

Navy Chaplain Helped to Save Stricken Carrier 10 Years Ago

(Editor's Note: By all odds, the USS Franklin should have gone to the bottom. The Japanese dive bomber pilot who dropped two 500-pound bombs on her just 10 years ago did his job well, but the Franklin's crew wrote a valiant new chapter in naval history and refused to abandon ship. Here's a recollection of what happened by the Franklin's chaplain, awarded the Medal of Honor for the part he played in saving her.)

By TOM HORGAN
WORCESTER, Mass. (AP)—The news cameraman said he'd like to make a picture of the priest wearing his Medal of Honor, the nation's highest and rarest decoration for courage. No other chaplain has won it.

"Sorry," said Father Joseph T. O'Callahan, "but it's locked in the library safe. I've told them not to show it until after I'm dead."

Such modesty is characteristic of Father O'Callahan, who was called by his skipper "The bravest man I ever knew" after a Japanese dive bomber made the carrier USS Franklin a raging inferno of destruction and death 10 years ago.

Father O'Callahan, 49, has returned to Holy Cross College, which he left for the wars in 1940.

but for him the cloistered quiet of the campus still is invaded by the clamor of battle.

Teaches Young Boys
There he teaches boys too young to remember when the world was afire, while writing his recollections of a period when one day of terror encroached upon the next too rapidly to consider the calendar.

The interview was in Father O'Callahan's austere little room—typical Jesuit quarters—crowded with books and papers, desk and typewriter, narrow bed and chairs and three potted plants.

One of few decorations was a small ditty bag on which the Star of David was embossed.

Contained Letters
"Before we went into action," he explained, "one of the boys asked me to keep it for him. It contained letters which he said he was afraid he might lose. I mailed the letters later, but I kept the ditty bag. The boy was killed."

The "boy" was only one of about 1,000 who gave their lives serving the Franklin. Asked the number of casualties among the carrier's complement of more than 3,000, the priest said: "Just about everyone was a casualty, killed, burned or wounded."

As one of the latter, he would easily qualify for the role of disabled veteran, but he waives it.

Captain Stripes
Father O'Callahan, who joined the Navy's Chaplain Corps as a lieutenant junior grade and now rates a captain's four stripes, described as "a very good pilot" the Japanese who bombed the Franklin, a 27,000-ton Essex Class carrier, on March of 1945, off Kobe, Japan.

"We shot him down, but a few seconds too late," he adds.

As fires and explosions spread rapidly throughout the big ship, Father O'Callahan said his first concern was his duty as a chaplain, ministering to the wounded and dying—"many of them died in my arms."

His second concern was to get wounded transferred to the cruiser Santa Fe, which skillfully maneuvered alongside the Franklin, dead in the water and listing badly.

Because of Cross
Capt. Leslie E. Gehres, of the Franklin, was able to identify him and get his attention, the priest recalls, because of the cross painted on his helmet. Most of those aboard soon were so covered by soot and grease they were unrecognizable. The captain was able to direct him to where he was most needed.

One such spot was a 5-inch gun turret, crammed with live ammunition and burning fiercely. Father O'Callahan led a fire-fighting detail which, because of intense heat and smoke, could work only in relays inside the turret while over-coming flames and jetting ammunition. Shell casings were so hot, hands were burned.

Must Be Dumped
"Capt. Gehres told me that unless the ammunition were dumped, it would blow up," Father O'Callahan says. So the priest organized two groups of 10 men to get the ammunition overboard bucket-brigade fashion.

The Franklin was attacked at sunrise and fire-fighting continued until long after sunset, with escaping airplane gasoline feeding the flames. She was taken in tow by the cruiser Pittsburgh and eventually her own propelling machinery was restored.

Japanese aerial attacks continued three days, during which hundreds of burials at sea were conducted in grim and almost unending repetition.

Band Survives
As his concern turned from the dead to the living, Father O'Callahan recalls he marshaled survivors of the ship's band, which had labored throughout the emergency in fire-fighting and rescue work, and two musical instruments which had escaped destruction. These were supplemented with two kettles, as drums.

The padre sent his bedraggled gang up to the bridge to serenade the captain with parodies, one to the effect that "The old big Ben, she ain't what she used to be."

The captain, in turn, detailed the "band" to tour the ship.

"Those parodies put us over the crisis, cut tension—the men saved their ship and their sanity; it was a tough time," Father O'Callahan says.

Good news awaited him when he reached Pearl Harbor, however. One of his two sisters, Sister Rose Marie, of the Maryknoll Order, had been unreported since her capture by the Japanese at Manila. At Pearl Harbor, he learned she had survived. She is still on duty in the Philippines.

The Franklin made it back to the states, eventually, a proud tribute to the perseverance—and faith—of her crew.

Young Pupils Take Foreign Languages

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP)—About 125 elementary school children here are learning a foreign language. It's part of an educational idea that has spread across the country since 1947. More than 700 elementary schools are teaching foreign languages. Ann Arbor is typical. Third, fourth and fifth graders are taking part.

Associate Prof. Otto G. Graf, of the University of Michigan and two assistants teaching French, Spanish and German find that children having difficulty with reading English are the first to pick up the idea of the foreign language.

This, he said, is "partially because their verbal abilities are better than their reading abilities at the moment and partially because foreign language excites their imagination, while reading does not."

The object of the classes, Graf says, is to help break down the one-language barrier in students' minds and to help them in later studies.

Police Check Woo's Laundry

PEORIA, Ill. (UP)—Assistant Fire Chief Rudy Kneer radioed a police dispatcher to check the owner of Woo's Laundry here and ask him to open the door.

The fireman had answered an alarm at the laundry address, and wanted to get in to see if the place was okay.

"Who's laundry?" asked dispatcher Roy King.

"That's right," Kneer replied. King consulted a city directory.

C-C-C-COLD
FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP)—It was a mighty chilly night for the parade. Taking a realistic view of the situation, the Fort Myers News-Press used this banner headline over the story: "Th-th-thousands ch-cheer p-p-parade."

Lighting 'Can Double' Size Of Dwelling

PITTSBURGH (UP)—A lighting specialist for one of the nation's largest electrical manufacturing concerns says most American home owners can "double" the size of their homes at an average cost of \$100.

The trick is in installing a more efficient electrical system, and extending new wiring to hitherto unused portions of the home.

"Home lighting is the new American hobby," said E. W. Beggs, lighting specialist for Westinghouse Electric Corp. "Spend \$100 and double the size of your house."

Beggs explained that many home owners "are putting in basement recreation rooms, made possible, of course, because of lighting. Others are lighting their garden and enjoying outdoor living in the cool of the evening. The rest of us are at last getting around to lighting our homes better so we can live more fully in them."

Students Write Own Text Book

NEWTON, Mass. (UP)—Grade school pupils in Newton are getting a new text book—written by a group of high school students.

"A Young Citizens' History of Newton" started as a routine project by members of the high school's English Club two years ago.

Faculty adviser M. Roland Heintzelman was impressed by the students' research in local history. Under his guidance, a club member, Joyce Dudley, put them together in book form.

"This is the first time that school children have actually written and published their own community's history," Heintzelman said, "and the first time such a student publication has been used as a text for lower grades."



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