

## H-Gram 035: Lieutenant (j.g.) George H. W. Bush Shot Down; Mediterranean Theater Catch-up; U-Boat *UC-97* on the Great Lakes

6 September 2019

*This H-gram covers:*

- The shoot down of future President of the United States Lieutenant (j.g.) George H. W. Bush on 2 September 1944 over Chichi Jima.
- The heroism of Ensign "Kay" Vesole during the "Great Bari Air Raid" in December 1943, during which a U.S. Liberty ship with a secret cargo of chemical weapons exploded.
- The ill-conceived Allied amphibious assault at Anzio, Italy, in January 1944, that bogged down for months, at the cost of numerous Allied ships.
- The convoy battles along the northern coast of Algeria in April/May 1944 that cost several U.S. destroyers and the Liberty ship *SS Paul Hamilton*, which was lost with all 580 aboard.
- The story of the World War I German U-boat *UC-97*, which ended her career at the bottom of Lake Michigan.



*George H.W. Bush in the cockpit of a TBM Avenger. Photo courtesy George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.*

*As I have been writing H-grams following along with the 75th Anniversary of World War II, one thing that has amazed me is how the staffs of Admiral Nimitz, General MacArthur, and General Eisenhower could plan and execute a global conflict faster than I can write about it. I am still working on a Normandy wrap-up that includes the great storm off the beachhead and the Battle of Cherbourg, among others.*

*As always, back issues of H-grams may be found here [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/directors-corner/h-grams.html>], and you are welcome and encouraged to disseminate H-grams so that our Navy can better understand the heroism, sacrifice, and incredible achievements of those whose legacy we are charged to uphold.*

## 75th Anniversary of World War II

### Shoot Down of Lieutenant (j.g.) George H. W. Bush

On 2 September 1944, on the third day of carrier strikes by Task Group 38.4 against the Bonin Islands of Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima, the TBM-1C Avenger flown by Lieutenant Junior Grade George H. W. Bush was hit and severely damaged by heavy ground fire while on the run-in to bomb the Japanese radio transmitters on the latter island. Despite the damage, Bush pressed on with the attack and dropped his bombs on target, for which he would be awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross. Bush was able to nurse his damaged plane back out over water before determining that he would be unable to make it back to his carrier (the USS San Jacinto—CVL-30) nor could he control it well enough to safely ditch. Bush's gunner, Lieutenant (j.g.) William G. White (an intelligence officer, not Bush's normal gunner) was probably already dead or incapacitated. Unable to communicate with either White, or his radioman (ARM2c John L. Delaney), Bush ordered a bailout. Two chutes were observed by trailing U.S. aircraft. One opened (Bush) and the other (probably Delaney) was a streamer; neither White nor Delaney would ever be seen again. Although injured due to hitting the tail while bailing out, Bush regained consciousness and was able to stay afloat for four hours while U.S. Hellcat fighters overhead kept Japanese boats at bay (all U.S. aircrewmen captured by the Japanese at Chichi Jima during the war were executed, in some cases involving ritual cannibalism). Bush was rescued by the submarine USS Finback (SS-230), spending about a month on board as she continued her patrol and experiencing depth-charge attacks in the process. For more on Lieutenant (j.g.) Bush and a brief history of the TBF/TBM Avenger aircraft, please see attachment H-035-1 "Flight of the Avenger" (a title I have admittedly re-purposed).

### Mediterranean Theater Catch-up—Forgotten Valor: Ensign K. Vesole and the "Great Bari Air Raid," 2 December 1943

On 2 December 1943, 105 German Ju-88 bombers conducted a devastating surprise attack on the Allied port of Bari, Italy. Two U.S. Liberty ships with a cargo of ammunition were hit by bombs and catastrophically exploded, setting off chain reactions throughout the harbor, which was quickly covered by flaming fuel oil. About 28 cargo ships were sunk, including five U.S. Liberty ships, one of which (SS John Harvey) was carrying a secret cargo of 2,000 mustard gas bombs, which added to the thousands of casualties and was the only known poison gas incident of the war. As many as 2,000 crewmen on the ships, dockworkers, and civilians in the city were killed. About 75 U.S. merchant seaman and 50 U.S. Navy Armed Guards were killed in the attack. Polish immigrant Ensign "Kay" Vesole, USNR, commanding officer of the Armed Guard on SS John Bascom (the first ship to open fire on the German bombers), was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism. According to Navy historian Samuel Eliot Morison, "This was the most destructive enemy air raid on shipping since the attack on Pearl Harbor." Please see attachment H-035-2 for more about Ensign Vesole and the Bari air raid.



Off Anzio beachhead, late January 1944: An Allied landing craft aflame, apparently after a massive explosion. This may be British LST-422, which hit a German mine on 26 January while carrying U.S. Army personnel and equipment (SC 212978).

## **Operation Shingle: The Allied Landings at Anzio, Italy, January-June 1944**

*British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill would later say of the Allied amphibious assault at Anzio, "I had hoped we were hurling a wildcat onto the shore, but all we got was a stranded whale." How much responsibility Churchill bore for the ill-conceived operation is beyond the scope of this H-gram. Operation Shingle was intended to be an amphibious end-run around the German defense lines that had bogged down the Allied advance between Naples and Rome in the winter of 1943-44. Although the initial landings on 23 January 1944 caught the Germans by surprise and went pretty well, the enemy reacted swiftly with superior numbers of forces, and pinned down the Allied force on a narrow beachhead until late May of 1944. This resulted in about 4,500 Allied soldiers being killed during the stalemate, including 454 U.S. soldiers who were lost on British LST-422, which was sunk by a German mine.*

*Incessant German air attacks, including many using radio-controlled glide bombs, and later attacks by U-boats, inflicted a steady drain on Allied ships, with many damaged and several painful losses. The Royal Navy suffered the most, losing two cruisers, three destroyers, and numerous amphibious ships, plus a hospital ship bombed and sunk. U.S. losses were confined to an LST torpedoed by a German submarine, minesweepers lost to mines, amphibious craft to various causes, and two Liberty ships lost in ammunition explosions due to air attack. Naval gunfire support proved critical in blunting many German counter-attacks that at times seriously threatened the narrow Allied beachhead. Finally, with the aid of naval (especially supplies and reinforcements) and air superiority, the Allied force was able to break out of the beachhead in late May and Rome fell on 4 June 1944. For more on Operation Shingle, please see attachment H-035-2.*

## **Convoy Battles Along the Coast of Algeria, April-May 1944**

*German submarines and aircraft continued to take a toll on U.S. warships escorting convoys in the*

*western Mediterranean in the spring of 1944, although it was essentially the Germans' last gasp. On 11 April 1944, the destroyer escort USS Holder (DE-401) was hit and severely and irreparably damaged by a torpedo from a German aircraft. Saved by her crew, Holder would be towed to New York City, where her stern would be removed to replace that of the USCG-manned destroyer escort USS Menges (DE-320), whose stern had been badly mangled by a German submarine-launched acoustic homing torpedo off Algeria on 3 May 1944. On 20 April 1944, a large German air attack struck an eastbound Allied convoy off the coast of Algeria; the U.S. Liberty ship SS Paul Hamilton exploded and sank, with the loss of all 580 merchant seamen, Navy Armed Guard, and mostly U.S. Army Air Force ground personnel aboard. In addition, the destroyer USS Lansdale (DD-426) was torpedoed and sunk in the air attack; one of Lansdale's survivors, executive officer Robert Morgenthau, would go on to be the longest-serving Manhattan district attorney (35 years). On 5 May 1944, destroyer escort USS Fechteler (DE-157) was sunk by a German U-boat off Algeria, the last major U.S. warship lost in the Mediterranean. Despite these losses, hundreds of Allied cargo ships were safely escorted to Italy and other ports in the Mediterranean. For more on the convoy battles off Algeria, and the distinguished service of Robert Morgenthau, please see attachment H-035-2.*

*Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France on 15 August 1944, will be covered in a future H-gram.*

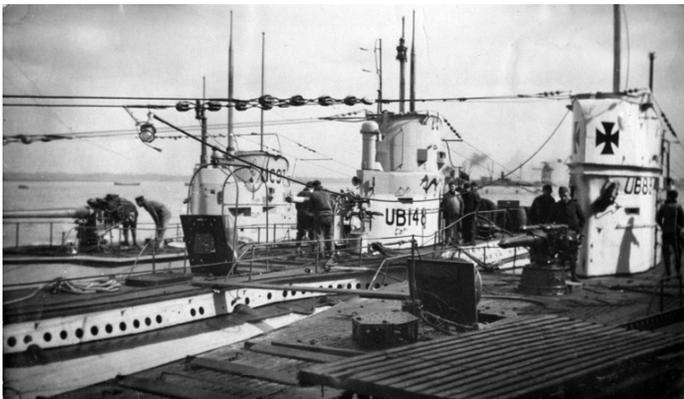
## **100th Anniversary of World War I**

### **U-Boat UC-97 on the Great Lakes**

*In August 1919, the submarine USS UC-97 arrived in Chicago, where she continued to be the biggest sensation on the Great Lakes in decades, visited by many thousands of American citizens. Commanded by Lieutenant Charles A. Lockwood (future vice admiral in command of U.S. submarines in the Pacific in World War II), UC-97 was flying the U.S. national flag over the flag of Imperial Germany, the international signal for a captured vessel. UC-97 was a German U-boat surrendered to the British shortly*

after the armistice went into effect in November 1918. The British then allowed other Allied nations to take possession of several U-boats (with the proviso that the U-boats be sunk upon conclusion of study and test ). UC-97 was one of six provided to the United States, which then conducted an epic and harrowing crossing of the Atlantic under their own power.

Upon arrival in the United States, the former German submarines visited numerous U.S. cities—one submarine operated on the West Coast (via the new Panama Canal)—on a highly successful war bond and recruiting drive. UC-97 proceeded up the St. Lawrence Seaway to the Great Lakes (provoking an international incident with the Canadians when she refused to fly the Union Jack) before visiting cities on all the Great Lakes (except Lake Superior). After being stripped of all useful material, UC-97 was sunk in Lake Michigan as a target in 1921 and then forgotten. So forgotten, that even in the 1960s, the Naval Historical Center (predecessor of Naval History and Heritage Command) dismissed stories of a German U-boat in Lake Michigan as rumor. However, she is still there today, within sight of the skyscrapers of Chicago. For more on UC-97 and the other five U-boats (including one sunk by Commander William F. Halsey), please see attachment H-035-3.



Surrendered Imperial German submarines UC-97, UB-148, and UB-88 docked at the Submarine Base, New Groton, Connecticut, 1919 (US 41.06.01)



*Grumman TBF-1 Avenger of Torpedo Squadron EIGHT (VT-8), photographed at Midway, 25 June 1942, prior to shipment back to the United States for post-battle evaluation. Badly shot-up, this plane was the only survivor of six Midway-based VT-8 TBFs that had attacked the Japanese carrier force in the morning of 4 June. The plane's pilot was Ensign Albert K. Earnest. Crew were ARM3c Harrier H. Ferrier and S1c Jay D. Manning. Manning, who was operating the .50-caliber machine-gun turret, was killed in action with Japanese fighters during the attack (80-G-17063).*

## H-035-1: Flight of the Avenger

*H-Gram 035, Attachment 1*

*Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC*

*September 2019*

*(Originally published in different form in The Sextant, NHHC's blog, on 17 September 2018)*

Exhilaration is what I felt, sitting in the gunner's turret as "Doris Mae's" powerful radial engine roared

and vibrated on the take-off roll. Restored to flying condition by the Capital Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, the World War II-vintage TBM Avenger torpedo bomber was the heaviest single-engine aircraft built by the United States during the war. I was already marveling at the naval aviators who were able to bring that big plane aboard even the smallest escort carriers.

As much fun as I was having, however, as a historian I couldn't help but think back to the Avenger's role during World War II, and imagining what it might have been like to be commencing a mission against the enemy. I knew the names of two others who had

sat strapped in the same turret as I was: Aviation Machinist's Mate Third Class (AMM3c) Jay Manning in a TBF-1 Avenger piloted by Ensign Albert "Bert" Earnest at the Battle of Midway on 4 June 1942, and Lieutenant (j.g.) William "Ted" White in a TBM-1C Avenger piloted by Lieutenant (j.g.) George H. W. Bush during a strike on the Japanese island of Chichi Jima on 2 September 1944. Unlike those two brave men, I knew with a high degree of certainty that I would return safely from my flight. They had no idea whether they would return at all, and as it turned out, neither one of them returned alive.

As the Avenger gained airspeed and altitude, I could only imagine what either one of those two gunners would have seen as their planes launched. Manning would have seen the airstrip at Eastern Island of Midway Atoll, covered with Marines in defensive positions, thousands of "Gooney Birds" (Laysan albatrosses), and every plane on the island that could fly launching behind them to attack the Japanese carriers. White would have seen the flight deck of the light carrier USS *San Jacinto* (CVL-30) receding behind him in the vast Pacific Ocean and other aircraft launching for the strike on Chichi Jima. What I saw was perfectly normal: the homes, schools and businesses of northern Virginia, displaying all the signs of peace and freedom purchased at such a terribly high price by Manning, White, and many more like them in the battle against tyranny in the World War II.

When I looked upward, I had a better sense of what those two men would have seen: a beautiful blue sky and clouds. However, I knew that those clouds did not hide Japanese fighters. The last thing Manning would have seen, on his first combat mission, would have been an exquisitely agile Japanese A6M "Zero" fighter, with a superbly trained and highly combat-experienced pilot, maneuvering and steadying up to take a shot with his 20-mm cannons, since his 7.7-mm machine guns seemed to have little effect on the incredibly tough American torpedo bomber. Manning would have been firing his own machine gun in a life-or-death duel that the Japanese pilot won—a 20-mm shell directly in Manning's chest ended the young sailor's life.

It is less certain what White would have last seen—most probably the anti-aircraft shells bursting around him and inflicting mortal damage to his aircraft. Despite this, Lieutenant (j.g.) Bush continued his dive and dropped his bombs on the target, before getting his crippled plane out to sea. White was not Bush's normal gunner. He was a naval intelligence officer (like me), who had taken the gunner's place so that he could observe Chichi Jima's defenses.

Exactly what killed White is unknown, but he probably never made it out of the aircraft before it crashed. And, from where I sat in the turret, I could see why. I barely was able to squeeze my way into it, hanging awkwardly in the small seat by the straps. There was no room for a parachute. The only way out for the turret gunner was to shimmy down from the turret into the radioman's compartment, put on a parachute, and then jump out the hatch on the underside of the aircraft. Given that torpedo bombers generally flew their missions at very low altitude, the odds of a successful escape from the turret were pretty small.

There are countless stories of valor and sacrifice among those courageous men who flew the Avenger during World War II against the Japanese and against German U-boats, too many to do them justice in this article. The plane made its debut on 7 December 1941; the ceremonies were rushed upon receipt of news of the Pearl Harbor attack. The original aircraft were known as TBFs, built by Grumman, and were intended to replace the TBD Devastator, which was the world's most advanced torpedo bomber when it came into service in 1937, and woefully obsolete by 1941. The name "Avenger" would not be bestowed on the TBF until after the Battle of Midway. Later versions were designated TBMs, built under license by the Eastern Division of General Motors as Grumman concentrated on producing as many F6F Hellcat fighters as possible. Successive versions of the TBM had more powerful engines and upgraded electronics (radios and airborne radar). The version I was in was a modified TBM-3E, which served in the U.S. Marines late in the war, and, via the Canadian navy, eventually for many years in the Georgia Forest Service as a fire-fighting bomber.

If you read the *Wikipedia* account on Avengers (and many other accounts of the Battle of Midway), the first combat mission of the TBF was deemed a failure; five of six planes were shot down for no hits. It was a failure, but one which had absolutely nothing to do with the bravery of the pilots who flew the mission. It was, however, one of the most pivotal points of the battle and key to the U.S. success that followed.

When Earnest, Manning and Radioman Second Class Harry Ferrier launched from Midway Island on 4 Jun 1942, they were part of a flight of six TBFs led by Lieutenant Langdon Fieberling that had only just arrived on the island as part of a last-ditch buildup of force in anticipation of a major Japanese attack and invasion. The detachment belonged to Torpedo Squadron EIGHT (VT-8), the main part of which was embarked on the carrier USS *Hornet* (CV-8), under the command of Commander John Waldron, and equipped with the obsolete TBD Devastator. When *Hornet* left the U.S. East Coast in early 1942 to carry Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle's B-25 bombers on their epic raid on Japan, Waldron left behind a detachment of his squadron to train and convert to the new TBF. The detachment then made its way independently to Oahu, missing *Hornet's* sailing for Midway by one day. Six planes and crews of the detachment, all volunteers, flew directly to Midway Island to bolster its defenses, a feat of long-range navigation notable in its own right.

Upon the first sighting reports of the Japanese carrier force and inbound Japanese air strike just after dawn on 4 June, every flyable aircraft on Midway was thrown into the air. First to launch were the Marine fighters, almost all of which would be shot down or severely damaged by the Japanese fighters escorting the incoming strike. The next to launch were the six VT-8 detachment TBFs, followed by four U.S. Army Air Force B-26 Marauder twin-engine bombers rigged to carry torpedoes (the first and last time the Air Force would ever do so), followed by the U.S. Marine Dauntless and Vindicator dive bombers.

Knowing only a range and bearing to the Japanese carriers, Lieutenant Fieberling led his six TBFs on a

high-speed direct-line transit to the reported position. The slightly faster B-26s did the same, on a parallel course, which would result in a synchronized (but not coordinated) strike against the Japanese carriers. Although no one has ever doubted Fieberling's courage, some have questioned his judgment in taking six unescorted TBFs against four Japanese carriers. However, given the stakes of the desperate battle, Fieberling really had no other choice but to do what he did: attack.

The TBF had never seen combat, nor had any of the six pilots and 12 radiomen/gunners of the VT-8 detachment. None of them had even dropped a torpedo before, live or exercise. They knew the torpedoes they were carrying were unreliable. They did not know that the slow speed and altitude restrictions for dropping those torpedoes, which made the planes even more vulnerable, were actually counterproductive, because the torpedoes had never been tested under warlike conditions ("too expensive"). Nevertheless, Captain James Collins, USAAF, leading the B-26s, independently made the exact same decision as Fieberling: his flight also proceeded unescorted and direct, and did not wait to form up for a coordinated strike with the Marine dive bombers. As it turned out, the Marine aircraft took almost an hour to form up themselves, during which time the Japanese carriers moved a considerable distance from the last sighting reports. Both Fieberling and Collins had accepted the "do-or-die" nature of the mission in a "must-win" battle against the numerically superior, and in many ways, qualitatively superior, Japanese forces.

The six TBFs and four B-26s ran into almost 30 Japanese Zero fighters of a carrier force that had been on a six-month victory spree. Some British Beaufighters had given the Japanese carriers a scare in the Indian Ocean a couple of months previously, but no one had laid a glove on the four Japanese carriers of Carrier Division One (*Akagi* and *Kaga*) and Carrier Division Two (*Hiryu* and *Soryu*). Convinced of their own invincibility, with pretty good reason, the Japanese fighters expected easy pickings of anything that would dare attempt to strike their carriers. They were surprised to see two types of aircraft they had never seen before (TBF

and B-26). They were even more surprised when both types of aircraft proved incredibly resistant to machine-gun fire, forcing them to use their cannons, which necessitated a more steady and risky approach. They were even more shocked when the formations of TBFs and B-26s each shot a Zero down before losing any U.S. aircraft. Whether Manning or another gunner shot a Zero down will never be known.

Discipline among the swarm of Zeros began to break down, as aircraft jockeyed for position, sometimes interfering with each other trying to avenge the loss of their fellow pilots. Every U.S. plane absorbed incredible punishment, killing and wounding aircrew, but still they kept coming. The Japanese Zeros bravely flew into the anti-aircraft fire being put up by the Japanese ships escorting the carriers so they could keep firing on the U.S. planes, which were getting dangerously close to the Japanese carriers. Even riddled with bullets and shells, with gunners dead and dying, the American aircraft just kept coming. None of them turned away despite the overwhelming odds.

Finally, the cumulative damage became too much and the U.S. planes started to go down—three TBFs and one B-26. Earnest flew on, even though he could not raise his gunners (Manning was dead and Ferrier wounded and unconscious). Just as he believed his severely damaged plane was about to crash, Earnest veered off and launched his torpedo at the Japanese light cruiser *Nagara*, while the other two remaining TBFs got close enough to launch their torpedoes at the carrier *Hiryu* before they were shot down. *Hiryu* and *Nagara* would skillfully avoid the torpedoes. Only at the last moment did Earnest discover that he could still fly his plane using the trim tabs as his only controllable surfaces.

Meanwhile the three surviving B-26s pressed their attack. The first and second planes got close enough to *Akagito* drop their torpedoes, which *Akagi* maneuvered to avoid. The second B-26 buzzed the length of *Akagi's* flight deck at bridge height, strafing as she went. The third B-26 didn't drop a torpedo, but was either out of control or deliberately tried to crash into *Akagi*, missing the carrier's bridge by a matter of feet before impacting

the water. A few feet lower and Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo (commander of the Japanese carrier task



force) and most of his staff would have been killed.

The valiant and determined attack by the TBFs and B-26s, and his

*Early group photo of VT-51 officers showing then-Ensign George H. W. Bush standing sixth from left (NHHC Archives Branch).*

near-death experience convinced Nagumo that aircraft flying from Midway represented a very real and dangerous threat that needed to be dealt with immediately, more so than a hypothetical threat posed by U.S. aircraft carriers that Nagumo's scout aircraft had not yet found. His decision to order his reserve strike (almost half his aircraft) to be re-armed with ground attack rather than with anti-ship weapons would set in motion the chain of events that would lead to disaster and the loss of all four carriers. The cost would still be high for the U.S. torpedo bombers: of the 41 TBDs launched from three carriers later that morning, only five would make it back. All 15 TBDs of Torpedo EIGHT would be shot down, with only one survivor, Ensign George Gay.

Ensign Earnest would nurse his bullet- and shell-riddled TBF via a circuitous route back to a crash landing on Midway. Captain Collins and one other B-26 would do the same. None of the aircraft would ever fly again. Earnest's TBF would be the first of many heavily damaged Avengers that would bring their crews back safely thanks to their sturdy construction. However, the aircraft flown by Lieutenant (j.g.) George Bush on 2 September 1944

("Barbara III," TBM-1C BuNo 46214) would not be one of them.

Bush (Naval Aviator No. C5907) was on his 50th combat mission when he was part of a four-plane formation of Torpedo Squadron FIFTY-ONE (VT-51) tasked with attacking the Japanese radio transmitter on Chichi Jima (using bombs, not a torpedo). Several months earlier, Bush's plane ("Bar II") had been caught on the catapult of *San Jacinto* when a Japanese air raid came in. Once it was over, he launched to conduct a bombing mission over Guam, but either during the air raid or bombing mission his plane suffered damage and he was forced to ditch the aircraft in the ocean, a dangerous action that he executed nearly perfectly, and both his crewmen and he were rescued by a U.S. Navy destroyer. During a later mission in the vicinity of Palau, one of the planes in his same flight was shot down, killing a close friend, Lieutenant Roland Houle. (This aircraft was located in 2014. In 2018, the Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency [DPAA] recovered remains from the aircraft and positively identified the two aircrewmembers, but Houle apparently was lost after he escaped the aircraft and remains missing in action.) Of the original 16 pilots in the Avenger squadron (VT-51) on *San Jacinto*, half would be killed or captured during the war.

On 2 September 1944, Bush's luck ran out. During a second day of strikes on Chichi Jima, noted for the extreme intensity of Japanese anti-aircraft fire, his plane was hit while inbound to the target. Despite the serious damage to his aircraft, Bush nevertheless pressed home his attack, an action for which he would be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Bush was able to get his damaged aircraft back out over water when he determined that he would not be able to get it back to the carrier, nor could he apparently control it well enough to be able to ditch. (Of note, no pilots or aircrew who were shot down over or near Chichi Jima survived the war. Those that survived being shot down were captured and executed by the Japanese, in several cases involving ritual cannibalism [eating the liver]. After the war, the Japanese major general in command of the island was tried and executed for war crimes).

Unable to raise either White or his radioman/gunner Radioman Second Class John Delaney, and believing that White at least was already dead, Bush elected to bail out. There are some differences in accounts about how badly the aircraft was smoking at the time Bush bailed out, but only he would know how well the aircraft could be controlled. Aircraft following behind reported seeing two chutes, one presumably was Bush; the other was a streamer and was probably Delaney. Neither White nor Delaney were ever found.

Bush was injured when he hit the tail after bailing out, but came to and was able to get into his raft. A Hellcat fighter from *San Jacinto* kept Japanese boats from reaching the downed aviator, while other aircraft reached the duty "lifeguard" U.S. submarine, USS *Finback* (SS-230), via radio and arranged for Bush to be rescued by the sub after being in the water for four hours. Bush then spent the next 30 days aboard *Finback*, along with four other rescued aviators, for the remainder of her patrol, enduring several depth-charge attacks as *Finback* sank two Japanese freighters. As a result of being on the sub, Bush missed the Battle of Leyte Gulf, but rejoined his squadron for operations in the Philippines (and Typhoon Cobra) flying eight more combat missions. In one of his last missions, Japanese anti-aircraft fire near Manila Bay blew a hole in his wing, but yet again, Bush pressed home his attack on a Japanese transport ship despite the damage.

As my Avenger returned quite safely to earth, I had to admit that it was a lot of fun, despite the "ghosts." Nevertheless, it was also an opportunity for me to honor the service and sacrifice of those who held the line, at great cost, in the early dark days of World War II, and then went on to achieve victory, at a steep price. The other passenger on the flight, in the second seat behind the pilot (which didn't exist in the original aircraft) was in her sixties or seventies and appeared to feel the same. Her 94-year-old (and still living) father had served as a radioman gunner in TBMs operating against German U-boats. Her flight was also a once-in-a-lifetime "bucket list" opportunity to understand better her father's service to our country.

Back on the ground, I thanked my pilot and crewman (who flew in the radio/ventral gun compartment) for a safe flight. I also thanked the staff of the Commemorative Air Force for what they have done to preserve these historic aircraft, and for honoring the valor and sacrifice of those like Manning, Fieberling, White, and Delaney, and many more, who gave everything so that we could have the freedom we have today, and I could have the freedom to go joyriding in a World War II Navy combat aircraft.

Sources consulted include: *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* by Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully (2005); *The Unknown Battle of Midway: The Destruction of the American Torpedo Squadrons* by Alvin Kernan (2005); *A Dawn Like Thunder: The True Story of Torpedo Eight* by Robert Mrazek (2008); and "Vice President Bush Calls World War II Experience 'Sobering'" by Journalist Second Class Timothy J. Christman, *Naval Aviation News* (March-April 1985).



*Wrecked ships clutter Naples harbor in October 1943 following the city's capture by the Allies. Widespread destruction and sabotage of the port and city by the retreating Germans left Bari on the Adriatic as the primary Allied logistics port in southern Italy (80-G-54365).*

## **H-035-2: Mediterranean Theater Catch-up**

*H-Gram 035, Attachment 2*

*Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC*

*September 2019*

When I last covered U.S. naval operations in the Mediterranean, the United States and Allies had

successfully conducted the amphibious landings at Salerno on the mainland of Italy despite attacks by German aircraft with radio-controlled bombs and by German U-boats, which made the Salerno landings one of the costliest battles for the U.S. Navy in World War II (over 800 Sailors killed). Please see H-Gram 021 for more details.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, especially CNO Admiral Ernest J. King, had never been enthusiastic about invading Italy to begin with. However, since the British refused to budge on conducting an invasion of northern France before 1944, the U.S. leadership somewhat grudgingly went along with it (since British Prime Minister Winston Churchill pushed so hard for it) rather than have the

increasingly large number of U.S. troops arriving in the European theater sitting around and doing nothing for a year. Although the large port city of Naples quickly fell, the Allied advance toward Rome in the winter of 1943–44 quickly bogged down—as the U.S. commanders had feared. Although the Germans gave up Naples without much of a fight, they executed one of the most thorough sabotage operations in history against the port and city infrastructure (including the city’s water and food supplies), leaving the port useless for many months and the Allies responsible for the care and feeding of tens of thousands of Neapolitan civilians. (Not helpful was the eruption of the volcano Mt. Vesuvius in March 1944, which destroyed several outlying villages. Although there were no casualties in the eruption, between 78 and 88 U.S. Army Air Forces B-25 bombers were effectively destroyed by the effects of hot ash on them at Pompeii Airfield).

### ***Forgotten Valor: Ensign “Kay” Vesole, USNR, and the “Great Bari Air Raid,” 2 December 1943***

With the port of Naples largely out of commission, the port of Bari (on the Adriatic coast of Italy) became even more critical to supply the Allied forces bogged down in heavy fighting against determined German resistance in the mountains between Naples and Rome, especially near the famed monastery of Monte Cassino. Bari had initially fallen to the British 1st Airborne Division with no opposition on 11 September 1943, and had been rapidly transformed into a major cargo and personnel off-loading facility, servicing ships of numerous nationalities, including U.S. Liberty ships. For several weeks, there was only ineffective German air resistance to Allied efforts to clear Naples and conduct logistics operations at Bari. As a result (and also due to Air Force “doctrine”), almost all Allied fighters operating in the Italian theater were committed to escort offensive bomber operations or to offensive fighter sweeps.

So weak had German air opposition been that on 2 December 1943 (although Naples harbor had been hit four times in the previous month), the British

commander responsible for the air defense of Bari, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, held a press conference during which he stated “I would consider it a personal insult if the enemy should send so much as one plane over the city.” That afternoon, a German Me-210 twin-engine fighter-bomber flew a reconnaissance mission over Bari. That evening, 105 German twin-engine Junkers Ju-88 bombers of *Luftflotte 2*, under the command of *Generalfeldmarschall* Wolfram von Richthofen (cousin of the “Red Baron” of World War I) attacked Bari with devastating result.

Most of the German aircraft launched from airfields in northern Italy, but flew a circuitous route over the Adriatic and over German-occupied Yugoslavia, where they were joined by additional German bombers, and then attacked Bari from the east. At 1925 local, two or three of the bombers commenced dropping chaff and flares, which weren’t needed, as surprise was complete and the port was already fully illuminated to facilitate around-the-clock off-loading. The U.S. Liberty ship SS John Bascom was the first of over 30 ships in the harbor to open fire, but it would do little good. The Germans literally had a field day, crisscrossing the port, bombing at will, which resulted in several massive explosions of ships carrying ammunition and chain reactions, as well as severing the bulk petrol line on the quay, sending a massive sheet of flaming fuel across the harbor that engulfed undamaged ships. Different accounts give different numbers (depending on the size of the ships counted), but about 28 ships were lost (including three that didn’t sink, but were a total loss due to severe damage—although their cargoes were salvaged) and another 12 received varying degrees of damage. These ships included American, British, Polish, Norwegian, and Dutch-flagged vessels. Exact casualties are unknown, but some estimates are as high as 1,000 crewmen killed aboard the ships and military personnel on the docks and another 1,000 civilians killed in the city. Five U.S. Liberty ships were sunk, with the loss of about 75 U.S. Merchant seaman and 50 U.S. Navy Armed Guards.

The U.S. Liberty ship SS *John Harvey* was hit by a bomb and exploded, killing all 36 crewmen, ten U.S. soldiers, and 20 U.S. Navy Armed Guards aboard.

Worse, *John Harvey* was carrying a secret cargo of 2,000 M47A1 mustard gas bombs (to be used in retaliation in the event the Germans resorted to the use of chemical weapons). Liquid sulfur agent mixed with the fuel oil coating the surface of the harbor and a cloud of sulfur mustard was blown over the city of 250,000 civilians. The exact number of casualties due to the chemicals is not known (especially civilian casualties), and many were caused because no one was prepared for it; neither victims nor medical personnel initially recognized or correctly diagnosed the symptoms. Some of the deaths could have been prevented by simple freshwater washdown of oil-coated sailors and disposal of contaminated clothing. That the equipment for a U.S. hospital was also destroyed in the bombing compounded the tragedy. At least 628 patients and medical personnel came down with symptoms of chemical poisoning and at least 83 died by end of month. Of these known gas casualties, 90 percent were U.S. merchant seaman. The event was initially kept secret because the United States did not want the Germans to know that chemical weapons had been brought into the theater, which might provoke German use. However, in February 1944, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a statement admitting what had happened, although records were not fully declassified until 1959. This was the only known poison gas incident in World War II.

The U.S. Liberty ship SS *John L. Motley* was hit by three bombs, which detonated her cargo of ammunition in a massive blast that killed almost everyone aboard, including 36 crewmen and 24 U.S. Navy Armed Guard personnel. Five Armed Guards somehow survived, as well as four crewmen ashore. The U.S. Liberty ship SS *Samuel Tilden* was hit by an incendiary bomb forward of the bridge, and another bomb that penetrated into her engineering spaces, and she was hit by German strafing and "friendly" anti-aircraft fire. Ten of her crew, 14 U.S. soldiers, and three British soldiers were killed aboard, and she was so badly damaged she had to later be scuttled by torpedoes from a British destroyer. The U.S. Liberty ship SS *Joseph Wheeler* was also sunk, with a loss of 26 crewmen and 15 U.S. Navy Armed Guard. The U.S. Liberty ship SS *Lyman Abbott* was damaged, killing one U.S. Army soldier and one U.S.

Navy Armed Guard. The U.S. Liberty ship SS *John M. Schofield* also received damage.

The explosion of the SS *John Motley* caved in the side of the U.S. Liberty ship SS *John Bascom*, which, coupled with three bomb hits, caused her to sink with the loss of four crewmen and ten U.S. Navy Armed Guard. Ensign Kopl K. "Kay" Vesole, USNR, would be awarded a posthumous Navy Cross for:

"...extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his profession as the Commanding Officer of the Armed Guard aboard the SS JOHN BASCOM when that vessel was bombed and sunk by enemy aircraft in the harbor of Bari, Italy, on the night of 2 December 1943. Weakened by loss of blood from an extensive wound over his heart and with his right arm helpless, Ensign Vesole valiantly remained in action, calmly proceeding from gun to gun, directing his crew and giving aid and encouragement to the injured. With the JOHN BASCOM fiercely ablaze and sinking, he conducted a party of his men below decks and supervised the evacuation of wounded comrades to the only undamaged lifeboat, persistently manning an oar with his uninjured arm after being forced to occupy a seat in the boat (he had tried to swim to make room for other wounded, but his crew forced him into the boat), and upon reaching the seawall, immediately assisted in disembarking the men. Heroically disregarding his own desperate plight as wind and tide whipped the flames along the jetty, he constantly risked his life to pull the wounded out of flaming oil-covered waters and, although nearly overcome by smoke and fumes, assisted in removal of casualties to a bomb shelter before the terrific explosion of a nearby ammunition ship inflicted injuries that later proved fatal. (He had to be restrained from going into the flames to rescue others; he also refused to get in the first boat that came to rescue them from the jetty where they were all trapped by the flames, and was forced into the second). The conduct of Ensign Vesole throughout this action reflects great credit upon himself, and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."

Ensign Vesole was a Polish immigrant to the United States, and had previously saved a man from drowning while attending the University of Iowa, where he earned a law degree. He was a practicing lawyer when he joined the Naval Reserve. Upon his death, he left a wife and baby he had never seen, with his last words being "I've a three-month-old baby at home. I certainly would like to see my baby."



*USS Portent (AM-106) sinking off Anzio after hitting a mine on D-day, 22 January 1944. Photographed from a USS Brooklyn (CL-40) 40-mm anti-aircraft gun mount. Note Allied invasion shipping in the distance (80-G-212430).*

### **Operation Shingle: The Allied Landings at Anzio, Italy, January-June 1944**

With the Allies and the Germans deadlocked in months of bloody combat in the rough terrain (which favored defense) between Naples and Rome, a plan to conduct an amphibious operation at Anzio and Nettuno on the western Italian coast north of Gaeta gained the strong backing of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. It would turn out to be one of the most ill-conceived operations of the entire war, resulting in a months-long stalemate of U.S. and British Army forces pinned down on the beachhead. The Anzio landings were too far behind the German lines with insufficient force. The Germans were quickly able to shift enough forces to continue to hold their defensive line in the mountains, while at the same time hemming in the Allied beachhead and preventing either Allied force from aiding the other. Constant German air attacks

took a toll of Allied forces ashore and a significant number of warships, mostly British, which were also tied to the beachhead attempting to provide gunfire support to the troops. The actual amphibious landing actually went very well; it was what happened afterward that was nearly a disaster.

At the various major Allied planning conferences in 1943, some of the most contentious arguments concerned the allocation of tank landing ships (LSTs), which proved to be the long pole in the tent for a number of planned amphibious operations. The United States continued to push for the earliest possible invasion of northern France, while the British steadfastly resisted, with Churchill (from the U.S. perspective) intent on beating around the Mediterranean bush. Finally, after intense "negotiations," the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff reluctantly agreed to retain 68 of the 90 LSTs in the Mediterranean, although initially that was considered insufficient to transport enough troops for an effective amphibious landing behind the German defensive lines, and to sustain the Allied forces in the face of almost certain German counterattacks.

The Anzio plan got a boost, when at the Cairo Conference (SEXTANT) in late November 1943 a long-planned British amphibious assault in the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean was formally cancelled, freeing an additional 15 LSTs for the Mediterranean. (The purpose of the Andaman operation was to assist with the opening of a ground supply route to China via Burma, something that CNO King supported in his hope to ultimately use Chinese manpower in the final defeat of Japan). Nevertheless, the Anzio operation was on-again off-again (cancelled on 22 December 1943 and revived on 23 December 1943 at Churchill's insistence).

In November 1943, Rear Admiral John L. Hall, USN, commander of VIII Amphibious Force, was designated as the overall Allied naval commander for the Anzio landings, although he would be replaced by Rear Admiral Frank J. Lowry in December. U.S. Army Major General John P. Lucas was designated commander of the VI Corps (initially one U.S. and one British division, along with several battalions of U.S. Ranger and British commando

forces, and a U.S. airborne regiment) to conduct the landings. (Eventually six divisions would be needed just to hold the beachhead, as four German divisions were able to quickly counter the landings). Lucas was pessimistic about the operation from the very beginning. His pessimism wasn't helped when the U.S. rehearsal for the landings on 17-18 January turned into a total fiasco, during which rough seas swamped 40 DUKW amphibious trucks, resulting in the loss of many of the 105-mm howitzers intended to support the initial amphibious assault. The plan also called for a major operational deception effort, including diversionary shore bombardments and air strikes near the German-occupied Italian port of Leghorn (Livorno), which appeared to have absolutely no effect on the Germans.

After many delays, D-day for Operation Shingle was set for 0200 on 22 January 1944 (sunrise was at 0731). As had been the case for every Mediterranean amphibious landing to that point, the U.S. Army insisted on a night assault with minimal pre-landing shore bombardment to maintain the element of surprise. The night assaults invariably resulted in confusion and delay among the landing craft and support vessels, and the landings at Anzio would start out the same way.

The Anzio assault force was designated Task Force 81, under the command of Rear Admiral Lowry, embarked in USS *Biscayne* (AGC-3), a seaplane tender reconfigured as an amphibious force command ship. Lowry was also in command of the X-Ray Force, tasked with landing the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division (commanded by Major General Lucian Truscott). The gunfire support group (TG 81.8) included the light cruisers USS *Brooklyn* (CL-40) and HMS *Penelope*, escorted by several U.S. and British destroyers and destroyer escorts. Task Force Peter, commanded by Rear Admiral Thomas Troubridge, RN, was responsible for landing the British 1st Infantry Division, and was supported by the cruisers HMS *Orion* and HMS *Spartan*, and several British destroyers.

The initial assault on Anzio was spearheaded by U.S. Army Rangers, embarked on British infantry landing ships (LSIs). However, the rocket-configured tank landing craft (LCT-147-798 rocket tubes) that was

supposed to support the Rangers' assault, arrived late and opted not to fire for fear of hitting the Rangers, while the Rangers delayed while waiting for the LCT to fire. It turned out not to matter, as the beach chosen was neither mined nor defended, and the Rangers achieved complete tactical surprise, capturing the Anzio mole before the Germans could sabotage it. By 0645, all Rangers were ashore.

The British landings (Task Force Peter) started reasonably well as the beacon submarine HMS *Ultror* guided the force in, but was subsequently delayed by extensive mines on the beach. This caused 18 LSTs and 24 LCIs from Naples to mill about, during which time the HMS *Palomares* (originally a banana boat, but re-configured as an anti-aircraft and fighter-direction ship) hit a mine and had to be towed to Naples. German artillery opened up and hit a few of the British LSTs, fortunately with minimal damage, but the beach was determined to be "too hard," and the British landings shifted to the U.S. beaches further north.

The U.S. landings at the "X-ray" beaches (Red and Green) started well, as the guide sub HMS *Uproar* led 23 minesweepers in, which found few mines. At 0153, two British LCT rocket ships assigned to support the U.S. X-ray landings opened fire, which proved effective at detonating German mines on the beach. The initial U.S. waves on landing craft met no opposition. However, at 0239, LCI-211 in the third wave ran aground on a false beach, and as other landing craft closed in to help, heavy machine-gun fire from the beach inflicted numerous casualties. Nevertheless, by 0634, eight waves of landing craft had reached shore with minimal troop losses.

As the Germans had been taken by surprise, there were initially few calls for Navy gunfire support. The destroyer USS *Mayo* (DD-422) fired on some targets at 0748, but *Brooklyn* mostly milled about smartly awaiting calls. The first (of what would be many) German air attacks commenced after dawn. Six Messerschmitt fighters were followed by several Focke-Wulf fighter bombers that hit and sank USS LCI-20 with a bomb about the same time as the minesweeper USS *Portent* (AM-106) struck a mine

and sank with the loss of 18 crewmen. Nevertheless, by midnight of D-day, 36,034 men, 3,069 vehicles, and 90 percent of the assault load were ashore. Both divisions and the Rangers were ashore and engaging German forces.

Compared to the disastrous rehearsal, the actual Anzio landing was a great success, aided considerably by fair weather and complete surprise (the Germans at Anzio had actually been at a high state of alert, but had cancelled it the night before the assault, apparently fooled by the Allied delays). However, the German senior commander in Italy, *Generalfeldmarschall* Albert Kesselring, had a pre-planned response ready and with one code word ("Richard") set it in motion. And, despite Allied air attacks, the Germans had little problem moving to counter the landings.

To that point, all pretty much seemed to be going according to the Allied plan. On 23 January, *Brooklyn* was finally called upon to interdict German troop movements, as it became increasingly apparent a German counterattack was in the offing. Gunfire from destroyer USS *Trippe* (DD-403) broke up a German counterattack. However, at dusk, a 55-plane German air raid came in. Destroyer HMS *Janus* was hit by an aerial torpedo, broke apart, and capsized with a loss of 159 crewmen. Destroyer HMS *Jervis* was hit by a radio-controlled bomb, but suffered no casualties and was able to make Naples under her own power. However, as a result of a command-and-control mix-up, the British cruisers all withdrew, leaving *Brooklyn* alone the next morning, resulting in a low point in Anglo-American relations. (As an aside, future comedian Lenny Bruce served as a sailor aboard *Brooklyn* in World War II).

The next evening, on 24 January, several waves of German aircraft attacked. *Brooklyn* suffered several near misses, but escaped significant damage. The minesweeper USS *Prevail* (AM-107) was put out of action by a near miss. Destroyer USS *Plunkett* (DD-431) was simultaneously attacked from different directions by two radio-controlled glide bombs and two Ju-88 bombers, followed by several more bombers. *Plunkett* out-maneuvered the glide bombs, but, after a 17-minute duel with the

bombers, was finally hit by one 550-pound bomb that started a serious fire, killing 53 crewmen. However, *Plunkett* was able to reach Palermo, Sicily, under her own power. In the meantime, the destroyer *Mayo*, which had conducted numerous gunfire support missions throughout the day keeping German ground forces from crossing the Mussolini Canal, hit a mine, which nearly broke her in two, killed seven, holed the starboard side, and damaged the propeller shaft, resulting in loss of steering control. *Mayo* was towed to Naples by a British tug and was the fourth Allied destroyer knocked out in 24 hours. (*Mayo* was repaired and went on to serve until 1972). The German air attack also worked over three clearly marked British hospital ships, which suffered numerous near misses, and caused the *St. David* to sink with loss of life.

On 25 January 1944, U.S. Army radio intercept operators embarked on destroyer escort USS *Frederick C. Davis* (DE-136) intercepted a German aircraft reconnaissance report, providing early warning of impending airstrikes. *Frederick C. Douglas* was also equipped with special equipment to jam German radio-controlled bombs. She would remain on station off Anzio under frequent air attack and occasional shore battery fire almost continuously for the next six months, for which she would be awarded a Navy Unit Commendation. (She would survive Anzio, only to be torpedoed and sunk while attacking a German U-boat in the Atlantic on 24 April 1945 with a loss of 115 of her crew, the last U.S. destroyer/destroyer escort lost in the Atlantic.) Although the British cruiser HMS *Orion* returned with additional naval reinforcement the same day, the small minesweeper USS *YMS-30* struck a mine and quickly sank with the loss of 17 (about half) of her crew.

The steady drain of Allied naval losses continued and took a tragic turn. On 26 January 1944, the British *LST-422* (carrying U.S. troops and equipment) was blown into a known minefield by gale-force winds, struck a mine, and caught fire. Over 400 U.S. troops were caught between the raging inferno and the frigid sea as the ship made any decision moot as she broke in two and sank with the loss of 454 U.S. soldiers (mostly from the U.S. 83rd Chemical

Battalion) and 29 British crewmen. As U.S. LCI-32 came to the rescue, she too struck a mine and sank in three minutes, with 30 of her crew killed and 11 wounded. A total of 150 survivors were rescued from the two ships. At dusk, a German Focke-Wulf fighter damaged HMS LST-366. The U.S. Liberty ship SS *John Banvard* suffered a close and damaging near miss from a radio-controlled bomb and the master ordered abandon ship. However, the U.S. Navy Armed Guard re-boarded the vessel, manned the guns, and continued to fight off a second wave of attacks. *John Banvard* amazingly suffered no casualties and remained afloat, but she would be written off as a total loss. In addition, a presumably damaged German aircraft crashed into the freighter *Hilary A. Herbert*, which was then barely missed by a bomb and had to be beached to prevent sinking. U.S. commanders off Anzio began to complain about the lack of Allied air cover, as the U.S. Army Air Forces' strategy of "isolating the battlefield" by attacking lines of communication was doing nothing of the kind, ashore or afloat. And, the weather continued to deteriorate.

As the Allied advance from Anzio and Nettuno beachhead quickly bogged down in the face of determined German resistance and frequent counterattacks, the situation ashore turned into a bloody stalemate for months. Allied naval forces were compelled to remain offshore during this period, which lasted from about 28 January to 30 April 1944.

Destroyer escorts *Frederick C. Davis* and *Herbert C. Jones* (DE-137), and HMS *Ulster Queen* (an auxiliary anti-aircraft cruiser) had embarked fighter-direction teams, powerful jamming gear to counter radio-controlled bombs, and radio-intercept and -monitoring capability to provide early warning. (*Herbert C. Jones* would also receive a Navy Unit Commendation for her work off Anzio). Despite this, an air strike on the evening of 29 January struck the British cruiser HMS *Spartan* with a radio-controlled Hs-293 glide bomb. The German aircraft evaded radar detection by flying low over land and attacking ships silhouetted by the afterglow of the sunset (the smoke screen was ineffective due to high winds). The damage to *Spartan* was severe, and after an hour she rolled over and sank with the loss of 65 of

her officers and crew. In addition, the U.S. Liberty ship SS *Samuel Huntington* was hit by a glide bomb, which ignited her cargo of ammunition and gasoline, and blasted a jeep through her flying bridge. Four crewmen were killed in the bomb hit. The master quickly ordered abandon ship and the rest of the crew got away in lifeboats before the ship exploded, raining shrapnel on ships up to a mile and a half away, and sank in shallow water.

Despite the losses, in the first week of Operation Shingle, seven Liberty ship and 201 LST loads had been put ashore along with 68,886 troops, 237 tanks and 508 artillery pieces, about four divisions worth, which, however, would not be enough. Allied warships continued to blunt German ground attacks, with destroyer USS *Edison* (DD-439) given credit for very effective fire, killing many German troops on the night of 29-30 January. In addition, the previously damaged light cruiser USS *Brooklyn*, with her rapid-fire 6-inch guns, returned to the action. On 1 February, Rear Admiral Lowry on *Biscayne* departed, handing over command of the naval forces offshore to the British. General Lucas noted, "The work of the Navy under his [Lowry's] direction has been one of the outstanding achievements of the operation."

Throughout February, heavy German attacks ashore kept the Allied VI Corps on defensive, sometimes threatening to break through to the beach, often being driven back by effective naval gunfire. On 8 February 1944, the destroyer USS *Ludlow* took a hit from a German 5-inch artillery shell that hit the bridge at a 60-degree angle and passes between the legs of the commanding officer, Commander Liles Creighton, as he was sitting in his chair on the bridge, and down into the ship, but failed to explode. Chief Gunner's Mate James D. Johnson located the live shell and threw it overboard. Creighton suffered severe burns to his legs, but survived (demonstrating an evolutionary advantage of "man-spreading").

By 16 February, the light cruiser USS *Philadelphia* (CL-41) replaced *Brooklyn*, providing gunfire support. On that day, the U.S. Liberty ship SS *Elihu Yale* was hit by a radio-controlled bomb. Although the bomb hit in an

empty hold, it set off ammunition that had been off-loaded onto *LCT-35*, which resulted in the loss of both vessels, with *Elihu Yale* settling in very shallow water.

On 22 February, Major General Lucas took the fall for the badly conceived operation and was fired. Lucas came in for considerable criticism over the years for essentially “hunkering down” once his forces were ashore rather than aggressively attacking. The reality is that either way he lacked sufficient combat power against more numerous and highly capable German forces operating from highly defensible terrain, and too far from the main Allied forces north of Naples for mutual support. Lucas was relieved by 3rd Infantry Division commander Major General Truscott, which made no difference. Churchill was later to complain, “I had hoped we were hurling a wildcat onto the shore, but all we got was a stranded whale.” In addition, the step-son of U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, was killed at Anzio.

Somewhat surprisingly, neither the Germans nor Italian forces that sided with the Germans conducted attacks by submarine or motor torpedo boats during the first weeks of the operation. That changed on 18 February, when several Italian torpedo boats attempted an attack but were driven off by U.S. patrol craft, which sank two of the enemy. That same day, the British light cruiser *HMS Penelope* departed Naples en route Anzio and was struck by a torpedo from *U-410* that hit her after engineering room. Sixteen minutes later, she was hit by another torpedo from *U-410* in her after boiler room, with catastrophic effect. *Penelope* took her commanding officer and 417 of her crew to the bottom (206 survived). On 20 February, *U-410* struck again, sinking U.S. *LST-348* with two torpedoes. The first torpedo blew off her bow, and the second broke her in two; 43 of her crew were lost. On 25 February, the British destroyer *HMS Inglefield* was struck by an Hs-293 glide bomb and sunk with a loss of 35 of her crew (157 were rescued). On 30 March, the British destroyer *HMS Laforey* was torpedoed and sunk by *U-223*, with a loss of all but 65 of her 246 crewmen.

The stagnation ashore continued from March through April, fortunately without additional significant Allied naval losses. German midget submarines made their first appearance off Anzio on 21 April, but three were quickly sunk by U.S. patrol craft. Finally, in early May 1944, Allied forces had worn down the Germans enough to attempt a breakout. This commenced on 11 May 1944, supported by gunfire from U.S. light cruisers *Philadelphia*, *Brooklyn*, British cruiser *HMS Dido*, and several U.S. destroyers, which fired hundreds of rounds at the Germans. At one point,

on 13 May, however, accurate

*Sinking of USS Lansdale (DD-426) on 20 April 1944, off North Africa: The bodies of two men killed in the sinking are brought ashore at a North African port from a U.S. Coast Guard-manned destroyer escort that conducted rescue operations, either USS Menges (DE-320) or USS Newell (DE-322) (NH 756615).*

German artillery fire caused several near misses to *Brooklyn*, forcing her to retire for a time. On 14 May, German aircraft tried a new tactic, dropping torpedoes in Naples harbor that ran in circles, fortunately hitting no ships. Off Anzio, *PC-627* sank an Italian torpedo boat. That same morning, *Philadelphia* and destroyers *Boyle* (DD-600) and *Kendrick* (DD-612) were providing gunfire support near Gaeta (south of Anzio) to U.S. forces that had finally broken through the German defensive line and were advancing northward along the coast to link up with the Allied forces at Anzio.

On 22 May 1944, the destroyer *USS Laub* (DD-613) and *Philadelphia* collided, forcing both to withdraw for temporary repairs. However, the good news was that German defenses between Anzio and Rome collapsed, and the Germans gave up Rome without a fight, fortunately without the extensive sabotage and destruction they had inflicted in Naples. The French cruiser *Émile Bertin* assumed naval gunfire support duties from the U.S. cruisers. Rome fell to the Allies on 4 June, and event that was immediately overshadowed by the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944.

Operation Shingle was a costly victory. Over 2,800 U.S. soldiers were killed and 11,000 wounded, while the British Army suffered 1,600 killed and 7,000 wounded. The Royal Navy paid more heavily than the U.S. Navy. The Royal Navy lost two cruisers, three destroyers, three LSTs, one LCI, and one



hospital ship, with 366 Royal Navy personnel killed (this number does not appear to include those lost—over 400—on HMS *Penelope*, although she is one of the two British cruisers listed as lost in the campaign). The U.S. Navy lost one minesweeper, one small mine craft, one LST, two LCIs, three LCTs, and two Liberty ships (plus quite a few more ships damaged) with 160 U.S. Navy personnel killed and 166 wounded. The Germans ashore suffered about 5,000 dead.

### ***Convoy Battles Along the Algerian Coast, April-May 1944***

Just before midnight on 11 April 1944, while laying smoke ahead of convoy UGS 37 transiting easterly along the coast of Algeria, the destroyer escort USS *Holder* (DE-401) was struck portside amidships by an aerial torpedo from a German bomber. This resulted in two heavy secondary explosions and extensive fire and flooding. Despite the severe

damage, *Holder's* gunners continued to defend the convoy, driving off other attackers without any additional damage to the convoy. Lieutenant Commander G. Cook's crew got the fire and flooding under control and the ship was towed into Oran, Algeria, and then to New York, where the damage was considered to be too severe to repair.

On the evening of 20 April 1944, following an unsuccessful attack by German submarine *U-969*, Allied convoy UGS 38 (87 ships), carrying ground personnel and supplies to Italy, was attacked by about three waves of German Ju-88 and Heinkel He-111 twin-engine bombers (18-24 total according to U.S. reports) north of Algiers, Algeria. Flying low to avoid radar detection, the Germans attacked simultaneously from multiple axes after dark. The U.S. Liberty ship *SS Paul Hamilton* was struck by a torpedo from one of the bombers, and suffered a catastrophic explosion that killed all 580 personnel aboard; the ship sank in less than 30 seconds and only one body was recovered. The dead included eight officers and 39 crew of the ship, 29 U.S. Navy Armed Guards, 154 personnel of the USAAF 831st Bombardment Squadron (a B-24 heavy bomber squadron) and 317 personnel of the 32nd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. It is possible that gunners on *Paul Hamilton* violated procedure, opening fire too soon and drawing attention to the ship among the many in the convoy. The explosion of *Paul Hamilton* was one of the most famous photographs of the war.

The flames from *Paul Hamilton* silhouetted the destroyer USS *Lansdale* (DD-426), which had been acting as "jam ship" against German radio-controlled bombs. The jamming gear was of no use against German aerial torpedoes, and *Lansdale* was attacked from port and starboard at the same time. *Lansdale* maneuvered to avoid two torpedoes launched by Heinkels on the port side, both of which missed. *Lansdale* then maneuvered to counter five Heinkels coming in from starboard. *Lansdale* shot one down which crashed astern. Another Heinkel launched its torpedo before being hit by *Lansdale*, passing over the forecastle before crashing on the opposite side. However, the torpedo struck *Lansdale* on the starboard side in the forward

fireroom at 2106, blowing large holes in both sides of the ship and almost splitting her in two.

With a 12-degree list and her rudder jammed hard to starboard, *Lansdale* continued to fight, knocking down one of two more torpedo planes that attacked, and both torpedoes missed. The crew fought hard to save the ship, correcting the steering casualty, but, by 2122, the list reached 45 degrees, and her commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander D. M. Swift, ordered abandon ship. At 2130, *Lansdale* rolled on her side and then broke in two; the stern section immediately sank. Forty-seven officers and crewmen were lost with the ship. During the course of the attack, another merchant in the convoy was torpedoed and abandoned, but later re-boarded and saved, and two more merchant ships were hit by torpedoes and one was sunk.

During the night, the destroyer escort USS *Menges* rescued 137 survivors of *Lansdale*, plus two downed German aircrew, and the destroyer escort USS *Newell* rescued 119, including Lieutenant Commander Swift. One of the survivors of *Lansdale* was the executive officer, Robert M. Morganthau. Morganthau was born into great wealth and privilege (his father was President Roosevelt's treasury secretary, his grandfather was President Wilson's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and Robert raced sailboats with future President John F. Kennedy). Nevertheless, Morganthau was imbued with the spirit of public service, and he joined the U.S. Naval Reserve V-12 Program while still in college before the war. He was activated and served for four and half years aboard four destroyers and a destroyer-minelayer. He passed his physical exam for the Navy by concealing his near-deafness in one ear, which had been caused by a childhood infection.

After surviving the sinking of *Lansdale*, Morganthau went on to be the executive officer of the new destroyer-minelayer, USS *Harry F. Bauer* (DM-26). *Harry F. Bauer* shot down 13 Japanese aircraft during nearly two months of near-continuous *kamikaze* attacks in early 1945 and was hit by several bombs and a torpedo, all of which failed to explode, before suffering a glancing blow from a *kamikaze*. An unexploded bomb from

the *kamikaze* lodged in the fuel tank, unbeknownst to any of the crew, for 17 days before it was found and disarmed (barely). Morganthau battled institutional anti-Semitism in the Navy and as executive officer stood his ground with the commanding officer in insisting that black sailors be allowed to man anti-aircraft guns. He also prevailed in having several of them awarded Bronze Stars when they stood by their gun near the *kamikaze* flames while others sought shelter (*Harry F. Bauer* would be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation).

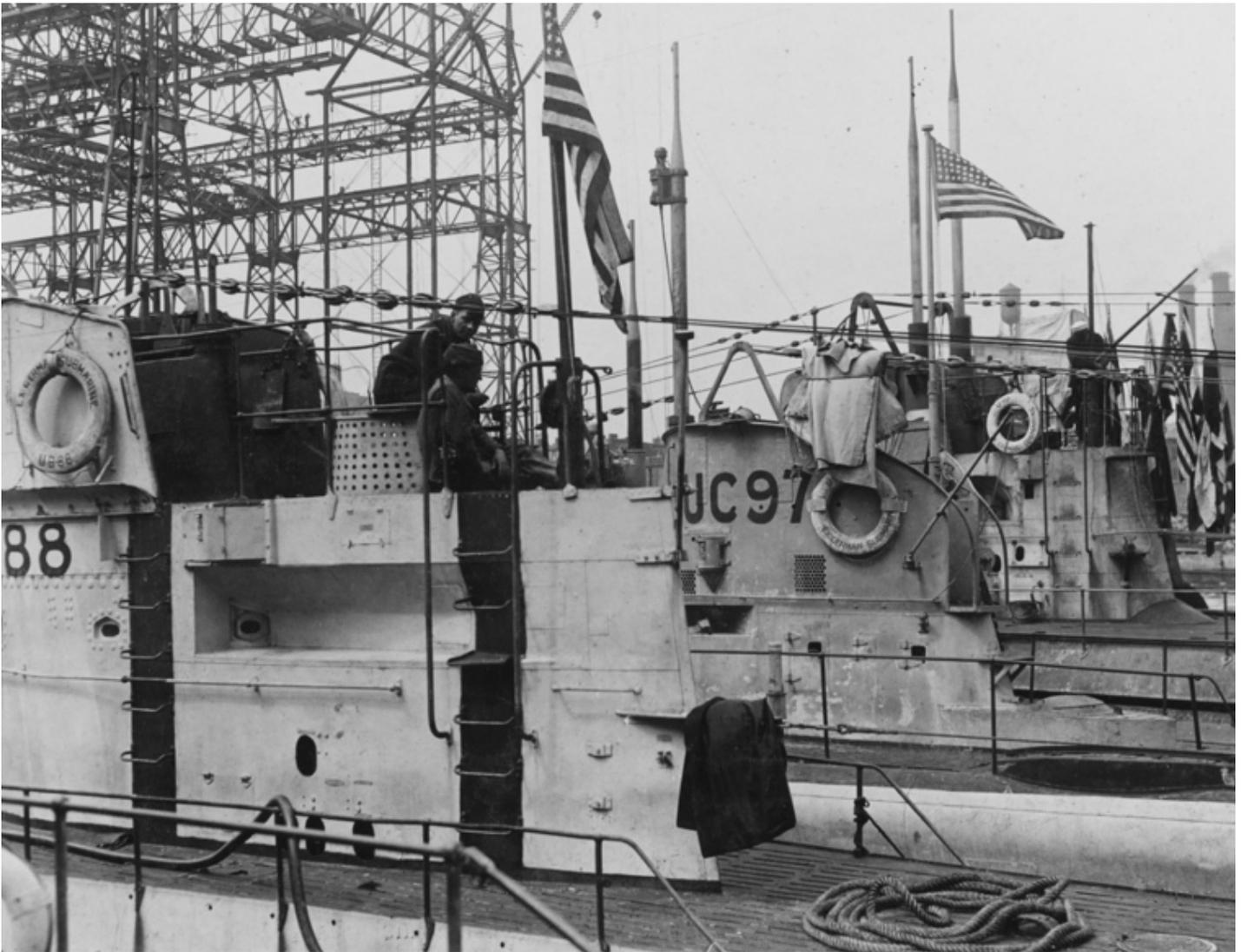
Years later, Morganthau reflected on his time in the water off *Lansdale*, "I was swimming around without a life jacket. I made a number of promises to the Almighty, at a time when I didn't have much bargaining power." His deal? "That I would try to do something useful with my life." After the war, he went to Yale Law School and went on to serve for more than four decades as the chief federal prosecutor for southern New York State (nine years) and as Manhattan's longest-serving district attorney (35 years), putting thousands of criminals behind bars. He passed away on 21 July 2019 at age 99.

Just after midnight on 3 May 1944, the destroyer escort USS *Menges* (DE-320), which had rescued many of the survivors of *Lansdale* on the night of 20-21 April, detected and attacked German submarine *U-371*, but was hit by a G7es acoustic homing torpedo counter-fired by the U-boat. The aft third of *Menges* was virtually destroyed, 31 crewmen were killed, and 25 wounded. Despite the grievous damage, *Menges*'s skipper, Lieutenant Commander Frank M. McCabe, USCG, refused to order abandon ship, and his almost entirely U.S. Coast Guard crew managed to keep her from sinking, including several who heroically jumped astride torpedoes that had come loose to prevent them from exploding. *Menges* was towed to Bougie (Béjaïa), Algeria, while other convoy escorts USS *Joseph E. Campbell* (DE-70), USS *Pride* (DE-323), and British and French escorts pursued *U-371*. On 4 May, they finally forced the U-boat to scuttle herself, but not before she put a torpedo into French destroyer escort *Senegalais* (a U.S. *Canon*-class destroyer escort seconded to the Free French Navy), which survived. *Menges* was towed to New York, where

her mangled stern was removed and replaced by that from the damaged USS *Holder* (DE-401) with repairs complete in October 1944. *Menges* then joined a four-ship hunter-killer group in the Atlantic, the only such group composed entirely of Coast Guard-manned U.S. Navy ships. McCabe was awarded a Legion of Merit for the rescue of *Lansdale's* crew and for saving his ship from the torpedo hit.

On 5 May 1944, while escorting westbound convoy GUS 38 off Oran, Algeria, the destroyer escort USS *Fechteler* (DE-157) was hit by a torpedo from German submarine *U-967*, broke in two and sank, suffering 29 killed and 26 wounded. USS *Laning* (DE-159) rescued 186 survivors. *Fechteler* had previously survived a heavy German air attack on 20 April 1944. *U-967* was one of the last surviving German submarines in the Mediterranean. During her three patrols, she only sank *Fechteler*. *U-967* was scuttled in Toulon, France, in August 1944 during the Allied invasion of southern France.

Sources include: "Naval Armed Guard Service: Tragedy at Bari, Italy on 2 December 1943," Naval Historical Center, 8 August 2006; *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol. IX, "Sicily-Salerno-Anzio, January 1943-June 1944*, by Samuel Eliot Morison, 1954. NHHHC's online *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships* (DANFS); and *The Official Chronology of the U.S. Navy in World War II*, by NHHHC Historian Robert J. Cressman, 1999.



Former Imperial German Navy U-boats UB-88, UC-97, and U-117 at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, 29 April 1919 (NH 111110).

## H-035-3: *UC-97*— Forgotten History in an Unexpected Place

*H-Gram 035, Attachment 3*

Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC

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Storms had churned the water the night before. The sky was overcast, significantly cutting the ambient light below the surface. Moreover, the remote operating vehicle (ROV) malfunctioned, leaving only a difficult-to-control drop camera as the means to positively identify the sonar contact below the workboat of A and T Recovery, the outfit that had previously recovered almost 40 lost U.S. Navy aircraft that are now restored and on display in museums (including NHHC's National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola) and airports (including Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports) around the country. After much trial and error, and mounting frustration, the sun finally came out, and there she was: on the monitor I could see the stern of *UC-97*, a sunken World War I German U-boat 200 feet below the surface of Lake Michigan. Wait, Lake Michigan?

How in blazes did a World War I German submarine end up here?

In the spring and summer of 1919, *UC-97* was the biggest sensation to hit the Great Lakes since possibly the Great Chicago fire of 1871. Hundreds of thousands of people, in virtually every port in the Great Lakes (except for Lake Superior) had lined up to take tours, or just to see, an example of the infernal war machines that had caused U.S. entry into bloody World War I.

America had stood by as millions of soldiers of the great powers of Europe were slaughtered in stalemated trench warfare. However, it was the German's resort to unrestricted submarine warfare and, in particular, the sinking of the British passenger liner *Lusitania* in May 1915 with the loss of 1,198 passengers and crew, including 128 American civilians, that outraged many Americans. The killing of soldiers was one thing, but the loss of innocent lives, even if only on a fraction of the scale of carnage of the land war, was too much to ignore and continue business as usual.

When the Germans resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 after a hiatus, resulting in the loss of more U.S. merchant ships and civilians to German torpedoes, the United States, under President Woodrow Wilson, declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917. As the United States began to build and train an expeditionary army, the immediate U.S. contribution to the Allied war effort was the provision of over 30 U.S. Navy destroyers to protect convoys from U-boat attacks that were on the verge of knocking Great Britain out of the war. As the trickle of U.S. soldiers sent to western Europe turned into a torrent in early 1918, over two million U.S. soldiers, protected by the U.S. and British navies, safely reached the front and finally turned the tide, convincing German leaders that they could not win the war.

Under the terms of the Armistice that went into effect on 11 November 1918, the Germans were required to surrender their entire navy, which had not been decisively defeated in battle. The German battle fleet steamed to the British base at Scapa

Flow, where, in violation of the Armistice, the Germans later scuttled their entire surface fleet in June 1919. The German submarines, eventually 176 of them, were sailed to the British port of Harwich. Although some of the subs were subject to German sabotage, and many suffered from poor maintenance in the final months of the war, they nevertheless represented a level of submarine technology significantly better than that of any other navy in the world, including the U.S. Navy.

The British agreed to allow Allied nations to take some of the submarines to study their technology, with the proviso that the submarines later be destroyed by sinking them in water too deep to salvage so that no other nation would gain an advantage by incorporating German submarines into their fleets. In the meantime, the British vigorously sought to have the submarine outlawed as a weapon of war. Having nearly lost the war because of German submarines, despite having the largest navy in the world by a significant margin, the British pushed hard at various post-war treaty conferences to have submarines banned (like poison gas). No other naval power supported the British position.

Initially the U.S. Navy had little interest in acquiring any of the surrendered German submarines. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William Benson, believed that since their use might soon be outlawed anyway, there was no point. He, and many others, did not believe that the submarine represented a viable form of warfare, and certainly torpedoing merchant ships was not something the U.S. Navy would ever engage in, especially since the Allies, led by the British, were seeking to have some of the German U-boat commanders, and the senior German leaders who authorized the sinking of merchant ships, tried as war criminals. Benson did not want any of his successors or other U.S. naval officers to ever find themselves in the position of the Germans. There was also an arrogant belief in the U.S. Navy that our submarines were superior to those of the Germans, and in some respects (underwater speed and habitability) they were. The German U-boats, however, were superior in the things that made them more effective weapons of war (better periscope optics, better torpedoes,

more reliable engines, and, in particular, the ability to submerge far more quickly than any other submarine in the world).

Despite CNO Benson's lack of enthusiasm, the senior U.S. submarine officer, Captain Thomas Hart (later admiral and commander of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet at the start of World War II), used his personal political connections to convince U.S. government leaders that acquiring several German submarines would be a great addition to the Victory Loan bond drive scheduled for the spring of 1919. The Victory Loan drive, an effort to raise money from American citizens to pay off the government's huge debt resulting from the war effort, featured captured German military equipment that was sent around the country for public display as an inducement for Americans to reach into their wallets and contribute. The leadership of the Victory Loan drive was convinced that what better German weapon to generate publicity, interest (and contributions) than the dastardly submarines that had led the U.S. to war in the first place? They would be proved right.

Due to political pressure, the U.S. Navy sent crews to Harwich to bring six of the German submarines to the United States. The subs had been in a state of disrepair for many months. Nevertheless, with extraordinary ingenuity and perseverance, U.S. Navy crews brought all six to the U.S. East Coast in April-May 1919. The U.S. Navy was the only navy that actually sailed German subs under their own power (mostly) to their respective countries (a number actually sank en route other countries). Initially, the Navy sailed four of the submarines, in company with the tender USS *Bushnell* (AS-2), via a longer and safer southern route across the Atlantic. A fifth submarine, *U-111*, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Freeland A. Daubin, left three days later due to mechanical issues. *U-111*'s direct trip across the stormy north Atlantic route, alone, without wireless, and with a power plant of dubious reliability, would cause any of today's adherents of "operational risk management" to freak out. Nevertheless, *U-111* beat all the other subs to New York City for the kick-off of the Victory Loan drive. The sixth U-boat came over later.

*UC-97* stayed in the general vicinity of New York City (which included a somewhat macabre re-enactment/commemoration on the anniversary of the *Lusitania* sinking), while the other boats visited ports along the U.S. East Coast. All of them were a sensation and attracted many thousands of visitors. At the time, *UC-97* was credited with having sunk seven ships with a loss of 50 lives, which added to her sinister, and crowd-pleasing, cachet. The reality was that *UC-97* was completed too late to participate in the war, so she actually had no combat record. *UC-97* was a *UC-III*-class submarine, a variant of smaller coastal submarines designed primarily to lay mines rather than attack ships, although she did have three 19.7-inch torpedo tubs (and seven torpedoes) in addition to her six minelaying tubes (and 14 mines) and a 3.4-inch deck gun. *UC-97* was 185 feet long, had 491 tons displacement, and a crew of 32 men—a small submarine, even by World War I standards.

After the successful Victory Loan drive (which raised over one billion dollars in the last 24 hours to meet its goal), the Navy decided the submarines would be useful as a recruiting tool. With the "War to End All Wars" having just ended, the Navy needed a new theme to attract Sailors to man the greatly increased U.S. battle fleet as ships authorized in the 1916 and 1917 fleet expansion programs began to come on line. Instead of appealing to patriotism to defeat "the Hun" and save Western civilization, the Navy now turned to "adventure, see the world, and learn high-technology" as a draw (which worked on my grandfather). The U-boats proved to be quite effective as recruiting props.

In May 1919, *UB-88* (Lieutenant Commander Joseph L. Nielson, commanding) embarked on an epic recruiting voyage, visiting numerous ports down the U.S. East Coast, into the Gulf of Mexico, up the Mississippi River as far as Memphis, then through



the Panama Canal to the U.S. West Coast, where it was later sunk as a target on 3 January 1921 off San Pedro, California, by the USS *Wickes* (DD-75), commanded by Commander William F. "Bull" Halsey. Meanwhile, *UC-97* (Lieutenant Commander Holbrook Gibson, commanding) transited to the Great Lakes, via Halifax, the Saint Lawrence Seaway, and the Welland Canal, between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, becoming the first submarine of any nation to sail on the Great Lakes.

Both submarines were designed by the Germans for only short coastal missions, and only to last for the duration of the war, so the engineering challenges to these lengthy voyages were profound. Yet it was actually the challenges of accommodating huge crowds (as many as 5,000 people would tour each submarine per day) and additional port cities be added to the itinerary due to political influence that caused *UC-97* to fall behind schedule and cancel the Lake Superior portion of the voyage, finishing up in Chicago in August 1919. Nevertheless, the voyage of *UC-97* was considered a huge success, and one of the few bright spots of an otherwise dismal 1919. Few today realize how tumultuous 1919 was. Although the "Great War" had ended, over half a million Americans had died from the Spanish Influenza epidemic (which disproportionately killed younger, healthy people),

numerous U.S. cities had experienced pro-Bolshevik May Day riots that had turned violent (which was used as a pretext for violent anti-union actions and provoked the first "Red Scare" that threatened American civil liberties), and also some of the most violent race riots in U.S. history, as white mobs in some northern cities gave blacks fleeing southern poverty a deadly reception. By contrast, the voyages of the submarines enjoyed extensive and positive press coverage, and provided a welcome distraction to the national turmoil. Within a year of the finale of her voyage, *UC-97* was a forgotten derelict moored on the Chicago River. Like the other five German submarines, *UC-97* had been stripped of everything of conceivable value that could be used for study of German submarine technology (engines, periscopes, pumps, etc.), which were scattered about various U.S. Navy commands, laboratories, design bureaus, and defense industries. Finally, in keeping with the Armistice stipulations, *UB-88* was sunk as a target on the West Coast. Three of the submarines were sunk as targets off the Virginia Capes as part of Brigadier General Billy Mitchell's tests of sinking ships with aircraft (*U-117* was quickly sunk by bombs from U.S. Navy flying boats, and *U-140* and *UB-148* were sunk by destroyer gunfire). *U-111* sank on her own while under tow off Lynnhaven Inlet, was raised and then repaired enough to be towed to deep water off the Virginia Capes, and scuttled (which made her previous solo trans-Atlantic crossing seem even more miraculous).

*UC-97* was in no condition to go very far, so she was towed out into Lake Michigan on 7 June 1921 to be used as a target by the Naval Reserve vessel USS *Wilmette* (IX-29). (*Wilmette* was formerly the passenger ferry *Eastland*, which had capsized in the Chicago River in July 1915, killing 844—the worst loss of life from a single ship in Great Lakes history—and then been raised, repaired, armed, put in Navy service, and then laid up.)

The Navy made a big production out of sinking *UC-97*. The first shot from one of *Wilmette*'s four 4-inch guns was fired by Gunner's Mate J. O. Sabin, who had been credited with firing the first U.S. Navy shot in the Atlantic during World War I. The last shot was fired by Gunner's Mate A. H. Anderson, who had fired the first torpedo at a U-boat during the war.

After being hit by 13 4-inch rounds of 18 fired, *UC-97* sank. The famous submarine was then immediately forgotten for decades. The amnesia was so complete that researchers in the 1960s looking for evidence of a German U-boat on the Great Lakes were initially met by total incredulity by the U.S. Navy (including even the U.S. Navy Historical Center, predecessor of NHHHC). Multiple attempts to find *UC-97* in the 1960s and 1970s failed, and the sub acquired a reputation as one of the most elusive shipwrecks on the Great Lakes. Not until 1992 was she first located by A and T Recovery, which has revisited and observed the wreck site periodically. Although the exact coordinates remain proprietary, A and T Recovery offered to take me out to see this very unique, and largely forgotten, piece of U.S. naval history within distant sight of the skyscrapers of Chicago.

During most of *UC-97*'s voyage on the Great Lakes, she was under the command of Lieutenant Charles A. Lockwood (who moved up from being executive officer). His career survived a diplomatic spat between Canada and the United States. While visiting Canadian ports and transiting the Welland Canal, *UC-97* had refused to fly the Union Jack, which would have been normal for a merchant vessel. Instead, *UC-97* flew the U.S. national flag over the Imperial German Navy flag, the standard means to symbolize a captured naval vessel, which resulted in angry feelings among Canadian dock workers and port officials. Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels ultimately had to write a letter informing Canadian authorities that *UC-97* was a commissioned vessel in the United States Navy, which made flying the Union Jack inappropriate (the incidents only served to generate even more publicity).

Lockwood would go on to be commander of U.S. submarine forces in the Pacific during World War II after February 1943. Within hours of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, on his own authority, directed the U.S. Navy to commence immediate unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan, technically a violation of the London Naval Treaty, which had outlawed unrestricted submarine warfare (Japan had abrogated the treaty even before Pearl Harbor).

Vice Admiral Lockwood executed the unrestricted policy with an efficiency that even the Germans couldn't match in either world war, sinking many hundreds of Japanese warships and merchant ships, strangling Japan's industrial war effort as well as Japan's ability to resupply far-flung garrisons across the Pacific, and contributing immeasurably to the U.S. Navy's victory in the Pacific. Many of the technological capabilities of the extraordinarily effective U.S. submarine forces in the Pacific in World War II were a direct result of lessons learned from the study of German technology on board *UC-97* and the other surrendered German U-boats.

This piece is based on official U.S. Navy sources, but also owes much to the extensive and original research by Chris Dubbs in his book *America's U-boats: Terror Trophies of World War I* (2014). Also of note, *UC-97* is protected under the U.S. Sunken Military Craft Act.