

C O P Y

S E C R E T

U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367)

File No. DE 367/P6
Serial No. 005

c/o Fleet Post Office,
San Francisco, Calif.,
9 August 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: Commander Western Carolines Sub Area.

Subject: Search for bodies, rafts and debris from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS.

Reference: (a) ComWesCarSubArea dispatch 040052.
(b) ComWesCarSubArea dispatch 040720.
(c) FRENCH's dispatch 070746.
(d) ComWesCarSubArea dispatch 070825.

Enclosure: (A) Track chart of search by U.S.S. FRENCH.
(B) List of bodies found by U.S.S. FRENCH (three copies).

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b), FRENCH departed Peleliu on 4 August to participate in a search for survivors, bodies, rafts and other debris of U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS.

2. At about 0630, 5 August, this vessel commenced an all day search as one unit of a scouting line with seven other ships (OTC in U.S.S. MADISON). The track of the FRENCH on this and subsequent days is shown on enclosure (A). Except for one life jacket, as far as the FRENCH was concerned the result of this day's search was entirely negative.

3. At 0615, 6 August, this vessel was designated by CO, U.S.S. COCKRELL, as OTC of the search, COCKRELL having relieved MADISON in this capacity during the night. Of the other ships, only DOYLE remained on the scene. Shortly afterward search was recommenced with the two vessels five miles apart and a search plane assigned to each. Search commenced along a line roughly parallel to that of the day before. During the morning FRENCH recovered three rafts and a net and sighted several ammunition and powder cans, all of which turned out to be empty. On these rafts were a gutted fish, fishing tackle and an ammunition can containing burnt rags.

4. At 1230 FRENCH recovered another group of three rafts and a net in which a body had become entangled. Another body was recovered at 1317. Between 1515 and 1915 nineteen more bodies were recovered. (For details refer to enclosure "B").

5. By the end of the day it had become clear that the local currents were generally southwesterly with a drift of about one knot. During the night, therefore, the vessels were maneuvered so as at dawn to be downstream, as it were, from the point where operations had been suspended the previous evening and at a distance from that point which could efficiently be covered by noon. Between 1135 and 1445 eight more bodies were recovered and numerous empty life jackets were spotted.

6. It should be noted that at the close of this day an area had been covered roughly eighty miles wide extending one hundred fifty miles in a generally

C O P Y

S E C R E T

File No. DE 367/P6
Serial No. 005

9 August 1945.

Subject: Search for bodies, rafts and debris from U.S.S. INDIANAPOLIS.

southwesterly direction from the point where survivors were first picked up. (Reference (c) erroneously described the area as "150 miles . . . from point of sinking.")

7. At 2030 reference (d) was received directing at least one DE to proceed to points where fifty life rafts had been reported. It was decided that both DE's should proceed on this mission as the division medical officer expressed the opinion that no further bodies would come to the surface and it was felt that the probable area in which any bodies would be found had already been thoroughly covered.

8. On 8 August a careful search was made over an extent of at least three thousand square miles having the reported points as its center. One or two orange crates, a small punt, a carpenter's work horse and a large log constituted the sum total of objects sighted.

9. Throughout the four days of search the work of the assisting planes was outstanding. They displayed the greatest patience and a high degree of cooperation in giving the areas the most thorough coverage. Practically nothing was recovered that had not first been sighted by them.

/s/ R. C. Robbins, Jr.
R. C. ROBBINS, JR.

Copy direct:
CTU 94.6.1 (less enclosure "A")

C O P Y

BODIES FOUND BY U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367)

Body No.

1. 8/6/45. Unidentified. Medium size, medium build, appeared to be rather young. Very advanced stage of decomposition and appeared to have been partially eaten by sharks. Hair missing. Remnants of mustache present. Inspection of teeth indicated no fillings or missing teeth apparent but advanced stage of decomposition made close dental check impossible. Fingerprints taken of thumb, first and second fingers of right hand. Man found entangled in a life net suspended under the water. No ring or wrist watch on body. No identification tags. Body unclothed.
2. 8/6/45. Identification tags: NORBERT, George Boss, [REDACTED], USNR-A T-4-45-C. No fingerprints taken because of advanced stage of decomposition of body. Small light blue St. Christopher's Medal attached to one identification tag. Body found floating in a life jacket with arms extended and legs spread apart, face up in the water. Life jacket appeared to have slipped up over head. Body swollen with gas. No rings or wrist watch on body.
3. 8/6/45. 1526. Identification tag: HUEBNER, Harry Helmut, [REDACTED] T-1-44-B USNR. Keys #1146 and #1042 and National Lutheran Council Medal on ID tag chain. USN ring found on ring finger of left hand. Body clothed in dungaree trousers only, stencill "HUEBNER." Advanced stage of decomposition. Found in life jacket floating face up. Fingerprints impossible to take. Found in pocket (right) of dungaree trousers: Identification tag for SELLERS, Leonard Edson, [REDACTED] T-8-42 A USNR-P.
4. 8/6/45. 1606. Unidentified. No wrist watch, identification tags, rings or other means of identification whatsoever. Medium height. Body badly decomposed, lying face down in water, unclothed. Impossible to take fingerprints.
5. 8/6/45. 1624. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings, wrist watch or other means of identification. Body unclothed, large size, black hair, face apparently blown off by explosion, badly decomposed, lying face down in water. Impossible to take fingerprints.
6. 8/6/45. 1640. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings, wrist watch or other means of identification. Body short and stocky, unclothed, badly decomposed, dark hair. Impossible to take fingerprints.
7. 8/6/45. 1755. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings or wrist watch. Body fully clothed except for shoes; no markings in clothing except for stencilled "CEM3DIV" on shorts. Pocket knife found in pocket (right) of dungarees trousers. Body badly decomposed. Fingerprints impossible to obtain.
8. 8/6/45. 1830. No identification tags. Class ring found on ring finger of left hand. "Boulevard" waterproof wrist watch with gray leather strap found on left wrist stopped at 5:15. Clad only in shorts, stencilled "R.E.KING." Body badly decomposed. Impossible to obtain fingerprints.
9. 8/6/45. 1840. No identification tags. Gold wrist watch on left wrist. No rings. Clad in white trousers and jumper, skivvy shorts and shirt. "J.A.SAENZ" stencilled on one pocket of trousers, "SAENZ" stencilled on

C O P Y
BODIES FOUND BY U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367)

Body No.

- other pocket. Evans cigarette lighter in right pants pocket. Body medium build, dark hair, badly decomposed. Impossible to take fingerprints.
10. 8/6/45. 1850. Identification tags on chain around neck: JAMES MONROE DOSS, [REDACTED] USNR-O T-4-45-P. Two keys on ID tag chain. Body clad in dungaree trousers and white shorts (both unmarked), both feet off, floating face up with life jacket around hips.
11. 8/6/45. 1902. No identification tags, rings, wrist watch or other means of identification. Body short and stocky. Unclothed, no life jacket, badly decomposed. Fingerprints impossible to take.
12. 8/6/45. 1906. Identification tags: RALPH JOHN HELSCHER, [REDACTED] T-4-44-A USNR-P. No rings or wrist watch. Body found face down in water, wearing life jacket, dungaree shirt and socks (unmarked), badly decomposed. Key #1140 on chain around neck. Fingerprints impossible to take.
13. 8/6/45. Identification tags: ROSE F. E. [REDACTED] Type-0 T.8/44 USMCR. Key on ID chain, "Chicago Lock Co., Chicago, Ill., 1145." Body badly mutilated by sharks.
14. 8/6/45. 1832. Identification tag: PAUL FRANKLIN MC COSKEY [REDACTED] USNR-P T-5-44-A. Fully clothed with dungaree shirt and trousers, skivvy drawers, shoe and sock on left foot (right foot missing). Key on ID tag chain, "Chicago Lock Co., Chicago, Ill., N1183."
15. 8/6/45. 1910. Unidentified. Clothed with dungaree shirt, dungaree pants, shoes and socks. Left sock stencilled with first four letters of name, "MANE---". Rest was torn away. Right sock was stencilled with initials "CFM" and letter "A" under initials. Had black onyx ring (gold) on ring finger of left hand; something removed from face of stone of ring (possibly metal initial or insignia). Body badly mutilated by sharks.
16. 8/6/45. 1819. Unidentified. No ID tags, rings, wrist watch or other means of identification. Body not clothed, 5'8", stocky build, with appendicitis scar 4" long and hernia scar on right side 6" long. Body not harmed by sharks.
17. 8/6/45. Unidentified. No identification tags. Had gold ring with blue square stone on ring finger of left hand. Catholic religious medal on chain around neck. Wore life jacket and shirt. Scars and marks: 1" crooked scar on left cheek, pitted scar under chin, 1/2" wide x 1" long angular scar on left elbow, 1" horizontal scar on right kneecap. Height 6', red hair. Life jacket up around head, neck was swollen, believed neck was broken.
18. 8/6/45. Unidentified. No Identification tags. Wedding band on ring finger of left hand; only marking inside ring was "L4K." Body 5'8", heavy set build, very badly bloated. 2" angular scar on penis, pitted scars on right kneecap.
19. 8/6/45. 1735. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings, watch or other means of identification. Body unclothed, badly burned and badly

C O P Y

Body No.

BODIES FOUND BY U.S.S. FRENCH (DE 367)

- mutilated by sharks, 5' 8-1/2" tall. Appendix scar, complete oval scar on chin about 1/2" diameter, deep scars on forehead and scalp (not sure whether caused by sinking or not).
20. 8/6/45. 1845. No identification tags, rings, watch or other means of identification. Body unclothed except for pair of socks unstencilled. Body 5'11", black hair, no distinguishing scars or marks. Very badly mutilated by sharks.
 21. 8/6/45. 1925. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings or watch. Had identification bracelet but it was lost overboard while removing it from arm of body. Height 6'. No marks or scars. Body very badly mutilated by sharks and decomposed.
 22. 8/7/45. 1135. No identification tags, rings or watch. Wore belt stencilled "LUNDGREN, A.D., [REDACTED]" No other identification. Body facing upward in life jacket, clad in dungaree shirt and trousers, no shoes or socks. Badly mutilated on left side and badly decomposed. No fingerprints taken.
 23. 8/7/45. 1155. No identification tag. Ring on ring finger of left hand. No watch or other identification. Body badly mutilated, decomposed, without clothing. Fingerprints not taken.
 24. 8/7/45. 1215. No identification tags, rings, watch or other means of identification. Body not clothed, lying on life jacket, badly mutilated by sharks and decomposed. Body not brought on board.
 25. 8/7/45. 1231. No identification tags, rings, watch or other means of identification. No clothing. Body badly mutilated by sharks and badly decomposed. Not brought on board.
 26. 8/7/45. 1310. Identification tag: DELBERT E. DUFRAINE [REDACTED] USNR-O-P T-1-45. Clad in dungarees and skivvy drawers, socks, shoe on right foot. Letters in left back pocket. Had in pocket: \$5 bill, two keys, one comb, one 25¢ piece, four pennies, cigarette case (these items in front left pocket). Height 5'11", not badly mutilated by sharks but badly decomposed.
 27. 8/7/45. 1414. Identification tag: CARL EMERSON MIRES [REDACTED] USNR-O T-7-43-P. Had wallet containing: Navy Identification Card, nine pictures, one newspaper clipping, wallet identification card, address book, certificate of Domain of Neptunus Rex, Curtiss-Wright Servicemen Organization card of Indianapolis, Ind., 2 keys (both with #2H550, Yale), 18 pennies, 2 nickels, 2 dimes, three \$2 bills, one \$1 bill and numerous papers. Body very badly mutilated and decomposed. Clad in dungarees. No fingerprints taken. No rings or watch. Man lying face up.
 28. 8/7/45. 1440. Unidentified. No identification tags, rings, watch or other means of identification. Body clad in dungaree trousers only, badly mangled by sharks, badly decomposed, no marks or scars. Dungarees not marked. Had chain with peach seed basket on dungarees. No fingerprints taken. Found lying face up. Identification impossible.
 29. 8/7/45. 1445. No identification tags, rings, watch, or any other means of identification. Identification impossible. Clad in life jacket. Body in mutilated condition and badly decomposed. Wore no clothing. Facing downward