

Midway Encounter 20 Years Ago War's Most Decisive Battle

(Editor's note: Twenty years ago, America was at war. In the months after Pearl Harbor, the news was grim. On June 3, 1942, a mighty Japanese armada was closing on Midway Island, a little blot of sand and coral about 1,000 miles from Honolulu. The Imperial Navy planned to launch an amphibious invasion, mop up the tiny Marine detachment at Midway and move on toward Pearl Harbor for a final showdown with the U.S. Pacific Fleet. But two American task forces lay in wait off Midway and World War II's most decisive naval battle followed.)

By FREDERICK H. TREESH
United Press International
On Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese planes also stormed another American base, a little known sand and coral atoll 1,000 miles north-west of Pearl.

Midway Island, a seaplane base and way station for trans-Pacific airliners, was presumed lost when, for three weeks, no word was received from its Marine garrison. Then, on Christmas Day, a message got through from the beleaguered outpost: "We're still here. Merry Christmas."

Lying in a direct path between Japan and Pearl Harbor, Midway was a logical stepping stone for an expected Japanese thrust toward Hawaii. Its fortifications were hastily reinforced.

On the morning of June 3, 1942, a Japanese strike force moving on Midway was sighted by a Navy patrol plane. Land-based B-17s bombed the fleet from high altitude in the afternoon without success. The U.S. fleet was off Midway but its presence was not known to the Japanese. The Japanese force, under command of Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, steamed on under the assumption that Midway was sparsely defended.

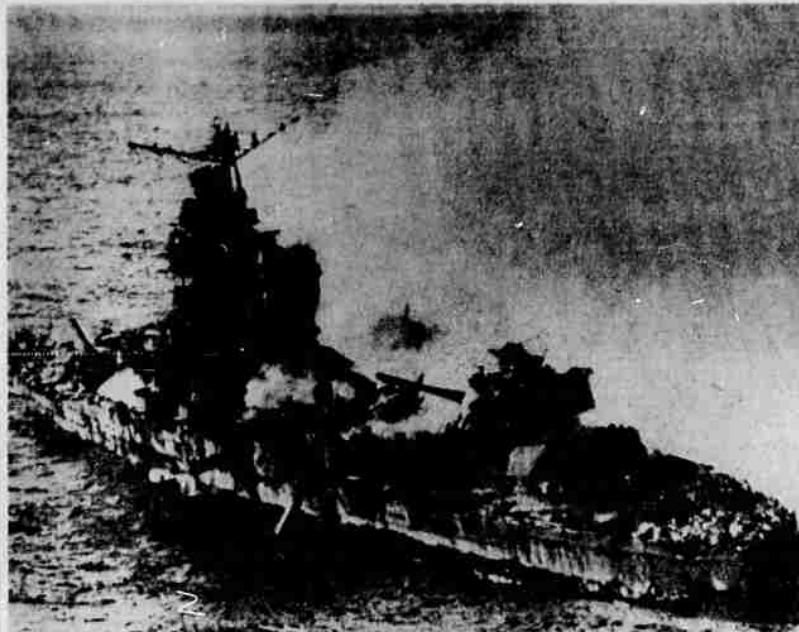
Early on June 4, Japanese planes from four carriers in the advance striking force launched a bomb attack on Midway. But a Navy PB4Y patrol plane, shadowing the fleet, radioed a warning. Every plane at Midway was airborne when the Japanese attack came and it was inconsequential. Thirty attack planes were shot down. American losses included 17 planes destroyed and seven damaged.

Adm. Raymond A. Spruance, U.S. task force com-



LISTING BADLY—Already listing badly, the aircraft carrier, USS Yorktown, receives a direct hit by a Japanese bomb during the battle of Midway in this UPI picture from files.

Black puffs from exploding anti-aircraft shells dot the sky. Today is the 20th anniversary of the most decisive Naval engagement of World War II. (UPI)



CRUISER SMOULDER—A Japanese heavy cruiser of the Mogami class is a smoldering, blackened wreck after being blasted by carrier-based planes during the battle of Midway. The Japanese lost four of their

finest carriers and one heavy cruiser in the battle, which was the most decisive Naval engagement of World War II. (UPI from files)

mander, ordered his carrier pilots to throw the book at the Japanese fleet, especially the carriers. Torpedo planes, dive bombers and fighters swept off the carriers Yorktown, Enterprise and Hornet.

About noon, planes from the Yorktown and Enterprise sighted three Japanese carriers—the huge Akagi and Kaga and the medium-sized Soryu—in a tight cluster. The Yorktown planes launched a coordinated attack with the other, slower-flying torpedo planes coming in low under a fighter cover while the dive bombers attacked from overhead. But the timing was off, and the torpedo planes, despite fighter protection, were annihilated by about 30 Japanese Zero interceptors. Only one of the 12 U.S. torpedo pilots survived.

Vice Adm. John Shook, "Blackie," was commander of the anti-submarine command in the Pacific, was in command of the six fighters which flew with the torpedo planes that day.

"We kept trying to get our torpedoes down," he said in a recent interview with a UPI correspondent at his Pearl Harbor headquarters. "We could see that some would never get out again,

but they kept right on. Not a single pilot turned away."

(Lt. Cmdr.) Len Massey, leading the torpedo planes, went down in flames in the first pass, but one of his planes pulled in to take his place and lead the formation on. We (the fighters) were burning a few Zeros and they were chewing up our torpedo planes.

"I'm convinced I saw one of our Yorktown torpedo planes get a hit on the carriers, even though it was never recorded in the official records."

While the torpedo planes were drawing withering fire, the dive bombers launched their second wave of attacks.

Adm. Massey, F. Leslie (Ret.), then a lieutenant commander and in command of the dive bomber squadron from the Yorktown, personally led the dive on the huge carrier Kaga.

"I discovered my squadron into a position which would enable us to make our dive out of the sun," Leslie told a UPI reporter at his Coronado, Calif., home.

"I gave the attack signal and started my dive from 14,500 feet. The target was about 100 miles away. I have never seen."

Leslie said he dived straight at the 27,000-ton Kaga and sprayed its flight deck and bridge structure with 300 or 400 rounds of 50-caliber machine gun fire. His bomb had been lost prematurely because of a malfunction in a recently installed electronic release system.

Leslie said his wingman, then Lt. J.G. Paul A. Holmberg, scored a direct hit on the Kaga's flight deck.

"As history will record," Leslie said, "Holmberg delivered the first effective blow in the battle. His bomb caused the most terrifying holocaust I could possibly imagine."

"In fairly quick succession, I observed three or four similar explosions on the same carrier. This was a remarkable performance. . . . The Kaga was moving about 25 knots and taking evasive action. Hitting a target like this is about as difficult as dropping a marble from eye height on a fast-moving cockroach."

Dive bombers from the Yorktown and Enterprise dropped a rain of fire on the Akagi (flagship of the Japanese carrier division) and the Soryu, leaving them, like the Kaga, fiercely burning and doomed to a watery grave. The U.S. planes also heavily damaged a Japanese battleship and cruiser.

Watch recalling the scene. "It was the best dive bombing I had ever seen. There had been a lot of practice, but this was the real thing."

"Pretty soon, the Zero attacks began slackening off and for the first time I began to think about maybe getting out of it alive."

"I looked around and could see a few Zeros above us and one directly below. By this time, all three carriers were burning, with flames shooting to high peaks below us. If those Jap pilots couldn't get to another undamaged carrier they were doomed and they knew it."

"There was another carrier—the Hiryu—but we hadn't found it yet. In any case, the Jap fliers seemed stunned, and soon melted away."

Round one was a clear-cut victory for the numerically inferior Americans. But the Japanese were to get their licks in, too. As the three Japanese carriers burned, the fourth, the Hiryu, launched a dive bomber attack on the U.S. carrier Yorktown.

Rear Adm. Oscar Pederson (Ret.), now a Wall St. investment advisor, commanded the Yorktown air group.

"We told our dive bombers approaching to land to get clear of the ship," Pederson said. "I ordered our fighter cover planes to intercept the Jap planes."

"They shot down about half of the 18 Jap bombers approaching us. Eight got through, two of which were shot down by guns on our supporting cruisers and destroyers."

The remaining attackers, Pederson said, scored three hits on the Yorktown, which had been damaged severely a few weeks earlier in the battle of the Coral Sea.

"One (bomb) struck the flight deck and went through to the hangar deck," Pederson said. "A second hit in the forward part of the ship, starting fires adjacent to the gasoline tanks and (ammunition) magazines."

"The third bomb exploded in the smoke stack amidship, disabling two engine boilers and snuffing out the fire in five of the other six boilers."

Pederson said the Yorktown was making 30 knots during the attack but the damage reduced its speed to six knots. In about 20 minutes, the disabled carrier lost all power.

Rear Adm. Frank Fletcher, commander of one of the two

task forces, moved his flag to the cruiser Astoria.

The Yorktown crew controlled the fires and began making repairs. In a little more than an hour, four boilers were back in service and the Yorktown achieved a speed of 18 knots.

Then radar detected another flight of Japanese planes—10 torpedo planes and six fighters.

"The Jap planes were almost on top of us as we launched eight fighter planes," Pederson said. "The last of the eight was airborne no more than 20 seconds when it shot down a Jap plane. It was fantastic!"

Pederson said four of the Japanese planes got close enough to the Yorktown to drop their torpedoes. They scored two hits and the huge carrier lost all power for the second time.

The ship soon listed 26 degrees to port and was in danger of turning over. Capt. Elliott Buckmaster gave the order to abandon ship. Pederson said the crew left the ship in orderly fashion down ropes, fire hoses or whatever else was available.

"The men automatically removed their shoes because it is easier to swim without them," Pederson said. "As senior officer at the time in that part of the ship, I was the last to go into the water. As I went over I was amazed to see about 300 pairs of shoes neatly lined up along the side of the ship."

The Yorktown's dive bombers, ordered away when the attack began, and its surviving fighters were diverted to the Enterprise and Hornet.

Two hours after the torpedo attack on the Yorktown, planes from the Enterprise—some of them from the original Yorktown squadron—found the Japanese carrier Hiryu and left it in flames. Planes from the Hornet attacked and damaged a battleship and cruiser escorting the Hiryu.

The next day, planes from the Hornet and Enterprise attacked two Japanese cruisers, and planes based at Midway attacked two other cruisers, crippling one. Poor visibility then curtailed air operation.

On June 6, planes from the Hornet located two more Japanese heavy cruisers and three destroyers. Planes from the Enterprise struck the cruisers

Local Students Get Service Certificates

Two Medford students were among those receiving annual awards and recognition from the Willamette university student body recently.

Lynn Hales, Medford, received a senior key for outstanding service to the associated student organization.

Joan Laurila, Medford, received a senior certificate.

Arthritis, Rheumatism Vital Facts Explained

FREE DESCRIPTIVE BOOK

As a public service to all readers of this paper, a new 38-page highly illustrated book on Arthritis and Rheumatism will be mailed ABSOLUTELY FREE to all who write for it. No agent will call. This FREE BOOK fully explains the causes, effects and danger in neglect of these painful and crippling conditions. It also describes a successfully proven method of treatment without drugs or surgery which has been applied in many thousands of cases. This book is yours WITHOUT COST or obligation. It may be the means of saving years of untold misery. Don't delay. Send for your FREE BOOK today. Address: The Ball Clinic, Dept. 26091U, Excelsior Springs, Mo. (Adv.)

Well Drilling NOTICE

To Go into Effect
June 1, 1962 to Meet
State Requirements

Regular Drilling	\$3.50 Ft.
Rock Drilling	\$8.00 Ft.
Hard Rock Drilling	\$12.00 Ft.
Casing Installed	\$3.50 Ft.

FURTHER INFORMATION UPON REQUEST

Rotary Drilling Co.
Griddle & Mithers
Hawlett Well Drilling
Crater Well Drilling
Gaff Brothers
Reggie Valley Drilling
Majors Well Drilling
Delap Well Drilling
C. A. Stuebner Drilling Co.
Shultz Bros. Well Drilling

HEAT AND COOL



...WITH ONE GAS UNIT

ARKLA
Servel

All-Year Air Conditioning

Enjoy wonderful winter WARMTH with GAS air conditioning... and when those hot summer days arrive, the fun of a dial will provide COOL springlike weather throughout your home...Yes, ONE unit will!

"HEAT AND COOL
DEHUMIDIFY
CIRCULATE AND VENTILATE
FILTER"

Install a SUN VALLEY® All-Year air conditioner...the unit with no moving parts, assuring long life and low maintenance costs...the unit that operates ECONOMICALLY with GAS.

We plan and supervise the installation with the cooperation of your heating contractor.

Live modern...for less...with **GAS**

CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC UTILITIES COMPANY
YOUR PARTNER IN WESTERN PROGRESS

772-5281, MEDFORD

482-2116, ASHLAND



So...
**You Have
Decided to
Buy Your
Own Home**

Let Us Help You With
Your Home Financing

EASY TO HANDLE TERMS
TO FIT YOUR BUDGET
STOP IN REAL SOON!

JCF

JACKSON COUNTY FEDERAL
SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSN.

Home Office - 2 East Main, Medford
Ashland Branch - 337 East Main, Ashland