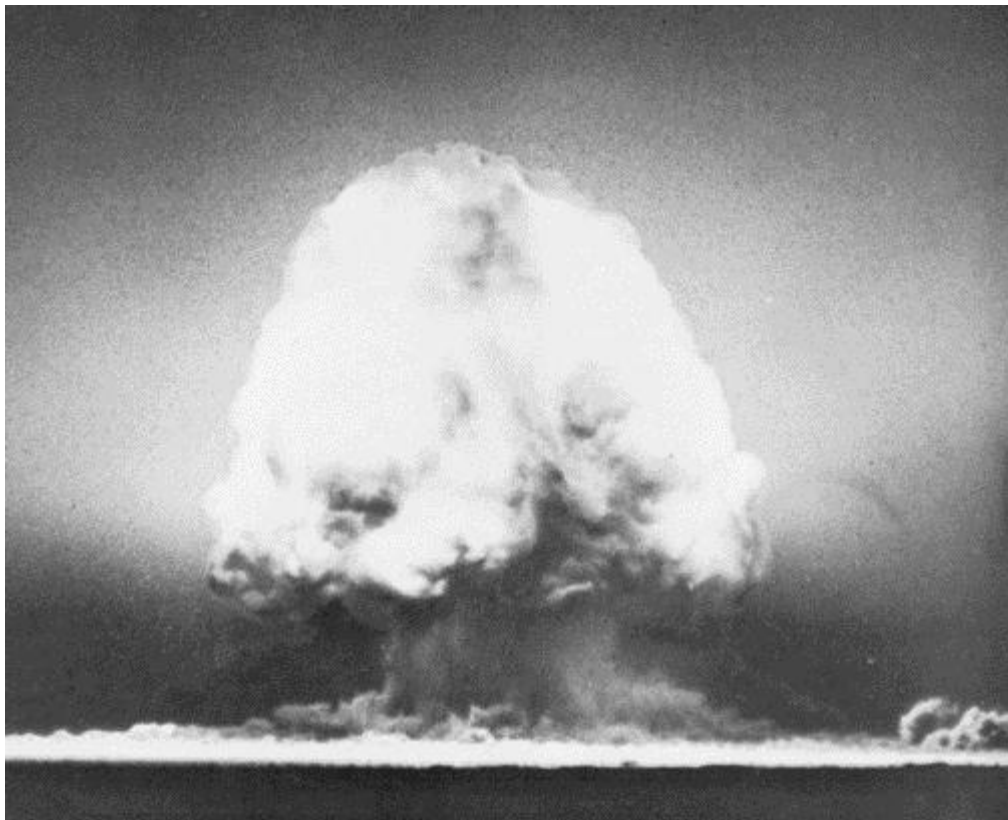
“So, tell me: how did you work with the Air Corps planners?”

“We didn’t, at least not directly. That wasn’t our job. We provided target nominations and let them do their work. We were concentrating on estimates and supporting the planning process. That is why Captain Layton took us forward. The main event after Okinawa was Olympic, the assault on Kyushu, and we were battling the Army staff in Manila about what it was going to cost.”

“You said Hal came up with 2.5 million American casualties for the invasion?”

Mac nodded grimly. “MacArthur’s people said 250,000. There was a lot of back-and-forth and that is how we settled on a round one million. It put things off to November, but we were gearing up for it. There was no alternative except a negotiated peace that would have left the militarists in charge. No one knew about the Bomb except Admiral Nimitz, the Chief of Staff and maybe a couple others.”

“They didn’t even know the thing would work. What did they call it?” I searched my brain without any luck.



(Trinity Test, Alamogordo, New Mexico. Photo DOE)

“The Gadget. No, they were pretty confident, but it wasn’t proved until the day of the strikes at Kudamatsu. On the sixteenth of July they blew up the gadget up at Trinity Flats in New Mexico.”

“With the estimates of casualties I imagine there really wasn’t much choice about it.”

“Hal Leathers used to rave about the disparity in the numbers between us and MacArthur’s staff in Manila. The Army actually started breaking some of the Imperial ground codes toward the end, and Hal was charting the units that were moving into Kyushu, which was the obvious next target. He had the real numbers of the real units, and that is why our

assessment was so dire. There was one unit that he knew was present, but could not identify by number. He named it the “Leathers Unit.” I have never seen that in the history books. Hal was my best man after the war. He is dead now.”

I tried to remember what they taught us about amphibious warfare. “Aren’t you supposed to have a three-to-one superiority on an assault?” I asked.

“Four-to-one if you are General Montgomery,” laughed Mac. “We could never get the numbers to work at more than 1.5-to-one. We would have been slaughtered.”

He leaned forward. “We had a translator from FRUPAC named John some-thing-or-other. I’ll think of his last name. He was slated to be in the first wave of the landings on Kyushu. He had a chance to actually visit the beach that his unit was going to hit. He looked at the caves and fortifications and realized that if Truman had not authorized the use of the Bomb, that is the very piece of sand where he would have died.”

“Amazing what changed in just a few weeks,” I said.

“You don’t know the half of it,” chuckled Mac.

## **Potsdam and Monkfish**



### **(Planning the Post-War World. Potsdam Leaders, July, 1945)**

The dining room of Tracy O’Grady’s Willow restaurant is a contrast to the bar area where I normally hang out. It is much lighter and airier than the dark wood area, though it shares a certain intimacy. It is all white tablecloths and spare elegant furnishings with solicitous staff. I do not make enough money to continue on from happy hour at the bar to the dining room as much as I would like. That is why Tracy established the \$5 “neighborhood bar menu” to tempt the regulars into a snack, even if we don’t stay for dinner all the time.

This meal was something in the way of a special occasion, though. The Good Doctor was joining Mac and me for a meal after drinks. He is always late, having *One Of Those Jobs* that involves talking to other *Very Busy People* whose schedules are frantic, and studied the menu, though it really doesn't matter at Tracy's Willow restaurant. Anything on it is good. If an item it is not composed of the freshest and tastiest of ingredients, it wouldn't be there.

I had the chateaubriand-for-two one night a few months ago, split with my older boy to commemorate some event, and it was better than anything I might have had at a specialty steakhouse. Creamed spinach and all the sides came with it, and the meal was extraordinary. I asked Tracy about it, since I haven't seen it since, and it was just something that came from *la boucherie* she frequents in the morning in her eternal quest for the finest ingredients.

The lamb, for example, is New Zealand and always good. I think it is one of the recipes she cooked for the Bocuse D'or competition in Europe, the one that required the custom serving set that now hangs in the narrow hallway that leads to the rear entrance and the restrooms past the private dining room.

I settled on the monkfish wrapped in bacon, which I would not have done anywhere else. The monkfish is supposed to be a real ugly creature in person, but much more approachable when filleted, sort of like life, or history.

Mac has a wonderful full-service dining facility at the Madison where he lives. He does not need the amenities and care that some of the other residents do, but he finds that not having to cook for himself is a nice convenience. Not that he can't mind you, as he would remind us.

When he comes to Willow, he drives the Jaguar from the garage under the building to a place he normally finds right in front of the restaurant, minimizing the risk of the crossing Fairfax Drive on foot.

This particular night I had strolled from the office and stared down the traffic from the dubious safety of the wide white lines that VDOT has lately begun placing with the apparent intent to confuse both motorists and pedestrians. Cars are supposed to stop for people, who have become emboldened and dart out unexpectedly in mid-block.

I made it almost all the way, edging uneasily in front of a gigantic and somewhat ambivalent Escalade SUV. Clear of the massive fender I looked up to see a hurtling bicyclist coming directly for me. My heart leapt into my mouth and I jumped for the safety of the curb.

The city is plagued by these Lance Armstrong wannabees who brook no opposition to their speedy progress, and view the rest of us with contempt.

I suspect that is why Mac drives, even though The Madison is only across the street. Spry as he is, the years have taken a half-step off his best times.

He has had some times, and it is one of those extraordinary pleasures to have him as my own personal time machine. We had been talking about the estimates process that supported the planning for the invasion of Japan. I had a stack of bar napkins in the pocket of my suit jacket that I would try to unscramble later, and was increasingly aware that having lived the experience, Mac was one of the very few on the planet whose opinion was worth counting.

He decided to take the safe bet on the lamb. The Good Doctor opted for a table order of the Warm Gruyere Cheese Puffs with Black Truffle Sauce and one of the signature grilled flatbreads with calamari ali olio, garnished with roast garlic, three cheeses and oven dried tomato.

The Doctor is a historian by trade as well as a reserve Navy Captain, and he has been trying to unravel the history of the Air Intelligence trade. Mac is the last man standing who recalls what Admiral Forrest Sherman had in mind for the craft that emerged from World War Two, morphed through the chaos of Korea, and provided the front-line support to the Nuclear Navy of Admiral Arleigh Burke.

I was interested, too, since if there was something I would have put on my tombstones when this is all over, it would be: "Socotra. Air Intelligence Officer. Cold War, DESERT STORM, GWOT, OCO."

So, the Doc was trying to steer things around to Admiral Forrest Sherman, and I was determined to understand the last months of World War II.

When the waitress left us- a pert young woman in a white blouse and dark apron I did not recognize- I made a stab at keeping us in July of 1945. "I was just in Potsdam in May. It was raining like hell and my lovely associate and I looked like drowned rats by the time we hiked just a couple blocks from the train station. We had intended to tour Cecilienhof, the home of Crown Prince Wilhelm Hohenzollern where the Big Three held the conference to determine the future of the world. Never got there. We took refuge in the nearest church- St. Nikolaikirche. There was a room off the nave that had a brief history of the restoration of the place and I was blown away by what the town must have looked like when the wartime leaders arrived. It was mostly rubble."

Mac nodded. “I imagine so. It was a long way from where we were on Guam, and we knew that VE Day meant that VJ Day was inevitable. It was just that the Japanese didn’t seem to agree.”

Doc said that the militarists had been frantically been trying to negotiate for a cease-fire with the Russians before the Conference, and were willing to make concessions in Sakhalin, Manchuria and some other territory to get it. Harry Truman had been president for less than three months, and FDR, failing in health had been a softy as far as Uncle Joe Stalin was concerned.

“He once said he had a hunch that Stalin was not the kind of man to take advantage of him, and that he would give him everything he possibly can and ask for nothing from him in return, noblesse oblige, and he won’t try to annex anything, working together for a world of democracy and peace.”

“That is a pack of crap as bad as President George W looking into Colonel Putin’s eyes and seeing a good soul,” I said.

Doc rolled his eyes. “There is a whole body of scholarship that holds that the US cynically held the secret of the bomb in Truman’s back pocket and sacrificed civilian lives at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to demonstrate to the Soviets that there was really a new world order and the US was large and in charge.”

“Those were the same idiots who wanted the Enola Gay exhibit on the fiftieth anniversary at the Air and Space Museum to be a big apology for American war crimes.”

Doc nodded. “It was the curator of the collection, Jim Crouch, who said it could either be a ‘feel good’ exhibition, or a testament to the horror of war. It could not be both in his mind.”

(Lehigh University graphic on the history wars).

I said that everyone who saw it who had a dad that would have been there for the apocalypse would have disagreed with him.

“They started too soon,” said Mac. “Too many of use were still alive who remember. They had to change the story-board to reflect the estimates of American casualties. “As you might imagine, I have followed this with a great deal in personal interest. In the CIA study of the end of the war are the minutes of a meeting at the White House with Truman, his chief of staff Admiral Leahy, George Marshall and Admiral King. They talked about all sorts of factors, but the one that was preeminent was the number of American kids who were going to die in the assault. Our estimates helped influence the course of the discussion.”

“Did they talk about the Bomb? Did they all know?” I asked.

The Admiral looked at me sadly. “The President, Chief of Staff, Secretary of War and CINCFLEET? Come on. Of course they did.”

“And the decision was to use the bomb.”

“Of course. And it saved a lot of lives, American and Japanese, if our estimates from CINCPAC Hill were correct. I think they were. The revisionists will just have to wait until I am gone to say otherwise.”

The waitress returned with another glass of that Chardonnay for me, one for the Doc and a glass of water, no bubbles, for the Admiral.



(Colonel Paul Tibbet's Enola Gay in the loading process for a special mission, August 5, 1945. The mission was accomplished the next day at Hiroshima. Air Force picture.)

## **Cagey Five**

(HMS *King George V*- "Cagey Five"- enters Apra Harbor, Guam, with sailors manning the rail in August, 1945. Photo National Archive 80- G- 328942)

I was walking over to Willow when Old Jim called. I fished the phone out of my briefcase and answered- it was a District number, and I thought it might be him.

“Where are you?” he growled. “Mac is here.”

“I am on my way,” I said. “Getting ready to cross Fairfax Drive. Be there in a minute or two. Busy day. I will tell you when I get there.”

Jim clicked off without comment. It had been a busy day. I flogged the Hubrismobile up to Shippensburg to confirm the burial space for Mom and Dad, visited Eby’s Granite Works to order a headstone, toured a couple likely spots to hold the reception, and found a place that would block some rooms to accommodate the family that will attend the funeral.

I made it back with an hour to spare, and went through the office mail after the company system took twenty minutes to boot up.

Our crack IT staff has succeeded in their Information Assurance mission so thoroughly that the system is now almost impregnable to use by the employees. Brave New World, I thought, and hoping I could make the date with Mac on time.

People were drinking out on the patio. The day was that nice, and I had the top down at the cemetery. It had been thirsty work, and I was gratified to see that Liz-with-an-S was back behind the bar.

(Liz-S with Mac. Photo Socotra.)

“I worried about you,” I said, slipping onto a stool next to Mac.

Liz-S gave me one of those radiant smiles as she topped up my glass. “Clean bill of health from the Docs,” she said. “I was going stir crazy at the house.”

“There is a lot of that going around,” said Mac. “I drove fifty miles today getting my granddaughter to some medical tests out in Fairfax. I am starved. Is there anything new on the menu?”

“There may be duck tacos,” I ventured, “but they are usually out of them.”

Mac studied the menu, and I got my pen and notebook positioned. Neither of us had eaten that day, so Mac asked for the duck, and I decided to go with the Pollyface Farms organic deviled eggs. “I brought you my recipe for no-fry eggplant parmesan,” he said, sliding a wire-bound cook-book toward me. “It is something we did at the Arlington Hospital.”

I read the title on the book: “Comforting Foods; Comforting Times.”

“I could use some comfort. Wait- it is right here at the end of Liz-S’s arm in this glass!”

Mac laughed. “I am feeling great. I walked over from The Madison.”

“No kidding! You are getting spryer and spryer! We won’t be able to keep up!” I looked up the bar.

(Mac with John-With and Jon-Without. Photo Socotra.)

Old Jim anchored the Amen Corner. John-with-an-H was wearing a worn Carhartt Jacket rather than his usual suit. “I tele-commuted today,” he said, looking at his Happy Hour red with satisfaction as Jasper topped him up.

“Me too,” I said. “But mostly I just commuted.”

I picked up my pen after inhaling a deep draft of an impertinent white wine. “Now, where were we?”

Mac looked at me with a twinkle. “You never know where to start, do you? Why not at the beginning. That is a good place to start.”

“Nah,” I said. “I like to jump around. I think I might have ADD.”

“You think?” growled Jim.

“The alcohol helps,” I said. “With the word that the Navy is going to start using breathalyzers on sailors when they come on the ship. It is ridiculous.”

“I heard that,” said Mac. “Would not have been popular in my day.” He took a sip of Bell’s, a fine golden lager out of Kalamazoo, Michigan. His duck arrived on a rectangular white plate and he began to nibble on the dark morsels.

“It is like they want to make General Order Number One permanent,” I said indignantly. “You guys won World War II and you had a wine mess at the forward headquarters on Guam.”

“Yes, we did.”

“Well, let me ask you this. Your Boss Eddie Layton almost punched out Admiral Richmond Kelly Freaking Turner onboard the USS *South Dakota* at the end of the war. Turner was drunk onboard ship.”

“So was Eddie,” said Mac. “There was probably more alcohol flowing on that ship the night of the victory as ever was poured on a man-o-war. People used to ask me how I tolerated him, but he was always OK with me.”

“That is an interesting cultural snap-shot,” I said. “What about Admiral Nimitz? Did he drink?”

“Never saw him do so,” said Mac. “He may have had a glass of wine with dinner, but he

certainly wasn't a booze-hound like some of them were."

"Did you ever socialize with the Fleet Admiral?" I asked.

"Not really. Well, wait, there was one time." He took a bite of duck and looked pensive.

"Was that on Guam?"

(Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Commander in Chief of the British Pacific Fleet. Photograph taken on board HMS Duke of York at Apia, Guam, 1945. Photo Imperial War Museum.)

Mac nodded. "Yep. Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser- F-R-A-S-E-R" he spelled out as I scribbled, "He brought HMS King George V into Apia to present Nimitz with the Order of the Bath."

"Wow. Were you there for that?"

"Yes, I was. The Admiral sent out a note that anyone who had a set of dress whites could go out to King George V- Cagey Five, we called her- and attend the ceremony. I happened to have a set of whites, and I was included in the party. It was around August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, I think."

“Did the Admiral drink at lunch?”

“Dunno. He and Fraser went to the Flag In-port Cabin, and the rest of us were in the wardroom with the Brits. We had lunch, and then we drank all afternoon, and then through dinner.”

“That must have been pretty fun. I have gotten smashed on Canadian warships, the last time being at Fleet Week in San Francisco in ‘98. I miss a civilized wardroom.”

“This was on the way to not being so civilized, so we decided to get the boat and go back ashore. We were walking down the brow to board when we heard Cagey Five’s 1MC crackle to life. The Captain announced that the Imperial Japanese government had made a decision to honor the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.”

“What a moment,” I said in wonder.

“Yes indeed. It may not have been official, but we turned around and climbed back up and had more drinks in the wardroom before we finally went ashore to sleep it off. On the way we stopped to ask Colonel Purple, the crusty old senior Marine on the staff if he had heard anything, and he said he hadn’t.”

”Wasn’t that the guy whose house you flooded when your car hit the fireplug out front?”

Mac smiled. “Yes, it was. He didn’t think much of the junior Navy officers.”

“That was funny. But as to the merriment, you were entitled to it,” I said. “It meant that everyone was going to live, and no one was going to have to die in the invasion of the Home Islands.”

“Everything changed. Everyone had a different reaction, and most just wanted to go home as fast as possible.”

“Except you.”

Mac nodded. “I didn’t have a job to go home to. I was single. I liked the Navy.”

“It was a Navy that I remember, but is just a fading memory now.”

“I think you will be surprised by that. Any institution that has survived a couple centuries will probably survive what is going on now.”

“I hope so. I sure had fun in my Navy.”

“So, the next day we resolved to host the Brits ashore in thanks for the open bar in their wardroom on Cagey Five. Then they had us back. It went on, back-and-forth, for four days.”

“Sounds like fun,” I said, taking a sip of happy hour white from a glass that never seemed to get dry.”

“It was. But by the time the actual surrender was announced by Hirohito on the 15<sup>th</sup> everyone had been partying for days. I went up to the club at Nimitz Hill to have a cocktail.”

“Must have been wild,” I said.

Mac shook his head. “Nope. It was kinda funny. There was no one there. Too much merriment over the last four days, and no one came.”

“Not quite what I would have expected,” I said, putting two fingers across the side of my glass and winking at Liz-S.

“Well, that pretty much sums up the whole thing, in my experience,” said Mac. He dipped the last bit of duck in a dash of hoisin sauce, and happily popped it in his mouth.

## **Put Up Your Dukes**

(USS South Dakota, (BB-57) in war colors as Flagship of the Pacific Fleet Commander, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz. Official Navy Photo).

I was going to write about cars this morning- it is the time of the season when the people with whom I share the mad eccentric passion for the wheels of yesterday are out and rolling. But this date is also something significant on the life of the Republic and the world.

On this day in 1945, an official announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies is made public to the Japanese people. It was not VJ Day, that is tomorrow, celebrated here on this side of the Date Line. But it is the day the Japanese war cabinet decided to throw in the towel, and I will let the vanquished express the anguish before turning my attention to the last man I will ever know who lived this.

The timeline is a little jerky: the War Council, urged by Emperor Hirohito, had submitted a formal declaration of surrender to the Allies on 10 August, though fighting continued between the Japanese and the Soviets in Manchuria, and between the Japanese and the United States in the South Pacific. Two USN ships, the Oak Hill (LSD-7) and Thomas F. Nickel (DE-587) were sunk by IJN submarine attacks east of Okinawa.

In the afternoon of August 14, Japanese radio announced that an Imperial Proclamation accepting the terms of unconditional surrender drawn up at the Potsdam Conference would be broadcast by the Emperor. The news was not met with universal acceptance. More than 1,000 Japanese soldiers stormed the Imperial Palace in an attempt to find the proclamation and prevent it from being given to the Allies. Soldiers still loyal to Emperor Hirohito held



them off.

That was then. This morning, the Japanese continue to honor 14 August as the day their world changed forever. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that Japan's past "heartfelt apologies" for World War II will remain unshakeable in the future. He went on to express "profound grief" for all who perished in the war and acknowledged that Japan inflicted "immeasurable damage and suffering" on innocent people.

Abe's statement included these words: "On the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, I bow my head deeply before the souls of all those who perished both at home and abroad. I express my feelings of profound grief and my eternal, sincere condolences."

All that said, he noted that more than 80 percent of the country's population was born after the war and had nothing to do with the war. I don't know if he is serious about the notion that generations who are not responsible for the bloodbath be condemned to continually apologize to people who also were not there.

I will probably never again know someone who was there and lived the events that transformed the world, but I was lucky enough to have one of the best friends a guy can have. That is why I turn back this morning to the same week five years ago, and sitting at Willow with a Great American, one of a generation whose like we may not see again. We were with Mac, and the memories flood back with the breath of August in Washington, and the cool darkness of the Willow Bar:

The bill was paid, and people were starting to drift out of the bar area and over to the restaurant side of Willow. It was Restaurant Week, after all, and the *prie fixe* menu with choice of appetizer, entrée and dessert for \$35 bucks is an attractive deal. Tracey O'Grady is always trying innovative things at Willow, and that is one of the reasons it is so much fun.

We need some fun. It could be that the recession is finally going to come to Arlington, which has ignored it thus far. At least the Defense sector has, what with two or more wars running through the decade. "Secretary Gates says he is going to retire next year, and take the national security succession issue out of the Presidential equation," I said.

Mac was straightening the stack of books and papers he had brought to the bar to aid the discussion. "He has done a fine job. One of our better Secretaries, in my judgment, and I have seen them all come and go, from James Forrestal on."

"It sure was a different world," I mused, looking at the empty wine glass in front of me. "I heard the Chinese are asserting sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands west of Okinawa."

“Oil, I would imagine,” said Mac. “The islands were part of the U.S. military mandate that we gave back to the Japanese in 1972 along with Okinawa. The Administration doesn’t seem to have the grit to explicitly tell the Chinese that they are Japanese territory, and subject to the provisions of the mutual defense treaty.”

“I guess we don’t want to irritate the Chinese,” I said. “But it seems like we are going to look like a Paper Tiger. If we cut carrier strike groups in the defense retrenchment, and the ASEAN nations are afraid to let us land-base the Air Force in Asia, what the hell do we think we have as a credible threat? Send a couple carriers against the whole of China?”

“Certainly is a policy conundrum,” said Mac. “It is a complete circle from 1940, only with Japan playing the role of today’s China. Article 5 of the 1960 ‘Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security’ with Japan states clearly that it specifically applies to the Senkaku Islands. Try as Secretary Clinton might to soft pedal things, it is hard to get around that.”

“It seems like we are surrendering the issue without discussion,” I said. “Like when the Japanese strafed the American gunboat Panay on the Yangtze River after the Rape of Nanking in 1937.”

“Yes indeed. And we did not respond, and four years later, the Fleet was on the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Take your stand, put up your dukes. It is pay me now or pay me later.” Mac leaned forward. “I will give you a last story before we go.”

I picked up my pen and flipped to a clean page on the note pad I had lifted as a souvenir from the US Senate years before.

“Eddie Layton was one of the few guys who saw the beginning and the end of the war, said Mac quietly. “He started it in Admiral Husband Kimmel’s office on the day of the attack. It is quite a professional tribute to his abilities that Admiral Nimitz took him along as his personal guest to the Surrender in Tokyo Bay. Eddie actually masqueraded as his bodyguard and carried a pistol. As a member of the Pacific Fleet Commander’s official entourage, Eddie was quartered in USS *South Dakota*, (BB-57).”

“She was a battle wagon,” Mac continued “New construction in 1939, and she had thirteen battle stars before it was all over. Seven hundred feet long and bristling with guns, she carried twenty-four hundred officers and men, plus the embarked staff, if there was one. She had a Panamax beam on her, built to within inches of fitting through the locks on the Canal, so she was roomy and the wardroom was vast.”

“I have been in the wardroom on Alabama, one of her sister ships,” I said. “It was a lot

different than the carriers I rode. Stately. I think they had cutlass racks on the quarter deck.”

“They probably did. It was a continuation of an old tradition, carried almost to the ultimate level that the four Iowa-class battlewagons represent. Halsey was embarked in *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay for the surrender, and Admiral Nimitz took *South Dakota* as his.”

Mac chuckled. “She was a ship that set a unique record. A twelve-year-old managed to sign up for the Navy after Pearl Harbor, and he actually got assigned to her in time for the battles in The Slot. He was wounded, too. Calvin Graham was his name,” Mac said with satisfaction. “You can look him up. He wound up getting a Big Chicken Dinner- a bad conduct discharge- when his Mother disclosed his real age.”

(Collapse of Japan. The rebuilt battle cruiser *Haruna* was sunk at her moorings in the naval base of Kure on 24 July, 1945. Official Navy Photo)

*South Dakota* had the same sort of wild change of circumstance that everyone did. In early August she was shelling northern Honshu and supporting carrier strikes against Tokyo, right up to the last surface action of the War on the 15th of August. On September 2nd, she was anchored in the Sagami Wan with Admiral Nimitz and his guests on board.”

“Eddie told me about it later. He was not senior enough to see the ceremony, but he said it was honor enough to be there. Following the signing of the instrument of surrender, the Allied delegates and spectators began to leave the *Missouri*. General MacArthur boarded a destroyer to be transported back to Yokohama. Admiral Nimitz left by boat after that and was soon back on board *South Dakota*.

Halsey stayed on his flagship, and enjoyed a conversation with his old friend, VADM John S. McCain, who would die of a heart attack just four days later. That would be Senator John McCain’s grandfather.”

“Stress,” I said. “Pity to live just long enough to see the end of it, and not the beginning of the new world.”

Mac nodded. “So here is where it gets interesting. Eddie Layton was playing acey-duecy in the wardroom of *South Dakota* when Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner strode into the room. “Terrible” Turner was in a state of high excitement. He was another of Admiral Nimitz’ personal guests. He executed all the amphibious landings in the Pacific, from Guadalcanal to Iwo Jima, after all. But he was a son-of-a-bitch to his staff, and liked the bottle. Eddie said he was pretty fired up that evening. He started to shoot his mouth off, and the wardroom hushed at the remarkable sound of the inebriated four star’s booming voice.”

“What was he saying?” I asked.

“He was going off on Admiral Husband Kimmel, of all things. Something to the effect that “Goddamned Kimmel had all the information and he didn’t do anything about it. The court of inquiry said so, and they ought to hang him up higher than a kite!”

“But it was Turner himself who did not allow the critical Bomb Plot messages go to Pearl Harbor!” I exclaimed. “He must have known that. The court of inquiry was a white-wash to scapegoat Kimmel and General Short.”

“Eddie sat there, stunned at what he was hearing. He had been there at the beginning, and was with Kimmel in the attack. Here at the end of it, the architect of the disaster was shouting that Kimmel ought to be hung up by his fingernails.”

“I guess you can’t do anything against four stars,” I said thoughtfully, trying to imagine the scene with any of the other four-stars I have known in my life.

“Well, Eddie got pretty fired up, too. He corrected Turner in mid-rant. He told the Admiral that he had been there as Kimmel’s intelligence officer, and he had been there in person on

December 7th, 1941.”

“So what happened?”

“Eddie said the Admiral charged across the deck and grabbed him by the throat. Eddie was putting his dukes up to pummel the Admiral when the skipper of *South Dakota*, Emmet Forrestal, got in between them and broke it up.”

I looked at Mac with amazement. The idea of decking a four-star Admiral made me admire Eddie Layton even more.

“Why on earth did Admiral Nimitz put up with Turner?” I said. “The man seems to have been unstable, and even if his war record was good, his poor judgment at the beginning is what contributed to bringing on the disaster.”

Mac looked at me thoughtfully. “Admiral Nimitz always believed a man should get a second chance, since he got one himself as a young officer after grounding his ship. Turner got his second chance after he screwed up in War Plans before the war. The cover-up of the whole ugly matter split a generation of senior officers and fueled a political and historical controversy over who was to blame for the Pearl Harbor disaster.”

“Not to mention the fact that the war over who controls Signal Intelligence has continued right down to this year. We even had different officer designators for the Cryppies and the Intelligence officers, and never the twain did meet until sixty-five years later.”

“I am not particularly surprised,” said Mac with a deadpan face and a twinkle in his eye.

## **STAFF WORK**

(The last Japanese Battleship, IJN *Nagato*, with an American prize crew in Tokyo Bay,

1945).

I have a hard time keeping up with the Admiral. He is 91, and I am just a bit more than thirty years younger. He has the life force: I don't know what it is, but you can see it in his merry eyes.

I look in the mirror most mornings and see only blur in mine.

It was past all our bedtimes, but he had escorted all of us at the dinner table of the bustling Willow restaurant back to 1945, and being there with him it was hard to let it go. It can be a little disconcerting.

If you have read the 2003 novel "Time Traveler's Wife" you will understand the ability Mac has to transport you across space and time with his stories. I have to keep the notes on my cocktail napkin numbered, since earlier in the dinner we had visited 1955, jumping easily between the decades, and his creation of target folders for the A-1 SPAD drivers to study before launching against the Soviet Union with nuclear weapons.

It sounds preposterous now, but that was the case when the Admiral arrived at the FIRST Fleet and began to survey how training was being done to support the training mission for units going forward to the Western Pacific.

The Navy had fought hard to be included in the Single Integrated Operational Plan, the master scheme for the attack on the Evil Empire, should it have come to that. The SIOP (pronounced "sy-op") was an esoteric and highly political document that purported to de-conflict Air Force and Navy strike operations in the event that the balloon went up. It required a lot of Staff Work.

The Admiral was disconcerted to find that there were no materials to assist the dauntless men in their flying machines on their way to Armageddon. He fixed the problem in his tour by establishing a new staff to prepare highly sensitive target folders. There were no satellite pictures to help, as there were in my day, but at least the pilots had some way-points on the route to hell.

It is a magical thing, talking to someone else who was in the same very sensitive line of business a long, long time ago.

With Mac, it is as fresh as if it happened yesterday. The years fall away, and you can feel the presence of others, dead now, crowd around holding glasses of whiskey and nodding. The Admiral is their emissary, their guide between the worlds.

I could tell you where we were in the course of drinks and dinner, but mostly it was in 1945, since so much of our present rests on the foundation of what happened that year.

The Admiral recalls that the SPAD, the vaunted A-1 *Skyraider* that the Douglas Company built for the Navy (my Dad was a Spad driver before Mom made him get out of the reserves) was designed so that it's internal bomb-bay could accommodate the dimensions of the atomic bomb.

I scratched my head at that. The Bomb was one of the biggest secrets in the world at the time, and certainly it would not have been disclosed to the designers at their drawing tables at the Douglas Corporation. Or perhaps it was just a grim-faced staff officer in dress khakis who showed up one day after lunch, and spread his arms "just so," and told them it had to be that way, "just shut up and do it, you have no need to know why."

The Admiral was just a pup then, twenty-six and a Lieutenant on the staff, but filled with vinegar then as he is now. The war had moved west. Doomed USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) delivered two very special packages to Tinian for assembly. Guam fell to the Americans in early August, 1944. Fleet Admiral Nimitz arrived to lead from the front and directed his staff relocate from Pearl to commence work there on the 15th of January.

Mac mentioned that the Marines were still catching eighty or more of the former enemy a day. They were hungry out there in the jungle, and sometimes the Marines killed them in the night, as the hungry soldiers scavenged for American food. The staff officers would walk by the bodies on the way to work in the morning on CINCPAC Hill.

They were planning the end game of the war, as best they could conceive it. The overarching plan was called DOWNFALL, and included two major landings in the Home Islands. One would be led by General MacArthur in Kyshu, to the south, code-named OYLMPIC, and a second one under the command of Fleet Admiral Nimitz on the Kanto Plain near Tokyo called CORONET.

"Why two invasions," you ask?

“One for the Army, and one for the Navy, Silly. They don’t call it inter-service rivalry for nothing.”

The Admiral was briefing events cribbed out of the Foreign Broadcast Intercept Service, which is called something a lot less ominous these days. That was really a cover, though, since his unclassified briefings were informed by highly secret decrypted intercepts of military and diplomatic communications.

If you are like me, history forms a jumble in my mental attic. For a lot of folks, amiable chowder-heads, it isn’t even a jumble. It just doesn’t exist. Here is what was happening that chaotic year of 1945, as the Admiral was briefing and planning.

Soldiers and Marines landed on Okinawa in March. President Roosevelt died on April 12th. The Nazis quit in May, and the troops were told to prepare for the invasion of Japan. The new fellow, Harry Truman, was informed that there was something being worked on, something big. Major combat operations were concluded on Okinawa in June, though scattered resistance continued.

The Scientists of the Manhattan District Engineering Project did not know if their bomb would really work, or if it would consume the atmosphere if it did. It was not tested until July 16th of 1945, as the Gadget was assembled at the hijacked McDonald Ranch and then trucked to the tower where the Los Alamos scientists predicted it would probably detonate with great force.

The CINCPAC Fleet Gunnery Officer, CAPT Tom Hill, was sent to observe the event, and he brought a highly-classified film clip back to Guam to show Fleet Admiral Nimitz, for his eyes only.

Nimitz pursed his lips, and kept his own counsel at the news as his staff planned the end. President Truman sent a question through his Joint Chiefs, once he knew what they had.

How many Americans were likely to die in the invasions?

It was a logical question, for a man who had options that others(except Uncle Joe Stalin) did not know about. In the Philippines and on Guam the planners paused in their deliberations and made calculations.



MacArthur's people in Manila low-balled the estimate. Maybe a quarter million, they said, ignoring the evidence of the communications intercepts that stated plainly that the Japanese knew where the landings would be, and that everyone, man, woman and child, would die to stop them.

The Admiral's team, headed by Ground Analyst Hal Leathers, looked at the evidence from the defense of Okinawa, and calculated that it might take more than a couple million casualties to secure the capital.

MacArthur desperately wanted to command the invasion, and damn the cost, in treasure and lives. That was his way. It was like his insistence on receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor for good staff work so that he could join his Dad as the only Father-son combination ever to win the highest military honor in the land.

There was discussion at the time back in Washington of considering Dugout Doug for promotion to a special "super rank" of General of the Armies, so as to be granted operational authority over other five star officers like Admiral Nimitz. Thank God the plans went forward as they did.

MacArthur would have been an American Caesar in reality then.

The story has been told of the days the world turned more acutely on its axis than normal. A-bombs fell on the 6th and 9th of August. I commend to you the account of the second strike on Nagasaki, and the comedy of errors recounted by Major Sweeny in the Super Fort *Bockscar*, which resulted in an emergency landing on Iwo Jima to refuel, and make it back to Tinian from the second most important mission the Air Force ever flew.

Maybe it didn't matter. Both of the weapons had worked as advertised, hundreds of thousands died, but not the tens of millions who would have perished if that astonishingly brutal path had not been chosen.

General MacArthur arrived at Atsugi Air Base on the 30th of August, the strangest month in the strangest year in human affairs to that date. I used to stay at Atsugi periodically and marveled at the revetments of old gray concrete that protected Japanese Ace Saburo Sakai's Zero fighters still ring the ends of the field.

They say there is much more still below in twelve great caverns carved out by the industrious Japanese, but it is too dangerous to go down there even after all these years, since traps were set with deadly efficiency, and now all those who set them are gone.

By the 2nd of September, the Allied Fleet was in Tokyo Bay to take the surrender.

Being so junior at the time, Mac stayed behind on Guam when Nimitz and four of his officers went to attend. His Boss Eddie felt bad about that, and so Mac was sent ashore to Yokosuka two days later, dispatched on an improvised and probably bogus mission to have a look-see at what they had accomplished.

Mac landed in a seaplane next to a tender moored in the Sagami-wan in the late afternoon, and a jeep took him to Yokohama where MacArthur's staff was preparing for the Occupation. For perhaps the only time in history, there was no traffic on Route 16 north from Yokosuka to Yokohama. There were crowds of Japanese on both sides of the road, looking impassively at the jeep impassively as it passed.

He arrived in the dark, and handed over his briefcase.

By the time he got back to Yoko, there was only time to trade a bottle of Three Feathers Whiskey from the wine-mess on Guam to a young Marine for one of three remaining battle flags 'liberated' by the Marines from the only Japanese ship that was still in the harbor, the

battleship IJN *Nagato*.

Then it was onto a motor whaleboat to the seaplane tender for the flight in the morning.



**Tokyo at Peace** US Air Force photo

“After we lifted out of the gray waters of the bay, the pilot did two long circles around the blasted capital before heading southeast for Guam. All the wooden buildings were ash, and only a few buildings stood in lonely isolation near the Imperial Palace. You could smell it.”

“So, you got back to Guam and what was it like, Sir? Having it over and done with such abruptness? It must have been surreal. When did you go home?” “We were told we were to clean out our desks. We were flying on the Staff C- 54 back to Pearl, direct, with a brief stop for fuel at Kwajalein Atoll.”

“You must have accumulated enough points to be among the first to go home, back to CONUS, the Land of the Big PX,” I said.

Mac dabbed his lips with one of the snowy white Willow cloth napkins. “Well, I did have a lot of points. More than most. But that is another story,” he said.

I waved to the waitress, suddenly realizing I needed another napkin and either a brandy or a cup of coffee.

Or more likely, all three.

## **R-Day**

(Australian Troops protest their slow return home in the Philippines, Dec 1945. Australian War Memorial collections database)

I took a sip of the rich Willow coffee, and countered it a moment later with a smoky taste of Brandy. The pile of napkins in front of me mounted. The Good doctor was having one of the extraordinary a *crème brûlée* for which the restaurant was known, while Mac was having just the water.

“Even the idea of coffee, decaf or not at this hour is going to keep me up.” I didn’t doubt him; he always has more energy than I do.

“Samuel Eliot Morison wrote a postlude to his big history of the war,” said the Doctor.

“The one that got so many things wrong about why things happened the way they did, since he didn’t have a clearance. He said there were a remarkable number of postwar operations in the Pacific. Surrender of outlying Japanese garrisons, the occupation of course, minesweeping approaches to Japanese ports, and Operation MAGIC CARPET for the return of American armed forces to the United States.”

“Yeah,” I said, gesturing with my pen. “You mentioned you had a lot of points. How did that work, and why didn’t you go home first? You had been in Hawaii since February of ’42.”

Mac smiled and took a sip of ice water. “One point per month of service; so I had over 50 points to start; I had been “overseas” for most of that, and each month counted for another point, and battle stars and decorations counted for more. Admiral Nimitz gave me a Bronze Star before he left command, and there is a citation for another one that I should have been awarded for the work we did to prepare for the battle at Midway. So, when you counted things up I was eligible to ride the Magic Carpet almost immediately. But of course we flew back to Pearl from the forward HQ at Guam.”

“The first ones to go on from there were those soldiers and sailors who were on furlough in CONUS when the war ended,” pronounced the Doctor. If they had more than 85 points, they were eligible for demobilization on the first R-Day.”

Mac folded his hands on the white tablecloth. “The War Department had begun to plan for this job long before D-Day.”

I swished some wine over my palette “I heard one time that the Navy went into the oval office to tell FDR that if the shipbuilding program continued as it was they would have 100 aircraft carriers in the Pacific, and the President told them to alter the plan.”

“I imagine so, but we didn’t know it was going to end.’

“Well, someone must have.”

“There was a fellow named Bill Tompkins, a Major General, who was in charge of the whole Magic Carpet thing. Apparently they waited until the day before the official announcement of R-day to inform the operational commanders what point total would make a servicemen eligible for release.

“They set it high at first, for the people in the European Theater, since they did not know how many troops would be required to conquer Japan. The Navy was specifically excepted from participating in the first flood of kids coming home after VE Day. The ships were needed to take the war to the enemy.”



(USS Missouri and the Surrender Fly-over. Official US Navy Photo)

“Of course, with the surrender, the Navy jumped on things quickly. Magic Carpet featured every kind of ship in the Fleet. They welded bunks into everything, from aircraft carriers to battlewagons. New Mexico, Idaho, Mississippi, North Carolina and two carriers plus a squadron of destroyers filled with thousands of servicemen from every branch of the military headed east.

The flotilla stopped at Okinawa to pick up more from the 10th Army. Aircraft carriers being the most popular with the soldiers because their size made them more comfortable rides than a destroyer or one of Henry Kaiser’s Liberty Ships. The carriers were floating cities- they had had movies on the hangar decks, gyms, spacious lounges for officer and enlisted personnel, well-stocked ship’s stores, fresh food, hot meals and three-to five-tiered bunks were installed on the hangar decks to accommodate the troops.

“I just did an interview with another vet. He was younger than you. Bill McCullough didn’t have many points, since he just got to Saipan in November of ’44. They shipped him up to North Field at Guam for a while before they let him go. He was happy with traveling on an LST- a “Landing Ship Tank.”

“I imagine he was. I was back at Pearl then. Captain Layton had been called back to DC to testify in the Congressional investigation on who was responsible for the disaster at Pearl Harbor.”

“That was the one where they pinned the blame on Admiral Kimmel and General Short?”

“Oh yeah.” Mac scowled. “Never forget: Washington is always right. Joe Rochefort had been put in for the Distinguished Service Medal for figuring out the Japanese were going to attack Midway, the OPINTEL that allowed Admiral Nimitz to bushwack them and sink four carriers and a heavy cruiser. I broke the back of the Imperial Fleet only six months

after the attack on Pearl. Washington thought the attack would be on Dutch Harbor in Alaska. Joe Rochefort was right, and the Redman Brothers were wrong.”

“They really were bastards, weren’t they?”

“Don’t get me started. They managed to get Admiral Stark’s Chief of Staff Joe Horne to not only deny Rochefort the DSM, but award one to Joe Redman. He got himself promoted to Rear Admiral, too, and his younger brother John to Captain, early. Admiral Horne was an ambitious son of a bitch. Admiral King never trusted him, even if he basically ran the Navy during the war.”

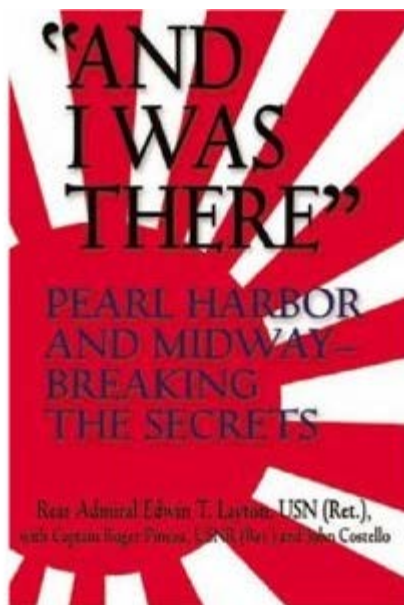
“Didn’t they force Rochefort out of Hawaii, too?”

“They forced him out of intelligence. They claimed Joe had missed signs of the attack on Pearl, and only Washington had everything right. By the time they were done, the most gifted code-breaker and Japanese linguist the Navy ever had finished the war as the commissioning commander of a floating drydock.”

I shook my head in wonder at that. “Didn’t you finally help set the record straight?”

Mac nodded. “President Reagan awarded Joe Rochefort the DSM in 1984. Unfortunately, it was posthumous. But Joe’s kids were there to see it.”

“I read Captain Layton’s book. He really savages those assholes. But the damage was done, right?”



“Yes. Layton made admiral, but he dragged his feet at printing his story of the war. So much of it was highly classified. His book “And I was there” didn’t come out until 1985, and that was posthumous, too.”

“I still can’t believe it was a drydock they forced him to. I imagine that ensured he would never get any recognition for the rest of the war. That was probably the only kind of ship that didn’t help bring the troops home.”

“True. It was quite remarkable. The Truman Administration could not stand the public and bipartisan Congressional outcry to bring the boys home. There were demonstrations by troops in Europe and the Philippines by the end of the year. Only a dust-up overseas could have stopped the flood going home, and it didn’t happen. The Japanese efficiently disarmed themselves. December of ’45 was the biggest month for the Magic Carpet.”

The Doc furrowed his brow as he sat across the apex of the Amen Corner. “As I recall, nearly 700,000 servicemen came home that month alone. It was like someone had pulled the handle on a toilet to drain the tank. The American armed forces shrank from about twelve million in June of ’45 to one-and-a-half million two years later. It would have a dramatic effect in the Pacific. By 1950, the North Koreans calculated they could push what was left of the American presence into the sea before we could respond.”

“My Mom still talks about the boys from her hometown coming back through New York. The one thing she was not going to do was the same thing. She was not going to go back to the Ohio River Valley. The war set her free.”

“It certainly did change things for a lot of people. But it was going to change again. Congress had passed a law that everyone who left a job to join the service would have that job waiting when they got home.”

“So, with your high point total, why didn’t you go home?”

Mac reached in his pocket for his wallet, I reached for mine and the Good Doctor reached for his, looking for all the world like a three-way Mexican stand-off.

“I told you everyone had a job to go back to, guaranteed by law. I had a bit of a problem. I had joined the Navy right out of the University of Iowa. I was one of the few people on the staff who had nothing to go home to.”

I won’t tell you who won the check, since you can probably guess. And I don’t need to tell you that what happened next, after serving under three revolving-door Fleet Intelligence Officers, Mac found himself on a boondoggle back to Washington in 1946, the new center of the universe.

Remember, he was a deck officer who had never served on a ship, and the future looked limited. After the Wahoo was sunk with all hands, he had decided the submarines were not



for him. He was trying to figure out what the future might hold as he walked down the passageway of the third deck of old Main Navy by the Reflecting Pool on the Mall.

(ADMIRAL Forrest Sherman 1947. Official Navy Photo)

It was all luck again. He happened to see lean and energetic Admiral Forrest Sherman coming the other way, and the Admiral remembered Mac well from their days together on Guam, and greeted him warmly.

The Admiral put his arm around Mac, and said “I am concerned about all my Air Intelligence Officers. Most of the ones I recruited were lawyers, and with the war over, they have all gone back to civilian life. I need to start a cadre of intelligence professionals for this new world. We need to keep you, Mac. There is a selection board meeting right now to pick the first batch.”

Mac looked at him, curious.

“Here is what I want you to do. Take thirty days leave and go back to Iowa. Then you come back here and contact my EA Captain Espey. He will tell you what to do.”

Mac shook his hand. It was the last time he would see the Admiral in person, but it was just enough to determine the course of the rest of his life.

## **Willow History**

*(IJN Nagato)*

It is sometimes said that the Department of War never lost one, and the Department of Defense never won a conflict. There is some room to quibble, since at the time we considered the first Gulf War to be a victory, since it liberated Kuwait from Saddam.

All I can say is that the last complete victory, ambiguous as it is, was fueled with whiskey and sustained by nicotine. I used to talk to Mac about that at the Willow Bar, though both he and the bar are gone now, just as most of the brands of that age are gone now; I have not lit up a Lucky in some years, and you cannot find Three Feathers whiskey anywhere.

Ships have the same problem. Regardless of how expensive or grand, they are nothing more than holes in the water that the owner, private or government, attempts to fill with

money. Mac was a wonderful guy to talk to- his memory of the war years (and all the rest of it) was crystal clear, and he loved having a knowledgeable audience that could ask the right questions. Willow was the perfect place to hear about history.

Mac's team at Station HYPO tracked all the call-signs of the Japanese Fleet, and when Mac moved over to the Joint Intelligence Center- Pacific Ocean Area (JIC-POA) he reported the general orders of battle in the weekly Fleet Intelligence Bulletin.

The Flagship of the Imperial Fleet, IJN *Nagato*, is a case in point. After Pearl Harbor, she saw action only once, during the battle of Leyte Gulf. She was a victim to a colossal error in strategy, which is the lifeblood of the successful war.

The Americans had adapted to the newest special weapon, the aircraft carrier, and only operated their battleships under the cover of aircraft. The Japanese never crystallized their doctrine in quite the same manner, failing in the integration of the combined-arms concept. The IJN leadership kept their major units in reserve for the decisive battle, which as it turned out, happened while they were waiting.

At the outbreak of the American phase of World War II, *Nagato* was under the command of Captain Yano Hideo, and with her sister *Mutsu* formed Battle Division 1. *Nagato* was the flagship of the Combined Fleet, flying the flag of Admiral Yamamoto. On 2 December 1941, *Nagato's* radio-room transmitted the signal "Niitaka yama nobore 1208," which translates from the Japanese as an admonition to "Climb Mount Niitaka on 12/08."

Mount Niitaka was the highest mountain in the Empire of the Sun, over 13,000 feet in height, and located on the island of Formosa, which we now call Taiwan.

That signal committed the Carrier Strike Force to the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Japan to expand its war in China to the rest of what they considered the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The glory was swift and fleeting. Admiral Yamamoto transferred his flag from *Nagato* in February of 1942, breaking it from the awesome new battleship *Yamato's* mast on the fifteenth.

*Nagato's* time as the most special weapon in the inventory had passed. *Yamato* and her class were stupendous, the first Japanese warships designed in the post-Treaty era. The limitations that preserved the primacy of her class had been established in Washington in 1922, and then extended in London in 1930. The international community hoped to put off another naval arms race until after 1937, at the earliest.

Yet another desperate diplomatic effort was scheduled for 1936, again in London. But under sanction, the Japanese withdrew from the pact. They commenced work on *Yamato* in

1934, and preliminary designs were accepted on March of 1935. After modifications, the design for a 68,000 ton ship mounting 18.1-Inch guns was accepted in March 1937. Constructed under intense secrecy at the Kure Naval Dockyards, Yamato was commissioned two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Nagato accompanied the First Fleet to the battle of Midway, but was consigned to the second rank. She saw no action at Midway, which turned the tide of the war, and returned carrying the survivors of the aircraft carrier Kaga to Japan.

As a part of the strategic reserve striking force, she proceeded to the anchorage at Truk in 1943, under the command of Captain Hayakawa Mikio. Upon the evacuation of that strategic base in February 1944, she steamed to Lingga, near the occupied British Crown Colony of Singapore.

Beginning in June 1944, she took part in the series of operations against the Allies that started in the Marianas, and continued in the Philippine Sea, and Leyte Gulf. Nagato passed through the San Bernardino Strait with other units of the Central Force, and engaged escort carriers and destroyers of the Task Group 77.4.3, the famous desperate fight of Task Group Taffy-3.

Under continuous air attack from the Americans, the Japanese fleet withdrew to the north, arriving at Yokosuka for refit and replenishment. The course of the war had changed. Lack of fuel and materials meant that Nagato could not be brought back into service.

(The Battle Off Samar. Map courtesy USN).

In December 1944, the battleship was tied with heavy lines to the Koumi pier, next to the gigantic *Yamato* dry-dock where the American Carriers are now accommodated. Worse, she was “cold iron,” with no boilers on the line. Lack of fuel meant that she could not get underway for evasive action. Accordingly, the ship was painted in an elaborate camouflage and her turrets were covered with wooden scaffolding as camouflage.

The New Year of 1945 was a dismal one. The Imperial Navy was shuffling personnel to match its remaining ships. *Nagato* was assigned as a coastal defense ship, isolated in Yokosuka, with the rest of the fleet in the Inland Sea.

In April, Rear Admiral Otsuka Miki arrived to assume command. Concealment operations continued, though increasingly it was apparent that battleships were hard things to hide. In

late June, the word came that Okinawa had fallen, and the home islands were the last objective of the Americans.

Nagato's secondary and anti-aircraft guns were moved ashore, to be placed strategically in the low green hills around the harbor. Tunnels were dug to provide shelter for the 1,000 crewmen who remained with the ship.

On the first of July, the fast carriers and supporting ships of Task Force 38 moved north from Leyte Gulf, and took up positions to launch aircraft against the Home Islands in July.

One of the prime targets of the combined American-British Fleet was *Nagato*. Admiral Bill Halsey viewed her as the very symbol of the perfidy of Pearl Harbor, and he was determined to sink her, in port if necessary, just as the *Arizona* had been sunk at the foot of Battleship Row.

Nagato was tied up with her bow facing northwest at nearly right angles to the inner harbor entrance, starboard side to the pier. The huge yard crane I remember from my days on the waterfront is evident in the ancient reconnaissance pictures.

Inclement weather conditions forced cancellation of flight ops on the 17th, but the next day the weather improved. The carriers *Essex*, *Randolph*, *Yorktown*, *Shangri-la* and *Belleau Wood* launched two hundred and fifty airplanes against Yokosuka.

The flight to the target was uneventful, with no resistance. That changed at Yokosuka, with fierce anti-craft fire erupting from the hills around the harbor, and from the ships themselves. The attack went on for around twenty minutes. *Nagato* took a 500LB bomb in the bridge, coming in at an angle from the port bow, slanting down.

The blast stopped a bridge clock at 1552, and shattered the pilothouse. Commanding Officer Otsuka, XO Higuchi and thirteen others were killed where they stood.

Months later, the compartment was still a mess.

My aeronautical engineer Uncle Jim was also a radio nut, among other passions, had brief custody (via the death of the American XO of *Nagato*, whose job was to steam the great battleship to Bikini Atoll for Operation Crossroads) of the very radio tubes *Nagato's* radiomen used to direct the attack on Pearl Harbor.

I wonder if the Wireless Museum people know that?

### Three Feathers and a Flag



**(RADM Donald “Mac” Showers is flanked by a pair of Socotras in the Hoyer Foyer at the Office of Naval Intelligence in Suitland, MD, on the occasion of Mac’s donation of the battle flag of the IJN Battleship *Nagato* in 2012. The Foyer is so named irreverently in honor of the former House majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-5th, for his efforts to have the new ONI building located in his district. Photo USN).**

The proud battleship *Nagato* had been pinned down in port for all of the last year of the war, and would not get underway again before the end. She was pier-side at the Yokosuka Naval Armory, heavily concealed with camouflage nets and plywood structures in July of 1945.

Soon-to-be Fleet Admiral Halsey had a personal thing about the ship from which the orders to attack Pearl Harbor had been issued, and he directed the THIRD Fleet to conduct a series of air raids on the base in order to put her underwater. Task Force 38, under Vice Admiral John S. McCain, was the blunt instrument of choice, and his force included nine fleet carriers, six light carriers, their escorts and a thousand aircraft.

On 10 July TF 38 pilots struck airfields around Tokyo and claimed to have destroyed 340 Japanese aircraft on the ground and two in the air. No Japanese aircraft responded to this attack as they were being held in reserve to mount large-scale suicide attacks on the Allied fleet during the impending invasion of the Home Islands. Mac Showers was unperturbed by the revisionist history about the use of the atomic bomb in later years. He and his pal Hal Leathers in the Estimates Section of the Forward Headquarters on Guam were reasonably confident that a million Americans would be killed or wounded in the assault, never mind the military and civilian population of Japan who stood in their path.

The strikes against Yokosuka were *Nagato's* last combat action, mostly serving as an American target.

Only two bombs actually hit the ship. One impacted the 01 deck aft of the mainmast, port side. It detonated at the base of the Number Three turret, and the occupying Americans of the Naval Technical Group marveled that although it had distorted the barbette, the turret was undamaged. The blast scar left a nearly perfect image of the rising sun flag on the surface of the armor plate. Worse, it had penetrated the ceiling of the lightly armored deck near the wardroom, killing over twenty men.

There is some lingering controversy about a possible third hit. Something, possibly a five-inch rocket, tore through the port side stern and passed through the Admiral's mess and out the other side without exploding.

The technical team reported there was a gouge on the surface of the dining table, and markings that looked like they might have been made by teeth. The team was astonished that no one was killed there.

Between the two bombs, *Nagato* lost thirty-five officers and men.

The Allies lost fourteen planes and eighteen fliers, most of them over the harbor.

That was the last action of the war for the old battleship. Rear Admiral Ikeuchi Masamichi was recalled from retirement to assume command in late July due to the death of RADM Miki .

The newest Special Weapons of the Allies were employed against Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th of August, respectively. At noon on the 15th, the Admiral called the crew to quarters to listen to the unprecedented broadcast of the Emperor, calling on his subjects to end hostilities.

On the 20th, Captain Sugino Shuichi, an active duty officer arrived on the ship and there



was a small change of command ceremony to make him the last Japanese commander. The position she occupied at the pier would be needed for other uses. Under his direction, *Nagato* was relocated to the Number One buoy in Yokosuka's inner harbor.

On the 28th, the Americans arrived. There are several accounts of who "captured" *Nagato*. The official legend is that "a boarding party composed of about 35 men from the USS South Dakota, symbolically on surrender day (Sep 2nd). The version some like to believe goes like this: "Many artifacts were brought back aboard USS South Dakota. The battle flag of the *Nagato* was acquired at this time."

Charles M. Cavell, QM1, USN, preserved a *Nagato* flag and donated it to the crew of USS South Dakota, and then the USS South Dakota Memorial in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Other credible reports of the disposition of the flag locker include this entry from the diary of the Skipper of the USS Buchanan, CDR Daniel E. Henry, USN, who reported this on August 30:

"Battleship *Nagato* boarded; San Diego docks at Yokosuka Naval Yard; first sighting of POWs; transferred 40 POW correspondents with horrifying reports on POW treatment. Awakened at 0700 and found the DD *Nicholas* (DD-484,) captained by D.C. Lyndon, my first classmate at the Naval Academy) was waiting to relieve us. They had met a Jap DD on the 27th and taken some Japs to Admiral Halsey on the Missouri. We proceeded to anchorage but found our berth occupied by transports busy sending Marines ashore at Yokosuka. We anchored and watched the show. American planes are landing at the field at Yokosuka, says the commodore, but I am not sure.

0830 our APD (USS Horace A. Bass (LPR-124)) went alongside the BB *Nagato*, boarded, hauled down the Jap flag and hoisted ours. They report *Nagato* #10 boiler still warm, a diesel OK as is the anchor engine and steering gear. Other steam lines cut."

I think that may have been the first boarding right then. Others followed over the next few days.

We talked about the whole thing at the Willow Bar in Arlington where we gather to swap lies. There was more than one flag from the battleship, and our pal Mac got one of them. Now it is at ONI, and it hangs in a place of honor at out in suburban Maryland. ONI is a gleaming building of steel and glass, one of the last of the Cold War buildings to be erected to replace the crumbling old buildings that had served in World War Two.



***(This flag from Nagato was brought home by a USS Horace A. Bass crew member named William Wilson. It measures an impressive 134 inches by 69 inches, and was sold at auction by Mark Lawson Antiques in Sarasota, NY, for \$1,800 in 2013. Photo Mark Lawson).***

In the course of its construction, a former Director of Naval Intelligence had the high-security facility designated an official depository for the combat art commissioned by the US Government. Accordingly, there are some spectacular original paintings dotting the corridors between the anonymous cipher-locked officers.

One of *Nagato*'s Rising Sun Naval ensigns is there as well, in a wooden frame, preserved behind glass.

It is a centerpiece that connects the young sailors and officers of ONI with their history. I asked Mac how the flag came to be in his possession as we sat at the Willow bar one lazy afternoon. He summarized it this way:

“By 1945, I was with Fleet Admiral Nimitz at the forward headquarters at Guam, doing estimates for the carnage that would come with the invasion of the Home Islands. I was slipping target nominations on the sly to General Curtis “Iron Pants” LeMay. Admiral Nimitz took his Intelligence Officer Eddie Layton- my boss- to the surrender ceremony on the *Missouri*. Eddie felt bad that none of the younger officers got a chance to see it, after more than four years serving in the conflict. He cooked up a semi-valid requirement to send me with a courier package to Yokosuka just a few days after the surrender, and I jumped at the chance to go and see up close just what we had done.”

“One of our shipmates was on a ship out there, and I decided to take him some whiskey, thinking that would something useful. I went to the wine mess on Guam and got a bottle of Three Feathers Whiskey to tuck in my bag, and caught a flight on a seaplane to Yokosuka.”

“I have never heard of the brand,” I said. “Did it go well with Lucky Strike Greens?”

“As a matter of fact, it did,” smiled Mac. “So, I delivered the package of papers and walked around the base, marveling at the idea the conflict was really over. I could not find my friend, and didn't really want to take the whiskey back to Guam with me. That is when I saw *Nagato* out at the buoy in the harbor. She was the last of the big Japanese ships in port.”

“My flag came from a Marine sentry on the Yokosuka docks (about 4 or 5 Sept. '45) who

told me he was a member of the boarding party on *Nagato*, and that his duty station was the flag locker. With this convenience, he said he had “liberated” four Rising Sun flags, two large and two small. Desiring such a souvenir, I told him I only wanted one and would take a small one. Then we negotiated the price and the whiskey trade, and he disappeared for a few minutes.”

“He returned with a brown paper package that looked about the right size. I tore open just a bit of the wrapping to confirm it was the Rising Sun design, we completed the deal, and I then caught my boat for the seaplane tender from which I would depart the next morning for my return to Guam. I didn’t open the package until I was back in my private quarters on Guam, and then was pleased with what I had. I showed it only to Captain Eddie Layton, who confirmed I had a genuine souvenir.”

“There’s more that can be told, but that’s the most authentic account of my procurement. In summary and in short, I’m sure there are other *Nagato* flags, but mine was clearly used, obviously had flown from the ship, and was from a believable source. More than that I cannot say.” Mac raised his glass and took a sip.

“As I look back on the encounter and the bargain I struck, I now believe I could have talked the Marine out of all four of his flags in trade for the bottle of Three Feathers Whiskey I provided. But I was satisfied, I’m sure the Marine was, and I have no idea how he disposed of the other three flags.”

*Nagato* was systematically plundered for the next few weeks, and formally stricken from the Navy List on the 15th of November 1945. Rust streaked the hull and the proud pagoda mast, and gulls of the Sagami Wan rendered their opinion of the works of man in streaks of white down the superstructure.

But that was not the last of the story, nor even the best part. That was going to come when the Last Battleship got a new crew. An American crew, and in the process, the enlisted ship-fitters discovered the *Nagato*’s store of grain alcohol, which may not have been Three Feathers, but suited them just fine on the last deployment of the battlegwagon.

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### **JICPOA Footnote**

Mac was trying- with some success- to explain how quickly things had changed with the end of the war. I was stunned at the pace of the changes he described. One lieutenant was

all that was left from the thousands who had toiled in Building 251/252. Wendy Furness was still around when I came into the business, and was a well-respected officer.

After the surrender, his job was to get rid of the captured Japanese military equipment that had been sent to the intelligence center for examination and assessment- what we later called “S&T”- or, Science and Technology.

High on the rim of Makalapa Crater, sits Building 251/252, where the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas (JICPOA) collected, evaluated, and disseminated strategic and tactical intelligence for the Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, throughout World War II.

Five decades later, the building was in need of more than a simple renovation. Part of its foundation, built on fill, was gradually sinking into the Crater when Mason Architects, working with general contractor Nan, Inc., was commissioned to design its renovation and oversee its reconstruction.

Compaction grouting, according to the brochure, was used to stabilize the soil beneath the building, along with new concrete and masonry foundation walls. New plywood shearwalls were then installed to bring the structure up to current seismic code, and a new wood skirt was nailed along the perimeter to match the original.

Post-World-War-II additions to the building were removed and the interior was gutted and rebuilt.

Blocked-out windows were reopened, windows added over time were removed, and new fixed-glass windows sized to match the originals were placed in the original window apertures.

Nearby, at the intersection just beyond the Pacific Fleet Headquarters building, at the intersection of Halawa Drive, there is a fireplug surrounded by an imposing concrete circle.

I recall it from my days at FOSIC PAC; the hydrant sits slightly above the level of the senior officer’s quarters behind it. In the war years, Colonel Purple, the senior Marine on FADM Chester Nimitz’ staff, occupied the house.

One night, just after dark, a young officer from FRUPAC was headed back to his quarters

in Little Makalapa. In the days of the black-out, there were three lines painted on the roads to follow, since headlights were prohibited. The custom was to follow the line in the middle. Fatigued from his labors, the young officer was following the right-hand line, not the one in the middle.

He collided with the fireplug. He was able to back his car off the offending infrastructure and proceeded back to his quarters.

Regrettably, the weakened plug later failed and flooded out Colonel Purple's residence.

Admiral Nimitz asked about the incident in the Command Briefing the next day, and Eddie Layton called over to Jasper Holmes to ask if anyone had reported the problem.

Mac sheepishly acknowledged the incident. Despite the irate Colonel, the war, and Mac's career, turned out just fine.