



H-Gram 049: The Naval Battle of Okinawa—Victory

18 June 2020

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75th Anniversary of World War II

This H-gram covers the Naval Battle of Okinawa from early June 1945, including the last two mass kamikaze attacks, Kikusui No. 9 and 10, through the end of the battle in late June. It also covers the Medal for Honor awards to Lieutenant Richard McCool, skipper of LCS(L)-122, and Lieutenant Commander George Street, skipper of submarine Tirante (SS-420).

Victory at Okinawa

The protracted and bloody Battle of Okinawa reached its final phase at the end of May 1945, as U.S. Marines captured the strategic point of Shuri Castle. However, the Japanese executed one more unexpected, well-ordered retreat to yet one more prepared line of defense at the southern end of Okinawa. The remainder of Japanese navy personnel on the island (from the naval base at Naha) retreated to the Oroku Peninsula, which the



A Japanese officer signs the surrender document on Okinawa, 7 September 1945. Also at table, standing (left to right) are Col. Phillip Bethune and Maj. Gen. Frank Merrill. At right is also General Joseph Stillwell (80-G-344922).

Marines cut off and then assaulted from the sea. U.S. Army units went head-to-head with the Japanese army, which now had no more room to retreat except into the sea. The Japanese navy units put up determined resistance, resulting in over 2,600 Marines dead and wounded, but in the end almost all the Japanese personnel were killed or committed suicide, including Rear Admiral Minoru Ota, commander of the Japanese naval forces on Okinawa. The weather turned foul, turning the battlefield into muck and mire for the last three weeks of some of the most vicious fighting in the entire campaign.

With the passage of Typhoon Viper (see H-gram 048), Japanese kamikaze attacks on U.S. and

British naval forces resumed with mass kamikaze attack Kikusui No. 9, consisting of only 50 kamikaze aircraft, as suitable planes and pilots became increasingly hard to come by (although part of this was because the Japanese were husbanding and hiding large numbers of aircraft for the anticipated U.S. invasion of Japan). Kikusui No. 9 was strung out from 3-7 June 1945 and accomplished relatively little.

On 6 June 1945, the destroyer minelayers J. William Ditter (DM-31) and Harry F. Bauer (DM-26) came under concerted kamikaze attack but shot down several kamikazes before J. William Ditter was badly damaged and Harry F. Bauer took a near miss, or so they thought. Harry F. Bauer was one of the lucky ships of the Okinawa campaign, having shot down 13 Japanese aircraft and being hit by a torpedo that didn't explode. As the damage on Harry F. Bauer was subsequently surveyed, it was discovered that she had been steaming for 17 days with an unexploded (but live, "three threads" from detonating) 550-pound bomb in one of her fuel tanks that had been released at the last second by the plane that almost hit her. The bomb was successfully de-armed. Harry F. Bauer was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for her numerous actions during the Okinawa campaign.

The destroyer William D. Porter (DD-579) was not so lucky. She had already acquired notoriety for having accidentally fired a live torpedo at the battleship Iowa (BB-61), aboard which was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, CNO Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, and most of the Joint Chiefs on their way to Allied conferences in Cairo and Tehran in 1943. Fortunately, Iowa had sufficient warning to avoid the torpedo. Subsequently, the story was told that when William D. Porter went into port or met other ships, she would be greeted with the signal "Don't shoot. We're Republicans." She also became the subject of other stories of dubious veracity. However, on 10 June 1945, she shot down a kamikaze that crashed close aboard. Unfortunately, the plane's

bomb detonated directly under the ship, which killed no one but inflicted mortal damage.

One of the vessels that assisted the stricken destroyer was LCS(L)-122, which was hit and badly damaged on the following day by a kamikaze. Her skipper, Lieutenant Richard McCool, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in saving his ship and is the namesake for the latest San Antonio-class amphibious transport, dock (LPD-29).

Even less lucky than William D. Porter was the destroyer Twiggs (DD-591) on 16 June, hit first by a torpedo and then by the plane that dropped it. Her forward magazine blew first and then her after magazine, and she went down with heavy loss of life (152 crewmen, including the commanding officer, Commander George Philip, who was awarded a posthumous Navy Cross). She was the last destroyer to be sunk before Japanese resistance on Okinawa ended.

On 18 June, the commander of U.S. forces ashore on Okinawa, U.S. Army Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, was killed by Japanese artillery—only three days before the end of organized Japanese resistance. Although it was obvious that Okinawa was lost, the Japanese launched one last massed kamikaze attack, Kikusui No. 10, consisting of only 45 kamikaze aircraft, on 21-22 June 1945. These attacks sank LSM-59 and Barry (APD-29), a fast transport previously badly damaged by kamikazes, stripped of anything valuable, decommissioned, and intended for use as a kamikaze decoy. A kamikaze also seriously damaged the Pearl Harbor-veteran seaplane tender Curtiss (AV-4) in the Kerama Retto anchorage. (Of note, famous actor Henry Fonda served aboard Curtiss as a combat intelligence officer, giving up the equivalent of a multimillion-dollar Hollywood income.)

On 22 June, LST-534 was hit by a kamikaze while she was beached. Technically, she sank, but she didn't go very far and would be raised,

making LSM-59 the last commissioned ship sunk before the end of Japanese resistance on Okinawa.

In the meantime, Japanese frustrations with that country's Kaiten submarines continued in late June. I-36 survived multiple close calls, and a sacrificial launch of two Kaiten-manned suicide torpedoes probably saved her, but she achieved no hits on her mission. I-165 was even less lucky and was sunk with all hands on 27 June 1945 by a U.S. Navy PV-2 Harpoon aircraft.

By 22 June 1945, the commander of Japanese forces on Okinawa, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, had committed suicide, and the enormously costly battle of Okinawa was officially over. Kamikaze attacks went into a lull until late July as both sides prepared for the invasion of Japan.

For more detail on the last three weeks of the Naval Battle of Okinawa, please see attachment H-049-1.

Lieutenant Commander George L. Street's Medal of Honor

On 14 April 1945, Lieutenant Commander George Street, on the first war patrol of Tirante (and his first war patrol in command of a submarine) boldly took Tirante into a harbor on the Korean Island of Jeju-do for a night surface attack on a small convoy (one transport and three escorts) at anchor. Street achieved surprise and sank the transport Juzan Maru. Illuminated by the explosions and fire of the transport, Tirante was pursued by the three Japanese escorts as she attempted to escape. Tirante then torpedoed and sank the escort ship Nomi, which blew up in a catastrophic explosion with heavy loss of life, and then torpedoed and sank escort ship CD-31. After reaching deep water, Tirante then survived a depth charge attack from the remaining escort. Street was awarded a Medal of Honor, and his Executive Officer, Lieutenant Edward L. "Ned"

Beach, received a Navy Cross. Tirante was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

On 12 June 1945, during Tirante's second war patrol, Lieutenant Commander Street took Tirante into the harbor of Hashima, only seven miles from Nagasaki, and sank the large merchant ship Hakuju Maru. He was awarded a Navy Cross for this exploit. For more on Lieutenant Commander Street and the Tirante, please see attachment H-049-2.

For more on the background for the invasion of Okinawa, please see H-Gram 044 and attachment H-044-1. See also H-grams 045, 046, and 048 for the Naval Battle of Okinawa in March through June 1945.

Sources for this H-gram include Naval History and Heritage Command Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS) for U.S. ships and "Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy" (<http://combinedfleet.com>) for Japanese ships. Additional sources are: History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol. 14, Victory in the Pacific, by Samuel Eliot Morison (Little, Brown and Co., 1960); Kamikaze: To Die for the Emperor, by Peter C. Smith (Pen and Sword Aviation, 2014); The Twilight Warriors, by Robert Gandt (Broadway Books, 2010); Kamikaze Attacks of World War II: A Complete History of Japanese Suicide Strikes on American Ships by Aircraft and Other Means, by Robin L. Reilly (McFarland & Company, 2010); Desperate Sunset: Japan's Kamikazes Against Allied Ships, 1944-45, by Mike Yeo (Osprey, 2019); Anti-Suicide Action Summary, August 1945," COMINCH Document P-0011, 31 August 1945; The Fleet at Flood Tide: America at Total War in the Pacific 1944-1945, by James D. Hornfisher (Bantam, 2016); Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II, by John Prados (Random House, 1995); U.S. Navy Codebreakers, Linguists, and Intelligence Officers Against Japan, 1910-1941, by Steve E. Maffeo (Roman and Littlefield, 2016); Information

at Sea: Shipboard Command and Control in the U.S. Navy from Mobile Bay to Okinawa, by Timothy S. Wolters (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Hell to Pay: Operation Downfall and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947, by D. M. Giangreco (Naval Institute Press, 2009); "Who Sank Destroyer DREXLER?" by Bill Gordon (kamikazeimages.net, May 2006).



USS Curtiss (AV-4), photographed soon after her completion, in 1940 (NH 55535)



An LST, loaded to the gunwales, approaches the beach on Iheya Jima, a strategic island about 15 miles northwest of Okinawa, on D-day, 3 June 1945. Equipment and American troops fill the small ship, which is nearing its objective (NH 86405).

H-049-1: Victory at Okinawa

H-Gram 049, Attachment 1

Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC

June 2020

Roll Call of Valor and Sacrifice

The Battle of Okinawa was so massive that it is impossible to capture the scope of the U.S. Navy's valor and sacrifice in a relatively short piece. Victory has a price and, in the case of Okinawa, an

incredibly high one—more than 4,900 U.S. Navy personnel. This H-gram attachment focuses on only those actions that resulted in significant U.S. damage and casualties in the period between the ninth mass *kamikaze* attack (*Kikusui No. 9*), 3–7 June 1945, and the end of the Okinawa campaign on 22 June 1945. I also include significant antisubmarine actions, as U.S. ships faced *kamikaze* threats from above and *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes from below.

Each U.S. ship listed here was sunk or put out of action for more than 30 days, but in every case there are superb examples of Navy core values—

honor, courage and commitment—and Navy core attributes—initiative, accountability, integrity, and especially toughness. I do not cover the innumerable near misses and close calls, frequent shoot-downs of Japanese aircraft, or instances of minor damage. So many damaged U.S. ships sought refuge at Kerama Retto that it acquired the black-humor nickname of “Busted Ship Bay.”

For the most part, casualty figures are from Samuel Eliot Morison’s *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 14, *Victory in the Pacific*, 1945, Appendix 2. In many cases more detailed analysis in years since has led to changes in the casualty figures. These changes often give a greater number of deaths, as those who died of wounds much later are factored in. If I came across other, more recent figures, I used the higher number.

I have used the following symbols to distinguish among the fates of the various U.S. Navy vessels involved in the battle:

* = sunk

= damaged beyond repair

= repairs completed after the war ended

Kikusui No. 9, 3-7 June 1945

Kikusui No. 9 was strung out over five days (3-7 June) and was the smallest *Kikusui* yet, with only 50 *kamikaze* aircraft (20 navy and 30 army). From the Japanese perspective, it was a failure. This was partly due to Typhoon Viper that blew through the area.

J. William Ditter (#) and Harry F. Bauer, 6 June 1945

J. William Ditter was one of twelve *Allen M. Sumner*-class destroyers that were converted to *Robert H. Smith*-class destroyer minelayers.

Their torpedo tubes (two banks of five 21-inch tubes) and two side-throwing depth charge launchers having been sacrificed in exchange for the capability to lay 80 mines, the ships were otherwise the same as *Sumner*-class destroyers and were frequently used with them interchangeably. *J. William Ditter* was commissioned on 28 October 1944, under the command of Commander Robert Roy Sampson, who would be her first and only commanding officer.

J. William Ditter made it to Okinawa just in time for the commencement of the operation, on 25 March 1945, initially providing screening services for minesweeping operations and, on 26 March, evaded a torpedo fired by a Japanese submarine. On 29 March, she sank a Japanese suicide boat, and on the night of 2 April she shot down two Japanese bombers. While on radar picket duty on 12 April 1945, she shot down several Japanese aircraft and was not hit. Her luck ran out on the late afternoon of 6 June while she was back on radar picket duty and in company with destroyer-minelayer *Harry F. Bauer* one of the luckiest ships in the Navy, and converted *Gleaves*-class destroyer minesweeper *Ellyson* (DMS-19, formerly DD-454).

At 1713, about eight Japanese aircraft attacked (variously identified as four different types, although most of them would have been older Japanese Army Ki-27 Nates, with possibly a couple Ki-61 Tony fighters mixed in), most of them headed for *J. William Ditter*. With help from *Harry F. Bauer*, *J. William Ditter*’s gunners shot down the first five *kamikazes*, but the sixth got through and bounced off the aft stack and into the water with minimal damage. However, the seventh *kamikaze* hit her portside amidships. The plane’s bomb ripped open a seven- by 50-foot gash in the hull and demolished the forward fireroom and engine room, causing the ship to lose all power. Despite the serious damage, *J. William Ditter*’s crew kept her afloat, suffering 10 dead and 27 wounded.

Meanwhile, *Harry F. Bauer* was also under attack. Like *J. William Ditter*, she was a *Robert H. Smith*-class destroyer minelayer, commissioned a couple of months earlier—in time to participate in the Iwo Jima operation. *Harry F. Bauer* was named for the commanding officer of the destroyer transport *Gregory* (APD-3), which had been lost along with *Little* (APD-4) on 5 September 1942 in a night action against a superior force of Japanese destroyers after providing U.S. Marines on Guadalcanal with desperately needed supplies. (The commanding officer of *Little* was Hugh W. Hadley, the namesake of DD-774, which still holds the record for the number of aircraft shot down by a single ship in a single engagement. See H-Gram 046.)

Arriving off Okinawa on 25 March 1945, *Harry F. Bauer* commenced an unusually charmed life. On 29 March, she was attacked by several Japanese aircraft and shot down three of them without suffering significant damage. She shot down several other aircraft in the next days. On 6 April, she was hit by an aerial torpedo that passed clean through the bow ballast tank and out the other side without exploding, although it left its tail assembly inside. On 20 April, the ship was attacked again, but shot down three Japanese aircraft and assisted in downing two others. Later that day, she shot down two more *kamikazes* and was hit by a *kamikaze* that sheared off a depth charge rack on the stern with none of the depth charges exploding, causing minimal damage. On the night of 29 April, she shot down three more Japanese planes. On 11 May, she assisted in the destruction of a Japanese submarine. She shot down a total of 13 Japanese aircraft in multiple engagements, while suffering no serious damage or casualties. And, in early June, she missed Typhoon Viper, which veered away from Okinawa into the Third Fleet area of operations.

On 6 June 1945, *Harry F. Bauer*'s gunners shot down the plane headed straight for their ship and assisted in shooting down two of the planes heading for *J. William Ditter*. One *kamikaze*

(probably a Ki-27 Nate fighter) glanced off the superstructure and crashed in the water close aboard. One of *Harry F. Bauer*'s below-waterline fuel tanks was ruptured. A couple of compartments flooded, but no one on *Harry F. Bauer* was killed or wounded. Despite her damage, once the air attack ceased, *Harry F. Bauer* went alongside the more seriously damaged *J. William Ditter* to assist and then escorted her to Kerama Retto.

J. William Ditter was taken in tow to Kerama Retto by fleet tug *Ute* (AT-76) for emergency repairs. She then made her way to Saipan and then to New York City, arriving there in August. Her damage was deemed not worth repairing, and she was decommissioned and scrapped in 1946. Commander Sampson was awarded a Silver Star

While being surveyed for damage, *Harry F. Bauer*'s fuel tank was drained, revealing an unexploded 550-pound bomb. The Japanese *kamikaze* pilot had released his bomb a fraction of a second too late for it to properly arm, and as everyone was understandably ducking for cover when the plane almost struck a direct blow on the ship, no one saw the bomb come off and penetrate the ship. As it turned out, the bomb had been on board for 17 days before it was discovered. An ordnance officer from one of the aircraft carriers was brought aboard and spent four hours alone working to de-arm the bomb by removing the nose and tail fuses, which were apparently “three threads” from dropping the firing pins on the activating charges. Had the bomb exploded, the effect would have been severe, quite likely resulting in the loss of the ship in a manner similar to that of *Drexler* (DD-741) on 28 May 1945 (see H-Gram 048).

After repairs at Leyte, *Harry F. Bauer* returned to Okinawa on 15 August, just as the war ended. Her commanding officer, Commander Richard Claggett Williams Jr., was awarded a Silver Star; he would later be awarded a Distinguished Service Medal in command of Mine Squadron 3

during the Korean War and would retire as a rear admiral. The executive officer of *Harry F. Bauer* was Robert M. Morgenthau, born into great wealth, who chose to serve in the U.S. Navy just before the outbreak of World War II, survived the sinking of the destroyer *Lansdale* (DD-426) by German aircraft and would go on to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York (1961–70) and the longest-serving District Attorney of New York County (1975– 2009). *Harry F. Bauer* was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for her actions in the Okinawa campaign.

Harry F. Bauer Presidential Unit citation:

For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces as Support Ship on Radar Picket Station and in the Transport Screen during the Okinawa Campaign from 24 March to 11 June 1945. One of the first ships to enter Kerama Retto seven days prior to the invasion, the USS Harry F. Bauer (DM-26) operated in waters protected by mines and numerous enemy suicide craft and provided fire support for our minesweeping groups against hostile attacks by air, surface, submarine and shore fire. Constantly vigilant and ready for battle, she furnished cover for our anti-submarine screen, served as an anti-aircraft buffer for our Naval Forces off the Okinawa beachhead and, with her own gunfire, downed thirteen Japanese planes and assisted in the destruction of three others. A natural and frequent target for heavy Japanese aerial attack while occupying advanced and isolated stations, she defeated all efforts of enemy Kamikaze and dive-bombing planes to destroy her. On 2 April, she rendered invaluable service by fighting fires and conducting salvage operations on a seriously damaged attack transport. Although herself damaged by a Japanese suicide plane which crashed near her on 6 June, she remained on station and escorted another stricken vessel back to

port. A seaworthy fighting ship complemented by skilled and courageous officers and men, the Harry F. Bauer achieved a notable record of gallantry in combat, attesting to the teamwork of her entire company and enhancing the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Anthony (DD-515), 7 June 1945

Like *Harry F. Bauer*, the destroyer *Anthony*, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Clyde James Van Arsdall Jr., was a lucky ship (probably primarily due to really good gunners). On 7 June 1945, she was in the most dangerous Radar Picket Station, No.1, north of Okinawa. *Anthony* had previously rescued survivors blown off of the destroyer *Braine* (DD-630), which survived, badly damaged, on 25 May. On 7 June, a combat air patrol fighter shot down a Ki-61 Tony fighter directly overhead *Anthony*. In an unusual occurrence, the Japanese pilot actually bailed out, but his chute didn't open. Three more Japanese aircraft were shot down by fighters under *Anthony's* control. At dusk, two more kamikazes (probably Japanese Army Ki-51 Sonia dive-bombers) made a run on *Anthony*, coming in low through the haze. One was either shot down or driven off, but the second kept coming until it was hit at the last moment by 40-mm fire. The plane exploded close aboard—close enough to shower the bridge, gun director and forecastle with burning gasoline, which luckily was immediately doused by the splash of the crashed aircraft. Five crewmen who were washed overboard were rescued. *Anthony* lost stanchions and lifelines and had a large hole in her side, but once again escaped a close call. This action was included in the citation of the Navy Cross awarded to Commander Van Arsdall (see H-Gram 048).

William D. Porter (*), 10 June 1945

The *Fletcher*-class destroyer *William D. Porter* was not a lucky ship but had a very lucky crew. On 10 June 1945, she was at Radar Picket Station No. 15A, northwest of Okinawa, in company with destroyers *Aulick* (DD-569) and *Cogswell* (DD-561) and the "pallbearers" *LCS(L)-18*, -86, -94 and -122. *William D. Porter* was serving as the fighter direction ship, with two fighters stationed overhead and eight other Marine Corsairs nearby. At about 0815, a lone "Val dive-bomber" (probably a Japanese Army Ki-27 Nate), which was only 7,000 yards away when it was detected by radar, suddenly dropped out of the overcast. The fighters made an unsuccessful intercept, and the plane slipped through.

William D. Porter managed to avoid being hit by the *kamikaze*, but the sinking plane ended up under the ship, where the plane's bomb exploded. Like that of an influence mine, the effect was disastrous. Although no one was killed, 61 crewmen were injured. Many seams were opened in the ship, and the after engine room flooded immediately. Steam lines were ruptured, power was lost, and a number of fires were started. By 0836, the ship had an 8-degree starboard list, and the fantail was awash, but the crew refused to give up. The four LCSs came to assist, and two tied up alongside and brought their pumps to bear. For over three hours, the crew fought to save their ship, jettisoning torpedoes, depth charges, and any topside weight that could be gotten over the side. Despite their best efforts, the flooding was uncontrollable, and the ship continued settling by the stern. The list had reached 25 degrees by 1108. As Commander Charles Melville Keyes finally gave the abandon ship order, *LCS(L)-86* and *LCS(L)-122* (commanded by Lieutenant Richard McCool) brought aboard the doomed destroyer's crew, with *LCS-86* taking off Commander Keyes and the last of the men. All 273 of them survived. Twelve minutes after the abandon ship order, *William D. Porter* rolled over and sank at 1119.

The ship, under her previous commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Wilfred A. Walter, had earned a notorious reputation after she accidentally fired a live torpedo at the battleship *Iowa* (BB-61) on 14 November 1943 while President Roosevelt, Admiral King, and a host of senior government and military leaders were on board *Iowa* crossing the Atlantic en route to the Cairo and Tehran conferences. After a confused series of flashing lights and then radio calls (breaking radio silence), *Iowa* received the warning from *William D. Porter* and took evasive action. The torpedo ultimately detonated in *Iowa's* wake, 3,000 yards astern. And, from there, the legend grew and grew, as they say, and has become increasingly sensationalized in various accounts.

How much of *William D. Porter's* string of bad luck before and after the torpedo firing is true and how much is apocryphal is increasingly difficult to sort out, as the story appears to be embellished in succeeding accounts. Supposedly, *William D. Porter* suffered a mishap in Norfolk, Virginia, as she was rushing to get underway (the short notice supposedly due to the secrecy of Roosevelt's transit on *Iowa*), her raised anchor ripped stanchions, lifelines and lifeboat mounts of another destroyer berthed astern. Neither of the two nearby destroyers' logs-- *Cogswell* (DD-651) and *Young* (DD-580)--mentions any damage, however. Then, shortly after joining up with *Iowa*, *William D. Porter* supposedly lost a depth charge overboard, which exploded, causing a short period of evasive action in the formation under the mistaken assumption that the explosion had been the result of a German attack. (This incident, too, fails to appear in any of the relevant logs.) *William D. Porter* next suffered a boiler tube failure, causing the ship to fall behind until another boiler could be brought on line. (This incident, unlike the others, is verified in the logs.) Some accounts also say *William D. Porter* lost a man overboard.

The facts of the accidental torpedo firing were fairly well established by subsequent investigation. On 14 November 1943, President Roosevelt asked that a live-fire antiaircraft drill be conducted because he wanted to watch. Target balloons were released, most of which were shot down by *Iowa* gunners. *William D. Porter* joined in, shooting down some balloons that headed her way. She and other escorts then conducted a simulated torpedo-firing drill using *Iowa* as a target, but one torpedo on *William D. Porter* fired by accident and headed for *Iowa*. The subsequent investigation determined that the chief torpedoman had failed to remove the primer charge from torpedo No. 3 on torpedo mount No. 2. Upon discovering his mistake after the torpedo discharged, he threw the evidence overboard in an attempt to cover up the mistake.

As the formation was in strict radio silence, *William D. Porter* used a signal lamp to try to warn *Iowa*, but since there were no code words for such a situation, the message caused confusion. *William D. Porter's* commanding officer finally broke radio silence, initially meeting with rebuke for doing so, but word of the danger got through. *Iowa* then took evasive action with a hard turn. When informed that a torpedo was inbound, Roosevelt supposedly asked his Secret Service agents to wheel him to a position from where he could see it coming. Fortunately, it missed by a wide margin. Admiral King was reportedly apoplectic over the incident, which is probably true. *Iowa* also supposedly trained her guns on *William D. Porter* out of concern that this apparent accident might actually have been some kind of assassination attempt (this may also be embellished).

After breaking from her escort duties, *William D. Porter* proceeded to Bermuda, where an official inquiry was conducted. However, accounts that the ship was surrounded by Marines and the entire crew was arrested are mostly legend. The inquiry did determine what had happened, and the chief torpedoman was sentenced to some

time at hard labor for negligence. The sentence was subsequently commuted by Roosevelt when he learned of it. Contrary to some accounts, Lieutenant Commander Walter was not relieved of command, although he and his ship were sent to the Aleutians. Reportedly, if improbably, whenever *William D. Porter* arrived in port or encountered other ships, she would be greeted with a signal, "Don't shoot! We're Republicans!"

On 30 May 1944, Commander Charles M. Keyes assumed command of *William D. Porter*. In June 1944, the ship conducted three bombardment missions on Japanese installations in the Kuril Islands. She then proceeded to the Western Pacific, arriving after the Battle of Leyte Gulf, but shooting down her first plane in that area and then a couple more while escorting convoys between New Guinea and the Philippines. She then participated in the landings at Lingayen Gulf in January 1945, shooting down two more Japanese planes. In the early phase of the Okinawa campaign, she provided gunfire support to troops ashore, expending more than 8,500 5-inch rounds, and shot down five more Japanese planes. After being assigned to radar picket duty, *William D. Porter* shot down another Japanese plane. Fighters under her control shot down seven more. Commander Keyes was awarded a Silver Star for his actions in command of *William D. Porter*.

LCS(L)-122, 11 June 1945

The day after *LCS(L)-122* rescued crewmen from *William D. Porter*, kamikazes dropped out of the clouds at about 1900 and attacked the ships at Radar Picket Station No. 15, northwest of Okinawa. The same ships were still at the station, with the exception of *William D. Porter*, now sunk and replaced with the destroyer *Ammen* (DD-527), the fighter direction ship.

Ammen picked up the incoming aircraft on radar at 42 miles. Two Val dive bombers made for *LCS(L)-122*, which shot the first one down. The

second Val crashed at the base of LCS(L)-122's conning tower. The Val's bomb passed through the hull of the ship and detonated on the port side, sparing the ship a direct blast but nevertheless spraying her with many fragments, which started a serious fire. (It's not clear what became of the third Val.) Although the skipper of LCS(L)-122, Lieutenant Richard McCool, was initially knocked unconscious and badly wounded, he came to and valiantly led the damage control effort and personally carried and saved one wounded crewman from a burning compartment. LCS(L)-86, which had also participated in saving the crew of *William D. Porter*, came alongside LCS(L)-122 to assist. Despite suffering 11 killed and 29 wounded, LCS(L)-122 was able to make it to Kerama Retto under her own power. Both LCS(L)-86 and LCS(L)-122 were awarded Navy Unit Commendations. LCS(L)-122 was repaired and served until being scrapped in 1951. Lieutenant McCool was awarded a Medal of Honor.

Medal of Honor for Lieutenant Richard Miles McCool

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Lieutenant Richard Miles McCool, Jr., United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Commanding Officer of the USS LCS(L)-122 during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Ryukyu Chain, 10 and 11 June 1945. Sharply vigilant during hostile air raids against Allied ships on radar picket duty off Okinawa on 10 June, Lieutenant McCool aided materially in evacuating survivors from a sinking destroyer which had sustained mortal damage under the devastating attacks. When his own craft was attacked simultaneously by two of the enemy's suicide squadron early in the evening of 11

June, he instantly hurled the full power of his gun batteries against the plunging aircraft, shooting down the first and damaging the second before it crashed his station in the conning tower and engulfed the immediate area in a mass of flames. Although suffering from shrapnel wounds and painful burns, he rallied his concussion-shocked crew and initiated vigorous firefighting measures and then proceeded to the rescue of men trapped in a blazing compartment, subsequently carrying one man to safety despite the excruciating pain of additional severe burns. Unmindful of all personal danger, he continued his efforts without respite until aid arrived from other ships and he was evacuated. By his staunch leadership, capable direction, and indomitable determination throughout the crisis, Lieutenant McCool saved the lives of many who otherwise might have perished and contributed materially to the saving of his ship for further combat service. His valiant spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of extreme peril sustains and enhances the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Richard McCool recovered from his wounds and served in both Korea and Vietnam before retiring as a captain in 1974. He passed away in 2008. The 13th *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport, dock, laid down on 12 April 2019, is named USS *Richard M. McCool, Jr.* (LPD-29) in his honor.

I-363's Futile War Patrol

On 15 June 1945, Japanese *Kaiten* mother submarine I-363 sighted a convoy about 500 nautical miles southeast of Okinawa. As the seas were too rough to launch any of her five *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes, the commanding officer, Lieutenant Commander Kihara, conducted an attack with conventional torpedoes, claiming one hit.

In reality, there were no hits and no damage. *I-363* had departed Japan on 28 May 1945 as part of the *Todoroki* ("Thunderclap" or "Sound of Big Cannon," depending on the translation) group of four Kaiten mother submarines (*I-36*, *I-165*, and *I-361*.) On 18 June, *I-363* received a message recalling her to Japan.

Twiggs (*), 16 June 1945

The *Fletcher*-class destroyer *Twiggs*, commanded by Commander George Philip Jr., was on duty at Radar Picket Station No. 16, west-northwest of Okinawa, on 16 June 1945. Commander Philip was a battle veteran with a Silver Star as executive officer of the charmed destroyer *O'Bannon* (DD-450) in action in the Central Solomon Islands in 1943. Commissioned in November 1943, *Twiggs* had previous combat experience at Leyte Gulf and Mindoro, where she aided destroyer *Haraden* (DD-585), which had been badly damaged by a *kamikaze*. *Twiggs* then rescued 211 survivors of the escort carrier *Ommaney Bay* (CVE-79), which had been hit by a *kamikaze* and sunk on 4 January 1945 while en route to the landings at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, Philippines (see H-Gram 040). *Twiggs* then participated in the landings at Iwo Jima, where she was almost hit by a *kamikaze* that grazed the fantail.

On 28 April 1945, while on radar picket duty off Okinawa, *Twiggs* was again almost hit by a *kamikaze*—close enough that the explosion of the bomb caused fragmentation and hull damage to the ship. She was repaired by the battle damage repair ship *Nestor* (ARB-6), a modified LST, at Kerama Retto and returned to action on 17 May. In June 1945, *Twiggs* provided gunfire support to landings on small islands off western Okinawa. (*Nestor* would be driven aground at Okinawa by a typhoon in October 1945.)

Twiggs had just come off radar picket duty and resumed fire support duty. Having just resumed fire support duty after coming off radar picket duty, *Twiggs* was answering a call for fire just after

sunset on 16 June 1945 when a single Japanese torpedo-bomber (identified as a "B6N Jill") penetrated close enough to drop a torpedo, which hit *Twiggs* on her port side. (The torpedo itself apparently hit the ship while it was still airborne, never touching the water.) The torpedo bomber then circled back and crashed into *Twiggs*, adding to the already raging fire started by the torpedo. The fire then caused the No. 2 magazine to explode, with devastating results. The damage was beyond hope and within an hour the ship sank upon the explosion of an after magazine. The sinking took 152 crewmen to the bottom, including Commander Philip and the ship's mascot dog Jeanie. The destroyer *Putnam* (DD-757) and *LCS(L)-14* came in close, despite exploding ammunition, to rescue as many survivors as possible. *Putnam* picked up 114, while other vessels accounted for another 74 survivors. Thirty-four survivors were wounded. Commander Philip was posthumously awarded a Navy Cross.

Navy Cross for Commander George Philip

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Commander George Philip, United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his profession as Commanding Officer of destroyer USS Twiggs (DD-591) during operations against the enemy in the vicinity of Okinawa Gunto, Nansei Shoto, from 25 March 1945 to 16 June 1945. Despite frequent attacks both day and night by enemy aircraft, and in the face of tremendous difficulties, Commander Philip directed the operation of his ship in such a manner that every mission was accomplished effectively. When his ship was damaged by an enemy suicide plane, Commander Philip brought her sagely through the attack and supervised repair of battle damage in the combat area, returning to action in the

minimum possible time. By his heroism in the destruction of enemy aircraft and shore installations, by his courage and endurance in commanding one of the destroyer pickets at Okinawa, an extraordinarily hazardous duty, and by virtue of conspicuous personal leadership in maintaining the morale of a battle-worn crew under extremely trying conditions, Commander Philip distinguished himself and his command and contributed greatly to the success of a very difficult operation. His determination and heroic conduct were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Lieutenant General Buckner Killed, 18 June 1945

On 18 June 1945, the commander of U.S. forces ashore on Okinawa (the Tenth Army), Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, was killed by coral shrapnel from a near miss by Japanese artillery, as he was very near the forward line to observe the final push against obstinate Japanese defenders. Final victory on Okinawa was only two miles and four days away when Buckner died.

Marine Major General Roy S. Geiger assumed command, becoming the first Marine to command a U.S. Army, and held it until Lieutenant General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell assumed command five days later.

On 19 June 1945, the commander of Japanese forces on Okinawa, Lieutenant General Mitsuru Ushijima, sent a farewell message to Japan and ordered his remaining troops to fight and die to the last. In three months of bitter fighting, as many as 110,000 Japanese soldiers and Okinawan auxiliaries had done just that. At the very end, only 106 Japanese soldiers and 238 Okinawan auxiliary troops surrendered. As many as 150,000 Okinawan civilians had died during the battle. On 22 June 1945, Ushijima and his chief of staff

committed suicide. The battle was declared over on 22 June, at least on land.

Kikusui No. 10 - 21-22 June 1945

On 21-22 June 1945, the Japanese launched the tenth and last massed *kamikaze* attack (Kikusui No. 10) with only 45 aircraft (30 navy and 15 army). The commander of the Japanese navy's First Air Fleet, Admiral Matome Ugaki, who had overall command of the *kamikaze* attacks at Okinawa, had concluded by this time that Okinawa was lost and that scarce resources in planes and pilots should be conserved for the last-ditch defense of the Japanese Home Islands. Nevertheless, these last few *kamikazes* would inflict pain on U.S. ships off Okinawa right up to the end.

Curtiss (##), 21 June 1945

The seaplane tenders *Curtiss* (AV-4) and *Kenneth Whiting* (AVP-14) came under attack at Kerama Retto on the evening of 21 June 1945. *Kenneth Whiting* was comparatively new, commissioned in May 1944.

Curtiss was a battle-scarred veteran of the Pearl Harbor attack, where she fired on and damaged a Japanese midget submarine that had penetrated the harbor and where she was near-missed by a torpedo from the same midget before it could be rammed and sunk by the destroyer *Monaghan* (DD-354). (*Monaghan* would later be sunk by Typhoon Cobra in December 1944.) *Curtiss's* gunners hit a Japanese Val dive bomber at Pearl Harbor, which then crashed into her No. 1 crane. Three minutes later, she was hit in the same area by a bomb from another Val, which in turn was hit by gunfire and crashed off *Curtiss's* port beam. She lost 19 men killed in the Pearl Harbor attack and many wounded.

After repairs from her Pearl Harbor battle damage, *Curtiss* tended seaplanes at various

locations as the U.S. Navy advanced across the Pacific and served also as the flagship for Commander, Naval Air, South Pacific, and then Commander, Naval Air, Central Pacific. While at Okinawa, in addition to tending seaplanes, she served as the flagship for Commander, Fleet Air Wing One. She was under the command of Captain Scott Ernest Peck, who had been a machinist on the U.S. Navy's first dirigible, *DN-1*, in 1917. Peck had survived the crash of the airship *Macon* (ZRS-5) in a storm off the California coast in 1935 and had been a U.S. Navy observer on flights of the German airship *LZ-129*, soon to be renamed *Hindenburg*, which famously crashed in 1937.

Near dusk on 21 June 1945, a small group of Japanese *kamikazes* penetrated into the anchorage area at Kerama Retto. At about 1830, one Ki-43 "Oscar" fighter (more likely a Ki-84 Frank) attempted to crash *Kenneth Whiting* but was shot down, although parts of the Oscar hit the seaplane tender and wounded five men. Fifteen minutes later a Ki-84 Frank fighter and its bomb hit *Curtiss* on her starboard side at the third deck, blowing two large holes in the ship and igniting a persistent fire that required the flooding of the forward magazines and that took almost 15 hours to put out. Although about half the ship was rendered unlivable, damage control teams kept her from sinking, and she was underway for repairs at Mare Island only four days later. Casualties were fairly heavy, with 41 men killed and 82 wounded.

One officer who had been embarked on *Curtiss* for a couple years but who was not on board at the time of the attack was Lieutenant Henry Fonda, already a famous Hollywood actor when he signed up for service in the U.S. Navy. At age 37, Fonda gave up a salary worth about 2.3 million dollars in today's money to enlist in the Navy. He initially served as a quartermaster aboard destroyer *Satterlee* (DD-626) in the Atlantic but was subsequently commissioned and transferred to the Pacific, where he served as an

assistant operations officer and air combat intelligence officer on the staff of Commander, Forward Area Pacific, embarked on *Curtiss* for operations in the Marianas, the Western Carolines, and Iwo Jima. The staff went land-based after Iwo Jima, which was why Fonda was not on board *Curtiss* at the time of the *kamikaze* attack.

Fonda was awarded a Bronze Star for his service aboard *Curtiss*. Although he left active duty at the end of the war, Fonda remained in the U.S. Naval Reserve until 1948, when he had to leave due to being "over age." Fonda starred as Lieutenant (j.g.) Douglas Roberts in two iterations of *Mr. Roberts*: a Broadway production that won the 1948 Tony Award for "Best Play" and the film version, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1955. Both were set aboard a fictitious cargo ship, which was played in the film by USS *Hewell* (AG-145). The plot has Fonda's character seeing his wish to serve aboard a combat destroyer finally fulfilled, only to lose his life in a *kamikaze* attack once on board.

Bronze Star citation for Lieutenant Henry Fonda

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Bronze Star Medal to Lieutenant Henry Jaymes Fonda, United States Naval Reserve, for services as set forth in the following citation: For Meritorious Service as Assistant Operations Officer and Air Combat Intelligence Officer on the staff of Commander Forward Area Pacific and Commander Marianas, during operations against enemy Japanese forces from 12 May 1944 to 12 August 1945. Displaying professional ability and untiring energy, Lieutenant Fonda rendered valuable assistance in planning and executing air operations which effectively supported the Marianas, Western Carolines and Iwo Jima Campaigns, neutralized hostile installations on nearby enemy-held islands and atolls,

and subsequently developed into search missions in Empire waters and strikes on the Japanese homeland. His untiring devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

LSM-59 (*), 21 June

On 21 June 1945, shortly after the hit on *Curtiss*, the fleet tug *Lipan* (ATF-85) was towing the stripped hulk of the destroyer transport *Barry* out of Kerama Retto to be used as a *kamikaze* decoy. (*Lipan* herself was being escorted by *LSM-59*, commanded by Lieutenant David C. Hawley. *LSM-59* had lost an engine due to artillery or mortar fire at Iwo Jima but was still providing useful service.) *Barry* had barely survived being hit by a *kamikaze* on 25 May (see H-Gram 048) and *Barry* had since been fitted with flashing lights (remotely controlled from *LSM-59*) to simulate antiaircraft fire as well as smoke generators. Shortly after leaving Kerama Retto, the small group was attacked by two *kamikazes* (probably Ki-84 Franks). At 1841, the first *kamikaze* crashed *LSM-59* starboard aft and passed through the tank deck and into the engine room. The plane ultimately ripped a hole in the bottom of the *LSM-59*, which went down in only a few minutes, with the loss of two crewmen killed and eight wounded. The second *kamikaze* crashed into the hulk of *Barry*, which capsized after an attempted tow and then sank. (Japanese records indicate only four Franks launched that night, all attacking Kerama Retto, sinking *LSM-59* and the derelict *Barry*, badly damaging *Curtiss*, and near-missing *Kenneth Whiting*.)

Halloran (DE-305), 21 June 1945

The destroyer-escort *Halloran*, commanded by Lieutenant Commander J. G. Scripps, USNR, had been performing antisubmarine and anti-air screening services off Okinawa since 9 April 1945, after having escorted a convoy transporting an Army division. On 12 April 1945, she fought off six

attacking aircraft, downing one and damaging two others. On 20 April, she was almost hit by a Japanese torpedo. On 22 April, she assisted the badly damaged destroyer *Isherwood* (DD-520), which had been hit by a *kamikaze* and then had one of her own depth charges explode on deck. At about 2330 on 21 June 1945, *Halloran* shot down a *kamikaze* (probably a K11W "Pete" float-plane fighter) just in time: It crashed 75 yards from the ship. However, shrapnel spray from the plane's bomb caused considerable topside damage, killing four and wounding 24 crewmen. Following repairs at Kerama Retto, *Halloran* returned to duty off Okinawa on 5 July 1945.

LSM-213 (##), 22 June 1945

Shortly after midnight on 22 June 1945, *LSM-213*, commanded by Lieutenant (j.g.) Grant L. Kilmer, USNR, was hit by a probable K11W Pete float-plane fighter at Kimmu Wan, off Okinawa, suffering severe hull damage, three dead, and 10 wounded. Repairs were not complete until after the war ended. (Japanese records indicate that five Petes launched for attacks on the night of 21-22 June 1945.)

The Last Gasp of the Last Kikusui, 22 June 1945.

On 22 June, the Japanese launched 11 army Ki-84 Franks, seven navy A6M Zekes, and six navy G4M Betty bombers carrying *Ohka* manned rocket-assisted glide bombs, escorted by 65 Zekes, in what was the final large *kamikaze* mission of the Okinawa campaign. Of the six Bettys, two turned back with engine trouble. Only two Bettys made it to the target area and both *Ohka* missed. All four of the Bettys were shot down by U.S. Marine and Army fighters.

Destroyers *Massey* (DD-778) and *Dyson* (DD-572) were at Radar Picket Station No. 15, northwest of Okinawa, between 0749 and 0925 on 22 June, when the bulk of *Kikusui* No. 10 came in. Fighters

controlled by *Massey* shot down 29 of an estimated 40 aircraft (most of *Kikusui* No. 10) and drove others away. Neither *Massey* nor *Dyson* expended any ammunition during the engagement.

LST-534 (##), 22 June 1945

LST-534 was a survivor of the D-Day landings at Normandy in June 1944, and she almost made it through the Okinawa campaign without being hit.

At about 0920 on 22 June 1945, several LSTs were located in Nakagusuku Wan, off Okinawa. *LST-534* was beached with her bow doors open when a single *kamikaze* attacked. Numerous ships in the bay opened fire, possibly doing more damage to each other than to the *kamikaze*, which hit *LST-534* on the port side, starting a fire in 300 barrels of gasoline on board. Five men were killed (including three from a shore party), and 35 were wounded. *LST-534* settled only a few feet to the bottom. The executive officer on another LST later wondered about the Japanese pilot's target selection, as he had hit the only ship in the bay that couldn't actually be sunk.

LST-534 would be raised and repaired, although repairs were not complete until after the war ended. In October 1945, she would be driven aground in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, by a typhoon and deemed not worth repairing. About two months later, she was towed out to sea and scuttled.

More Japanese Kaiten Futility, Late June 1945

In June 1945, the Japanese run of futility with *Kaiten*-carrying submarines continued. *I-36* had departed Japan on 4 June 1945 as part of the *Todoroki* Group of *Kaiten* mother submarines. *I-36* had six *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes embarked.

On 10 June 1945, while recharging her batteries on the surface in the East China Sea, *I-36* was attacked by the submarine *Tirante*, commanded by Commander George L. Street III (see H-049-2). (*Tirante* was the command boat of a nine-submarine wolfpack dubbed "Street's Sweepers.") *Tirante* fired two Mk. 18 electric torpedoes. Both missed. Street was awarded a Medal of Honor for his previous war patrol on *Tirante* (her second) and would be awarded a Navy Cross for this one. *I-36* was a rare one that got away.

On 22 June 1945, *I-36* sighted an oiler transiting alone and attempted to launch two *Kaiten*, but both malfunctioned. *I-36* then attacked with four conventional torpedoes, which all detonated prematurely. A torpedo caused slight damage to the landing craft repair ship *Endymion* (ARL-9), a modified LST. Once again, *I-36* escaped.

On 28 June 1945, *I-36* sighted the stores ship *Antares* (AKS-3) transiting alone from Saipan to Pearl Harbor. *Antares's* lookouts were alert, sighting a periscope at 1329 and an inbound torpedo fired by *I-36* in enough time for *Antares* to take evasive action. The torpedo missed astern.

I-36 had also launched a *Kaiten*, which *Antares's* lookouts sighted in her wake. At 1331, *Antares* gunners opened fire on the *Kaiten* and hit it with a 3-inch shell, causing the submersible to go under. At 1344, *I-36* broached and *Antares's* 5-inch gun took it under fire, before the sub went back under.

The destroyer *Sproston* (DD-577) received *Antares's* message that she was under attack and responded quickly. *Sproston* made sonar contact at 1,000 yards and then sighted a periscope at 500 yards. She tried to ram *I-36*, which was unsuccessful. She then dropped a full pattern of depth charges, which produced a large oil slick. The crew then made six more depth charge attacks, expending all of the ship's depth charges. All of this caused *I-36* to spring a leak in her forward torpedo room, and the situation was getting increasingly desperate. Lieutenant

Commander Sugamasa, the commanding officer, then ordered the launch of two *Kaiten* while at a depth of 200 feet. A *Sproston* lookout sighted a *Kaiten* coming in from the port bow and the ship maneuvered to avoid it. Then, a *Kaiten* periscope was sighted on the port quarter, and the ship opened up with her 5-inch guns, hitting the *Kaiten* and causing a large secondary explosion. In time, several amphibious ships arrived to provide radar coverage during the night, and the next morning three destroyer escorts came to continue the search. However, the sacrifice of the two *Kaiten* pilots worked and *I-36* made good her getaway.

On 9 July 1945, *I-36* was approaching Bungo Strait, returning to the Japanese Inland Sea, when she was attacked by the submarine *Gunnel* (SS-253), commanded by Lieutenant Commander Guy E. O'Neil, but all four torpedoes missed astern.

On 6 August 1945, the crew of *I-36* witnessed the atomic bomb explosion at Hiroshima.

On 11 August, *I-36* was strafed by a P-51 Mustang fighter while in port Kure and the commanding officer and navigator were wounded, but the sub survived the war and was surrendered. *I-36* was later towed out to sea by the Navy and was scuttled, along with 23 other Japanese submarines, at "Point Deep Six" on 1 April 1946 in Operation Road's End (to prevent Japanese technology from falling into Soviet hands). Lieutenant Commander O-Neil was awarded a Navy Cross for *Gunnel's* previous patrol (her seventh) and two Silver Stars for previous service aboard other boats.

I-165, with two *Kaiten* manned suicide torpedoes embarked was the last of the four *Todoriki* Group of submarines to depart Japan. On 16 June 1945, as *I-165* was exiting the Bungo Strait in foul weather, she was attacked by the submarine *Devilfish* (SS-292), commanded by Lieutenant Commander Stephen S. Mann Jr. *Devilfish* fired

two torpedoes, but *I-165* avoided them and crash-dived.

On 23 June 1945, minelayer *Champion* (AM-314) and destroyer-escort *Gilligan* (DE-508) detected a submerged submarine (probably *I-165*.) *Champion* and *Gilligan* executed several depth charge runs, and *Gilligan* launched a hedgehog attack, which resulted in air bubbles and diesel fuel traces, but no definitive proof that the submarine had gone down, although it was last heard passing 300 feet.

On 27 June 1945, a PV-2 Harpoon of VPB-142, flown by Lieutenant (j.g.) R. C. Janes, sighted a surfaced submarine east of Saipan heading northwest. The submarine had two midget subs on her back. Janes attacked, dropping three Mk. 47 depth charges and five markers. The submarine made a hard turn and then crash-dived. Janes came in for another attack and sighted an oil slick, fragments of wood, and two midget submarines (which had probably been jettisoned). Janes dropped a Mk. 24 "Fido" acoustic homing torpedo. Lieutenant Yasushi Ono and all 105 of his crewmen were lost.



Lieutenant Henry Fonda, USNR, circa 1945. A noted motion picture actor in civilian life, he also served at Okinawa (80-G-K-6235).



George L. Street at the Washington Navy Yard, D.C., just after receiving the Navy Cross on 19 October 1945. He was awarded the medal for extraordinary ship-hunting efforts during Tirante's war patrols earlier in the year. Street also received the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against Japanese forces on 14 April 1945. The ribbon for the Medal of Honor is in the top row of his ribbons, immediately below his submarine service dolphins (80-G-472641).

H-049-2: Lieutenant Commander George L. Street's Medal of Honor

H-Gram 049, [Attachment 2](#)

Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC

June 2020

George Levick Street III graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1937. After initial service

aboard the elderly light cruiser *Concord* (CL-10) and the even more elderly battleship *Arkansas* (BB-33), he requested transfer to submarine duty. Following submarine training, he reported as part of the commissioning crew of the modified *Tambor*-class submarine *Gar* (SS-206), commissioned 14 April 1941. Transiting from the Atlantic, *Gar* arrived at Pearl Harbor three days after the Japanese surprise attack. Of the six subs in the class, only *Gar* survived the war.

Street served for three years on *Gar*, for her first ten war patrols. He initially served as the gunnery and torpedo officer, then as torpedo data

computer operator, and finally as executive officer and navigator. He would be awarded a Silver Star on *Gar*'s first war patrol and another Silver Star for her tenth war patrol.

USS Gar

Gar's first war patrol took place from 2 February to 28 March 1942, mostly off Nagoya, Japan, and met with limited success, sinking the 1,520-ton cargo ship *Chichiubu* on 13 March. Street's first Silver Star was awarded to him in his position as the assistant approach officer for the successful attack. This was one of the earliest successes for the U.S. submarine force, which had been plagued by defective torpedoes, it was later determined. The next three war patrols were completely fruitless, and *Gar*'s commanding officer was relieved of command for excessive timidity.

Gar's next three war patrols met with some success. On her fifth war patrol, *Gar* fired six torpedoes at the freighter *Heinan Maru*, forcing her to run aground. On the seventh war patrol, *Gar* sank several small craft, the 703-ton freighter (converted gunboat) *Aso Maru*, the 3,197-ton passenger-cargo ship *Moikai Maru*, and the 4,361-ton cargo ship *Indus Maru*. On her ninth war patrol, *Gar* sank an unidentified 4,000-ton cargo ship, which was reassessed at only 1,000 tons after the war.

Street earned his second Silver Star while serving as executive officer on *Gar* for her tenth war patrol, conducted off Palau in the Western Caroline Islands from 16 December 1943 to 9 February 1944. On 20 January 1944, *Gars* sank the 5,325-ton *Koyu Maru* and then damaged two cargo ships. During an attack on a third convoy, *Gar* sank the 3,670-ton *Taian Maru*. At war's end, *Gar* had survived 15 war patrols.

USS Tirante

On 6 July 1944, Lieutenant Commander Street arrived at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard to fit out the new-construction, *Tench*-class submarine *Tirante* (SS-420) and, in November 1944, became her first commanding officer. *Tirante*'s executive officer was Lieutenant Edward L. Beach Jr., who had come off the submarine *Trigger* (SS-237) following patrols that had earned her a Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit Commendation—patrols for which Beach himself had been awarded two Silver Stars. (*Trigger* was lost with all hands on her twelfth war patrol, on 28 March 1945.) Beach would get his own boat just as the war ended.

Tirante commenced her first war patrol on 3 March 1945, operating southwest of the Japanese home island of Kyushu. By this point in the war, pickings were very slim, as the U.S. submarine force had mostly cleared the Japanese merchant fleet from the seas between late 1943 and the end of 1944 (thanks to effective and timely Ultra code-breaking intelligence support, which told commanders where to find targets, and thanks to torpedoes that actually worked). Lieutenant Street aggressively pursued Japanese shipping hugging the coast in shallow water near the entrance to Nagasaki.

On 25 March, *Tirante* sank the 703-ton freighter *Fuji Maru* and, on 28 March, sank the 1,218-ton freighter *Nase Maru*. Patrolling by Japanese escorts then kept *Tirante* under for seven hours. *Tirante* next sank a 70-ton lugger (sailing vessel) with surface gunfire on 30 March. On 1 April, *Tirante* fired a spread of three torpedoes at an LST-type vessel, but all three torpedoes missed.

Tirante then shifted her operating area to the coast of Korea, near the Tsushima Strait. On 6 April, she sank a small fishing vessel and took three Japanese aboard as prisoners for questioning. The next day, she torpedoed a 2,800-ton freighter with a deck cargo of oil drums. Although *Tirante* crewmen witnessed the ship

sink, and although *Tirante* directed a Korean fishing vessel to pick up two survivors, the sinking could not be confirmed in postwar analysis of Japanese records, so no credit was given in the end.

Based on timely intelligence reports, *Tirante* set an ambush for convoy *Tamo-53* on 9 April. *Tirante* fired two spreads of three Mk. 18 electric torpedoes at two targets. One spread missed. The other spread hit the 5,500-ton transport *Nikko Maru* with at least two torpedoes. Hit in the bow and engine room, *Nikko Maru* sank, with the loss of 563 passengers (mostly survivors of previous sunken convoys, including a number of women and children evacuees from Formosa) and 105 crewmen, including gunners, guard force, and signalmen. Japanese escorts counterattacked, and *Tirante* fired one Mk. 27 "Cutie" anti-escort homing torpedo to shake off her pursuers. (The Mk. 27 was a modification of the Mk. 24 "Fido" air-dropped anti-submarine homing torpedo, which was referred to as a "mine" at the time for security. Wooden attachments enabled the 19-inch weapon to be fired from 21-inch torpedo tubes. "Cutie" was the nickname for the submarine-launched version.)

The homing torpedo hit Japanese escort ship *Kaibokan* (CD-102) in the stern, blowing seven men into the water. *Tirante* reported "breaking-up" noises and claimed a kill, but *Kaibokan* (CD-102) survived and was towed to Pusan, Korea, and repaired. (The *Kaibokan* ships were relatively new and similar in concept to U.S. destroyer escorts: small, cheap, and optimized for antisubmarine warfare with two or three 4.7-inch guns and 120 depth charges. In the case of the Japanese, these ships were a belated attempt to give their convoys some hope of survival—mostly in vain.)

Tirante subsequently received intelligence reports on the movement of convoy *Moshi-02* (one transport and three escort ships) from Moji, Japan, to Shanghai, China, which anchored in Hiyo inlet at the Korean island of Jeju Do (also

spelled Cheju and Saishu). Before dawn on 14 April, Lieutenant Commander Street took *Tirante* into the harbor for a night surface attack. The boat sighted the auxiliary transport *Juzan Maru* (which had 400 passengers aboard) and two of the three escorts. *Tirante* fired a spread of torpedoes, which hit and caused the 3,943-ton *Juzan Maru* to sink, with the loss of 33 personnel.

The flash of the torpedo explosion illuminated *Tirante*, and she was spotted by lookouts on escort ship *Nomi*, the flagship of Captain Ikeda, Commander of the First Surface Escort Division. *Nomi* and escort ship *Kaibokan No. 31* (CD-31) immediately commenced aggressive pursuit as shore batteries opened up on *Tirante*. She fired two torpedoes at the on-rushing *Nomi* that hit under her bridge and detonated a magazine, blowing the ship in two. *Nomi* quickly sank, with the loss of 134 men, including Captain Ikeda and *Nomi's* skipper, Lieutenant Commander Hera. *Kaibokan No. 31* kept coming, so *Tirante* fired another torpedo (her second to last), which hit. The torpedo was a dud, but caused a fire in the after magazine. *Kaibokan No. 31* subsequently capsized and sank with the loss of 39 of 160 crewmen. *Tirante* made good her escape without being hit by shore fire. Boats from the island rescued many survivors of *Juzan Maru*, while arriving Japanese escorts rescued 417 survivors from the other sunken ships.

On *Tirante's* return transit to Midway Island, she picked up two downed Japanese airmen, bringing the total prisoners on board to five. Lieutenant Commander Street would receive a Medal of Honor and Lieutenant Beach a Navy Cross for *Tirante's* first war patrol. *Tirante* was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

Tirante departed Midway Island on 20 May 1945 for her second war patrol, with Lieutenant Commander Street as the commander of a nine-submarine wolfpack designated "Street's Sweepers" and operating in the Yellow and East China seas. On 11 June 1945, *Tirante* located a

four-ship convoy (one cargo ship and three escorts) off Nagasaki. She evaded the three escorts and torpedoed an 800-ton cargo ship, which could not be confirmed in postwar analysis by the Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee (JANAC). On 10 June 1945, *Tirante* fired two torpedoes at a surfaced Japanese submarine, which missed. This was *I-36*, with six *Kaiten* manned torpedoes embarked, which was part of the *Todoroki* Group of *Kaiten* mother submarines that had left Japan on 4 June.

On 12 June, Street again took *Tirante* into a Japanese harbor for a night surface attack, this time in Hashima harbor, only seven miles from Nagasaki. *Tirante* located the 2,200-ton merchant ship *Hakuju Maru* alongside a coal pier and fired three torpedoes in a bow-on-bow shot. The first torpedo hit and caused a large explosion. The second torpedo was a dud, but the third completed the job, sinking the ship. Despite coming under fire from shore batteries, *Tirante* escaped unscathed once again.

With Japanese convoys all but stopped and most of Japan's merchant fleet on the bottom, *Tirante* and other boats in Street's Sweepers were left with only small junks as targets. The junks were carrying supplies from Korea to Japan. *Tirante* interdicted about a dozen of these vessels by using boarding parties to take the vessels' masters for questioning and then putting the crews in life rafts and setting fire to the junks to sink them.

Tirante departed Guam on 12 August for her third war patrol, but was ordered to return when the cease-fire was declared on 15 August. She arrived at Midway on 23 August and would go on to serve after the war. In 1952, she was converted to *Guppy* configuration (i.e., given greater underwater propulsive power) and would mostly operate in the Atlantic (with six Mediterranean deployments). The boat was decommissioned in 1973.

During the war, *Tirante* was credited with sinking eight ships totaling 28,300 tons on her first war patrol and three ships totaling 7,400 tons on her second. Postwar JANAC analysis reduced these counts to six ships totaling 12,621 tons on her first war patrol and two ships totaling 3,265 tons on her second patrol.

Lieutenant Commander Street's record of sinking 11 ships totaling 37,000 tons in two patrols (reduced after the war to eight ships totaling 15,886 tons) puts him 48th on the list of successful U.S. submarine commanders, although few could match him for sheer audacity. Street would continue to serve after the war, retiring as a captain in 1966 as the Commander, Submarine Group San Francisco Bay Area.

Street was the last of seven submarine commanding officers awarded the Medal of Honor in World War II (and the last in the U.S. submarine service to receive the Medal of Honor). The other six were:

- Captain John P. Cromwell, who received a posthumous award as commander of the submarine coordinated attack group embarked on *Sculpin* (SS-191) when she was lost on her ninth war patrol, on 19 November 1943 (see H-Gram 025 and H-025-1)
- Commander Samuel D. Dealey, as commanding officer of *Harder* (SS-257) on her fifth war patrol, and who was lost with *Harder* on her sixth war patrol, on 24 August 1944 (see H-Gram 032 and H-032-1)
- Commander Eugene B. Flukey, as commanding officer of *Barb* (SS-220) on her 11th war patrol, on 23 January 1945 (see H-Gram 041 and H-041-2)
- Commander Howard W. Gilmore, who received a posthumous award as

commanding officer of *Growler* (SS-215) on her fourth war patrol, on 7 February 43 (see H-Gram 015 and H-015-1)

- Commander Richard H. O'Kane, as commanding officer of *Tang* (SS-306) on her fifth war patrol, on 23 and 24 October 1944 (see H-Gram 038)
- Commander Lawson P. Ramage, as Commanding officer of *Parche* (SS-384) on her second war patrol, on 31 July 1944 (see H-Gram 033 and H-033-2)

Medal of Honor Citation for Commander George L. Street, 14 April 1945:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Commander (then Lieutenant Commander) George Levick Street III, United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as commanding officer of the USS Tirante (SS-420) during the First War Patrol of the vessel against enemy Japanese surface forces in the harbor of Quelpart Island, off the coast of Korea, on 14 April 1945. With the crew at surface battle stations, Commander Street approached the hostile anchorage from the south within 1,200 yards of the coast to complete a reconnoitering sweep of the island. Leaving the 10-fathom curve far behind, he penetrated the mined and shoal-obstructed waters of the restricted harbor despite numerous patrolling vessels and in defiance of five shore-based radar stations and menacing aircraft. Preparing to fight it out on the surface if attacked, Commander Street went into action, sending two torpedoes with deadly accuracy into a large Japanese ammunition ship and exploding the target in a mountainous and

blinding glare of white flames. With Tirante instantly spotted by the enemy as she stood out plainly in the flare of the light, he ordered the torpedo data computer set up while retiring and fired his last two torpedoes to disintegrate in quick succession the leading frigate and a similar flanking vessel. Clearing the gutted harbor at emergency full speed ahead, he slipped undetected along the shoreline, diving deep as a pursuing vessel dropped a pattern of depth charges at the point of submergence. His illustrious record of combat achievement during the First War Patrol of the Tirante characterizes Commander Street as a daring and skilled leader and reflects the highest credit upon himself, his valiant command, and the United States Naval Service.

Navy Cross Citation for Lieutenant Commander George L. Street, May-July 1945:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Commander George Levick Street III, United States Navy, for extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his professions as Commanding Officer of USS Tirante (SS-420) on the Second War Patrol of that submarine during the period 20 May 1945 to 19 July 1945, in enemy controlled waters of the Yellow Sea and East China Sea. Tracking his targets relentlessly in comprehensive coverage of perilous waters bordering the Japanese Empire, Lieutenant Commander Street launched his smashing torpedo and gunfire attacks against hostile freighters, junks and picket boats, sinking over 7,000 tons of shipping vital to Japanese supply. Defying all hazards, he then penetrated the restricted waters of Ha Shima, seven miles inside the entrance to Nagasaki Harbor, to launch daring attacks in the center of the

harbor and destroy a Japanese collier and important docking facilities, retiring on the surface amidst the fury of gunfire from numerous small craft and shore batteries and returning the Tirante safe to port. His daring incursion in Japanese waters, his aggressive combat tactics and his skill in evading fierce hostile countermeasures resulted in a substantial weakening of the enemy's shipping strength and reflect the highest credit upon Lieutenant Commander Street, his valiant command and the United States Naval Service.