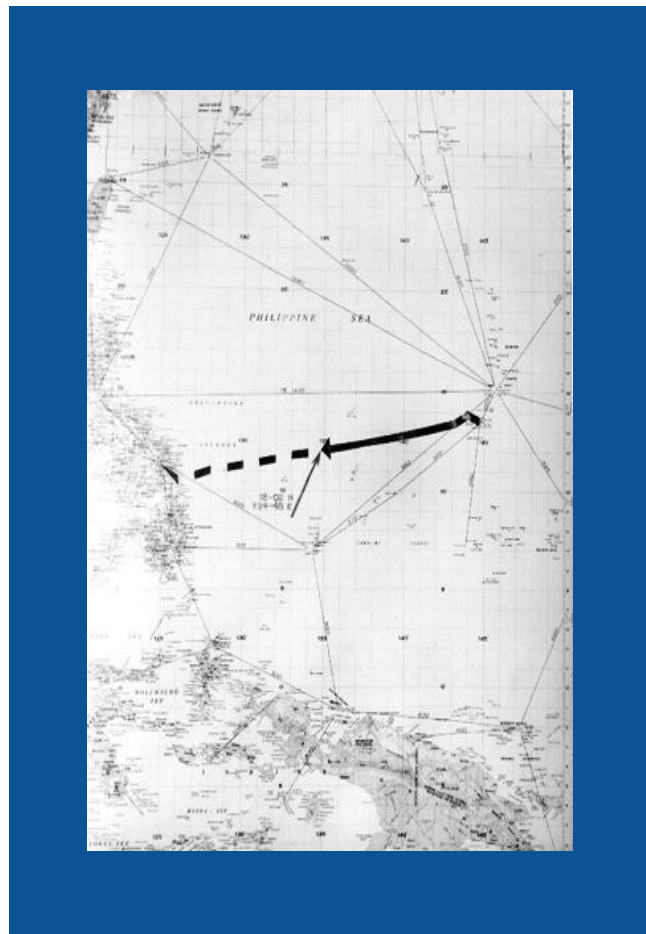


Top Secret



“Neither McVay nor anyone aboard would be told the contents of the shipment, which consisted of two cylindrical containers and a large crate. The cargo would be accompanied by two Army officers and was to be kept under armed guard at all times.”

The *USS Indianapolis* had gained a respectable reputation in its time at sea and even transported President Roosevelt during his tour of South America. The *Indianapolis* was chosen for a mission that, if successful, would have a huge impact on the end of the war. On July 16, 1945, the *Indianapolis* received the cargo that would be transported to Tinian. The mission was top secret, so only those who needed to know knew what was in the crate. The secrecy of the mission would have a terrible impact on the fate of the *Indianapolis* on what turned out to be its last voyage.



Twelve Minutes

“It only took about twelve minutes. Shorter than halftime at a football game, but enough time to kill about 300 men and put the rest in the water, roughly 880 men scattered 600 miles west of Guam, 550 miles east of Leyte, and 250 miles north of the Palau Islands, the closest land. Twelve minutes.”

The *Indianapolis* was struck by torpedoes on July 30, 1945. A Japanese submarine was in the area and saw the *Indianapolis* by chance. Shortly after it was spotted, two torpedoes were sent after the heavy cruiser, resulting in the greatest naval disaster in United States history. In just twelve minutes 300 men lost their lives and almost 900 were left in the Philippine Sea for four days.

In the Water



“And I said, “Well, the war is just about over Dad, don’t worry about it.” So, when I was in the water and I wanted to give up, I saw my dad’s face, and I wasn’t going to give up for him. He brought me home.”

The men that made it into the water were sure they would be rescued in no time, unfortunately, that was not the case. An SOS was sent out from the ship just minutes before it went down, so the sailors were hopeful that their time in the shark-infested waters would be rather short. However, the secrecy of the mission caused the distress signals to be overlooked. The number of men stranded in the open ocean decreased as the days passed with no rescue. Each day in the water was a fight to survive, and only 316 men were there at the end of it.

USS Indianapolis
and
Capt. Charles McVay

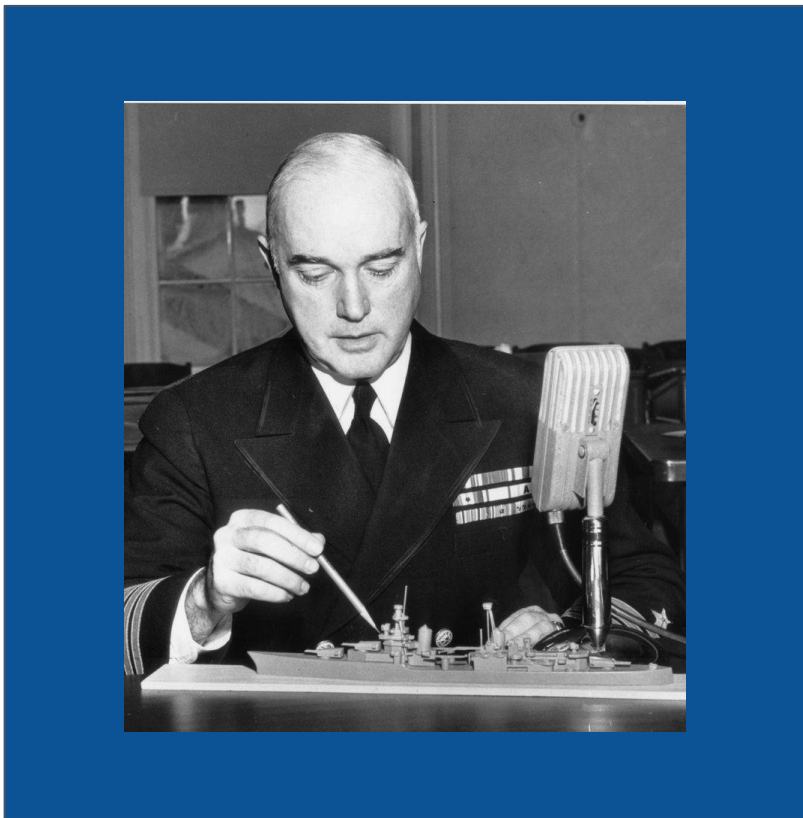
Rescue

“Rescue came somewhat by accident on Thursday when a pilot named Lieutenant Wilbur C. Gwinn thought he saw something in the water”



Had it not been for the oil slick in the water, there is no telling how long the men would have been in the water. Lieutenant Wilbur C. Gwinn spotted the oil slick from his plane while out on routine practice flights. When he got closer to the water, he noticed the men from the *Indianapolis* floating and immediately called for help. It was completely by chance that they were found, and the Navy did not even realize they had gone missing. The men were picked up by other ships and taken to a hospital for treatment.

Court-Martial

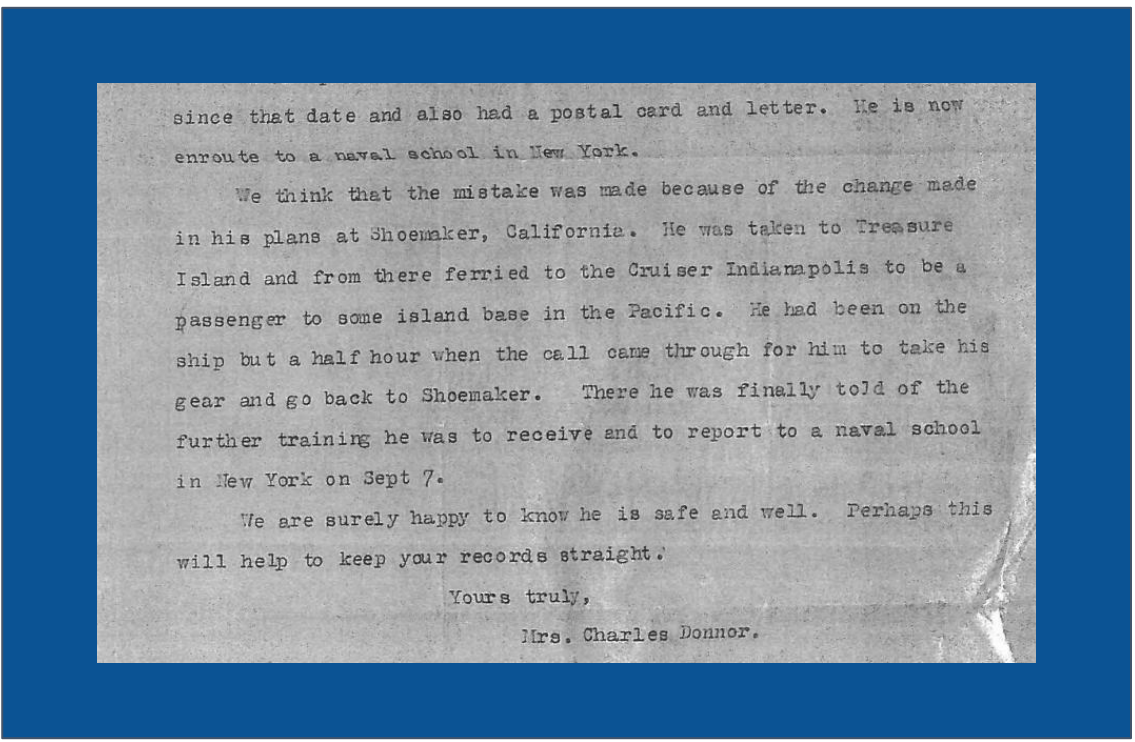


“Despite the lack of precedent or compelling evidence, the court judged McVay guilty.”

A court-martial was not the first thing the Navy thought of, but in an effort to make themselves look better, they opted to court-martial McVay. This case was the first where a captain was charged after their ship sunk as an act of war. McVay was brought into court just a few months after he lost his ship and almost 900 of his men. He was found guilty even after the captain of the Japanese submarine testified that he had hoped McVay would zigzag, so he would be easier to target.

Not Country, But Self

“The story now public, the Navy took immediate action to cover itself. [...] Admiral King recommended a court-martial. People have speculated why he did that, but the most obvious reason was to cover the Navy’s missteps in not providing a destroyer escort...”



The *Indianapolis* was one of 437 ships sunk during the war, but it was the only one to have its captain court-martialed. The Navy refused an escort but were aware of possible enemy submarines in the path of the *Indianapolis*. The sailors on board the *Indianapolis* were only trying to serve their country, and in return, they were met with a Navy that cared more about helping itself than the people who risk their lives to serve it.

November 6th, 1968

“It took the *Indianapolis* only fourteen minutes to sink. It took her captain twenty-three years and four months to follow her down. He left no suicide note. No one will ever know exactly what he was thinking when he pulled the trigger.”



After the court-martial, McVay was looked down upon. People saw him as responsible for the disaster. Families lost their sons, brothers, fathers, and grandfathers and they were looking for someone to blame. McVay got a lot of hate mail following the sinking and the trial. It is unclear what exactly led McVay to end his life, but the hate-mail and guilt of the tragedy did not help. McVay was holding a toy sailor that he kept as a good luck charm when he took his own life.

Hunter Scott



“In April of 1998 fifteen survivors and Hunter Scott arrived in Washington and met with members of both House and Senate, urging support for Representative Scarborough’s bill which urged a presidential pardon for Captain McVay.”

Hunter Scott was eleven years old when he first saw the movie *Jaws* and learned about the *Indianapolis*. Soon after learning about the disaster, he chose it as his topic for a project in school. He was an influential figure in the fight to clear McVay’s name. His work and efforts, along with the survivors who felt their captain was wrongly convicted, eventually earned an exoneration for McVay.

Extra! Extra! Don’t Read
All About it!

“The press kept the sinking quiet for two weeks. Then the White House announced the ship had been sunk with heavy loss of life on the same day it announced the Japanese surrender.”



When the news finally broke about the greatest naval disaster in United States history people were too caught up in the end of the war to read past the headlines. All the newspapers talked about was the Japanese surrender and rightfully so because it meant the war had ended, but it overshadowed the men that lost their lives to end the war. People do not realize that the *Indianapolis* delivered parts of the atomic bomb that essentially ended the war, and that it was hit on the way home. Almost 900 men lost their lives in an effort to serve their country, and they were reduced to an inaccurate snippet on the front page of the *New York Times*.



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