



*Our Webinar series, **Never Give Up! The Story of USS Indianapolis (CA-35)**, which aired in March 2021 has received rave reviews!*

KUDDOS

"Thanks for telling your story, Mr. Thelen, you are a National Treasure" – Nolan S.

"... Just want to give a great big Bravo Zulu to Dick." -JC

"...Congratulations on a fantastic presentation." Adm Dick Macke.

"Thank you for keeping this story alive. It never gets old hearing from you. – Keith P.

"This is a remarkable and inspiring story and the members of the panel really bring it to life! Thank you. Never give up!" Jerry R.

"I would like to thank everyone who had a hand in making this possible. Along with everything that is done every day to make the Legacy of CA-35 Indianapolis live on!" – Ryan

"Excellent job! Thank you for doing this." – Jody H.

Commonly Asked Questions

1. Is this being recorded, and can we access it?

Yes, NEVER GIVE UP Webinar Part 1 and 2 were recorded and can be viewed on our YouTube channel. You can find the links on our website at:

<https://www.usIndianapolis.com/never-give-up>

2. Do any living survivors know my family member that served on USS *Indianapolis*?
A Survivor's Son and His Perspective... At reunions in Indianapolis, I found my dad and his fellow radiomen and radio techs huddled together sharing memories, catching up and the hardest part, trying to answer the myriad of questions posed to them over the years, especially from families of the lost at sea, because the questions then were very personal and hard to reach back and talk about. I remember at the 50th anniversary reunion, after somebody showed a photo of her lost-at-sea person to my dad and a group of survivors with him and asked, "Did you know or see my _____ after the torpedoes hit?", all paused, shook their heads and each said quietly, "No, I did not." I felt their pain...the memories of what I thought that brought up for them. And then you can imagine my utter shock when after she walked away, approaching another group of survivors, I overheard these men quietly turn and say, "My God, how could we ever tell her?" Tears streaming down their faces. I learned something that

day. It tore them apart. It was a no-win scenario. They were not emotionally able to remember and tell...except among those who knew, were there. – James “Jim” Belcher Jr. son of Survivor James Belcher S1

Editor’s Note: Though we may not be able to help you find out more information specifically about your beloved crew member, we encourage you to become a part of our Legacy Organization and enjoy getting to know our family of Survivors, Lost-at-Sea and Rescue family members. Perhaps there will be someone in the membership who knows more about your loved one’s division group, or time frame when he served aboard the ship.

Join the USS Indianapolis CA 35 Legacy Organization at www.ussindianapolis.com

Questions for our honored guest and survivor Richard “Dick” Peter Thelen, S2

1. What was your daily life like/duties on the ship? What did you do on an average day?
The daily schedule aboard ship was eight hours off duty and four hours on duty. I was on watch for this kind of rotation around the clock. I was on watch for four hours. And then I had eight hours off. During those eight hours I slept, showered, ate, and wrote letters home. When you do these things, eight hours isn’t very long.

2. You talked about walking off the ship as it sank. How hard was it to swim when you entered the water? Did the force of the ship pull you down as you were trying to swim away?
Since it was hot in our quarters, I was sleeping topside on the bow when the torpedo hit. It knocked me up in the air 10 to 20 feet. When I came down there were others around me, and we began to grab the cable and pull the life jackets down. The flames were spread across the ship so we could not go in that direction. So, we moved forward cutting down the life jackets. The ship was listing to the starboard side as we put on our life jackets. We could not stand so we just slid off the edge of the ship. We did not jump. There was little suction from the ship. We were able to swim 40 to 50 yards away from the ship. Other survivors had also told me there was little suction. We bounced up and down below the water but every time we came back up to the surface. I think we were lucky.

3. What did you think about the discovery of the ship in 2017?
*It was early in the morning when I got a call. I just sat back in my chair and shook my head. My thought was, “Well it’s been finally found.” When I had been at the reunion, I had talked to Paul and told him that it could not be found. But Paul replied that they now had good equipment, that they would work very hard, and that they would find the ship. So, I had to eat my words. I was emotional but I did not cry. I did have a lump in my throat and was a little emotional. I am happy that a chapter has been closed with knowing the location of **Indianapolis**.*

4. What was the first thing you wanted after you got rescued?
I was picked up by the Doyle. The first thing I remember asking for was WATER. Most of us talked about not remembering much for several days after being rescued. We slept – or passed out. We agreed we did not remember being taken off the ship at Peleliu to the hospital.

5. When you were in the water, what did you feel most grateful for, and what did you most lament?
I was grateful that I was going to survivor after being rescued. I did not want to die like I saw others die. It was easier to die than to live in those conditions. I worked at staying alive. My dad had told me I had to come home. So I did.

My greatest regret is that I watched the death of others near me. I wondered if I would be next. It was a funny feeling. Terrifying. I was told later than the diesel fuel all over me kept sharks from attacking me.

6. How do you feel when lost at sea family members ask you if you knew their family member?

I have answered this question many, many times over the years. One example was at a presentation when a man asked me how different crew members died during our ordeal at sea. I explained to him the many ways that people died horrifically at sea. He replied, "My brother didn't make it." He seemed satisfied with my explanation as to how lost at sea crew passed at sea.

Questions for Sara Vladic, Honorary Survivor, Author of *Indianapolis*, and director of the documentary *USS INDIANAPOLIS: THE LEGACY*.

1. How close and what was the closest ship to the Indy when she was sunk?

This was not specifically determined at the time of the sinking because nobody knew the ship had sunk. Of course, after the fact, ships could look at the logs and where they were at the relative time, but generally speaking, none were remotely close. There were many planes nearby, in fact, we talk about one plane piloted by Richard LeFrancis, in the book, "INDIANAPOLIS." The pilot reported that he actually spotted the explosion as he flew over the area. At the time of the sinking, land was a few hundred miles away, of course, so when the rescue call came out, the Navy sent the closest ships to the scene.

2. With 30% of the crew being "greenies", how did bootcamp prepare them for at sea disasters - esp. at GLNTC? (since they were unable to train at sea).
Interestingly enough, boot camp really didn't have time to do all the training necessary in order to prepare these young men for war, much less for sea disasters. In fact, they didn't require swimming tests. Men were given Navy Blue Books which had written instructions for what to do in times of disaster. Some of the survivors recall learning about what to do with the sharks because of that manual. As a result of the Indy disaster, many of the Navy and Marine protocols were updated to better train men and women how to survive in similar situations.

3. What is the Navy doing to maintain the story in the minds of its enlisted personnel?
The Navy is a large organization, so as a whole, I'm not sure I can speak to the bigger picture there. However, what I can speak to is the number of times I have been asked to come and speak at the Naval Academy, on various bases during Chief Selection Week, at Navy events, and even aboard Naval ships. In all cases, the leadership was extremely interested in making sure their men and women knew the story of Indianapolis and understood the lessons we should all learn from the story. And recently, our Secretary of the Navy did his part in honoring the story and making sure the story was once again brought to the public eye with awarding Father Conway with the Navy Cross, posthumously.

Questions for James "Jim" Belcher Jr., Son of Survivor, James Robert Belcher, S1

1. Did any of the surviving RM's make it to the Indy Reunions?

Yes. At every gathering men of the various work divisions would congregate naturally, and the Radiomen (RMs) along with the Radio Technicians (RTs) would get together as many were

close friends on USS Indianapolis and worked closely together. At reunions in Indianapolis the radiomen and radio techs huddled together sharing memories, catching up and the hardest part, trying to answer the myriad of questions posed to them over the years, especially from families of the lost at sea.

2. One of the big mysteries was did Radio 2 get out a SOS message?

I am told over and over by good researchers that there is no proof a message was received anywhere, ship or shore, following the sinking, that was transmitted by USS Indianapolis. I believe that as fact...no proof was left to find thus far.

The radiomen in Radio 2 seemed pretty sure they were transmitting as damage was minimal in Radio 2 and all indications were they transmitted. Let's not forget, too, that a message was admittedly received and well documented almost immediately afterwards, reporting Indy had been sunk...by Capt Hashimoto and the Imperial Japanese Navy. That the Navy ignored that is unforgivable. Period.

Questions for Earl Henry, Jr. - Son of Lost-At-Sea Earl O'Dell Henry, LCDR

1. Mr. Henry, do you know the inspiration for the painting over your shoulder?

In addition to being a dentist, my father was an ornithologist and gifted painter of birds.

This painting "Eagle Over the Pacific" shows the American eagle spreading its wings to protect the 48 Star American flag while tearing apart a Japanese serpent. Tied to its tail is the tattered Japanese war flag.

I feel my father foreshadowed American victory over the Japanese Imperial Navy one year prior to America's victory over Japan.

2. Could Mr. Henry make that print available to the general public?

This print and other are available at www.earlhenrybirdprint.com. In the auction, during the 2020 USS Indianapolis reunion, an Eagle in the Pacific print signed by 5 remaining survivors and Captain Bill Toti sold for a high bid of \$750. All proceeds were gifted to the USS Indianapolis Legacy Organization.

3. As Earl Henry talked about the baby photo his dad received from his wife, I wanted to see it. Earl can you please post it? His letter also?

Absolutely! Editor's note, you can find this photo and letter in the Appendix A at the end of this document.

4. On finding the ship, I would like to hear what it meant to Earl and Michael, as lost-at-sea family members.

Earl: I cried uncontrollably. I had always told myself that finding the ship was not important, so I kept asking myself "Why am I crying?" After all, it was not going to bring my father back or any other crew member back to life. Nor would I be able to visit the ship. I conclude that the discovery of the ship had a meaning that I never expected. I did not expect closure, but after seeing the live video of the ship in Paul Allen's program on PBS, I found an unexpected peace.

Questions for Michael William Emery, Nephew of Lost-at-Sea William Friend Emery, S1

1. What has Michael put together about what happened to his uncle?

Survivor Vincent Allard was the last person to see William Friend Emery alive at his battle station after the torpedoes hit the Indy. Vincent explained to my grandfather's Naval colleagues and investigators that none of the survivors saw Bill Emery's group in the water and can only surmise that they went down with their ship. In a hand-written note reply to my grandfather,

Captain McVay reported that he knew Bill Emery, but also did not know what happened to him after the Indy was sunk.

Editor's Note: Read letters from Captain McVay and Bill Dellman in Appendix A.2.

2. On finding the ship, I would like to hear what it meant to Earl and Michael, as lost-at-seafamily members.

Michael: I was totally shocked and speechless, and a tsunami of emotions rose up within me to process the news. My emotions also brought up a question: Why didn't Bill Emery get off his (damn) sinking ship? For some Indy survivors, they were happy that their ship was finally found. But for lost-at-sea families, the news brought up a lot of pain and lingering questions where there will never be any answers.

Other General Questions Answered by the Legacy Education Committee

1. Did one of the buglers still have his mouthpiece in his pocket and use it to play taps at a reunion?

Yes, you're referring to Glenn Morgan, BGM3, a survivor, one of four bugler's aboard Indianapolis. Glenn played his nineteen dollar cornet aboard only to play "Taps" for Earl Procai, his best friend, fatally wounded in the Kamikaze attack. Read Glen's story in [Only 316 Survived](#) (available on Amazon).

2. Like many people, I first learned about the USS Indy when I watched "Jaws." Does anyone know how Steven Spielberg came upon the story?

An uncredited writer, by the name of Howard Sackler, on the Jaws script was the person who told Spielberg about Indianapolis.

Editor's note: You can read this story in full in Appendix B!

APPENDIX A – IMAGES

1. Baby photo of Earl & the letter from Earl's father and ship's dentist, Earl O'DellHenry, LCDR, mailed from Guam just two days before *Indianapolis* was lost.



Earl Henry's letter written on July 26, 1945 and
mailed on July 28, 1945 from Guam

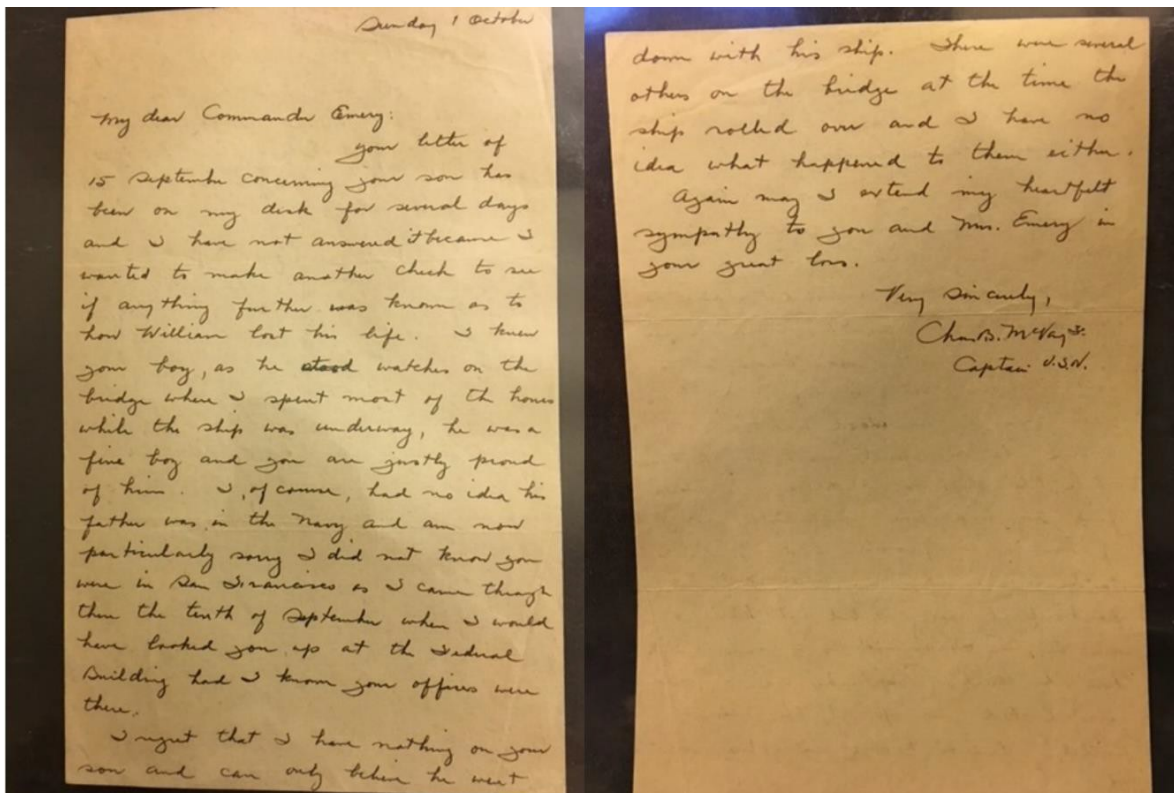
Thursday Night

Dearest Jane-gal,

Baby angel, those two wonderful pictures came today, and I am delighted as can be over them! Considering that he is a premature baby, he looks mighty good - As Lew Haynes remarked, "all prematures look like the wrath of God." But he looks good (Lew didn't say that in reference to the picture - he said it a few days ago when I was telling him about you're thinking that Earl's legs were so thin). He thought our baby looked grand, and so did Mel. Angel, I'm really gone on those pictures, and I tell you their value to me lies as much in the fact that I got a wonderful picture of you as it does getting a good picture of our sassy little boy! For, honestly, it is the most natural picture I have ever seen of you, and I love the setting. Thanks a million for sending them and being so danged smart as to have them made early. Oh happy day.

Must close, sweet ones - Love to all, Earl

2. Letters from Capt. McVay and Bill Dellman to the family of William Friend Emery, S1



U. S. NAVY
OVERSEAS AIR CARGO TERMINAL
NAVY NO. 224 (Niss Two Six)
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO

24 August 1945

Dear Commander:

Pete George and I located Quartermaster Vincent Allard at Base Hospital No. 18 on the island today, and talked to him and other Indianapolis survivors this afternoon. There is just a handful of men left from the Indianapolis disaster, and these had evidently been interviewed before, and at some length with regard to missing personnel.

Allard remembered Bill very well, having served in the same division and on several liberty parties with him. He last saw Bill, after the explosions had occurred, standing on the bridge in a life jacket, accompanied with several other men from the quartermaster division. He (Allard) and one other quartermaster attempted to go to a lower deck preparatory to going over the side, but when they got below found they couldn't make it and proceeded back to the bridge deck. Bill and the men with him had disappeared from the bridge deck when Allard returned and none of the survivors saw Bill's group again.

It is Allard's belief that Bill and the men with him also went to a lower deck in hopes of going over from there, but were perhaps caught in some gear below, or were not well away from the ship when she went under. At the time Allard last saw Bill on the bridge, the ship had not yet begun to list very badly and it is possible everyone thought they had some little time left before abandoning the ship. Actually, the ship went down in about three sharp lurches, very suddenly, shortly after Allard returned to the bridge. In any event, no survivor saw Bill or a member of his group in the water after the ship had plunged.

Allard and the other survivors can recall nothing more than the above, and are still nervous and unstrung, but extremely willing and anxious to furnish all the information they can. I gave your business address, and telephone number, to Allard who promised to get in touch with you if and when he reaches the West Coast. He does not know when he will leave Guam, or to what duty he will be ordered. I took his mainland address and he said he would be pleased to have you write to him if you so desire. No matter where he might be, a letter addressed to him care of his mother, Mrs. John Pfeifer, 2560 S.E. 89th Avenue, Portland, Oregon, will reach him.

This is a very sad letter to write, Commander, and you and Mrs. Emery have our deepest sympathy. If there is anything further any of us can do, please ask it of us. You know in what esteem you are held by us all, and to have such a tragedy strike you and Mrs. Emery is a heavy blow to us too. This comes on the heels of the unfortunate death of Bryce Minder, killed in a jeep accident a short time ago at Pearl Harbor.

Please convey to Mrs. Emery our sorrow.

Sincerely, *Bill Delluan*

APPENDIX B – Indianapolis In Popular Culture (aka the movie, Jaws)

This is taken directly from an interview with Steven Spielberg:

Steven Spielberg: I owe three people a lot for this speech. You've heard all this, but you've probably never heard it from me. There's a lot of apocryphal reporting about who did what on Jaws and I've heard it for the last three decades, but the fact is the speech was conceived by Howard Sackler, who was an uncredited writer, didn't want a credit and didn't arbitrate for one, but he's the guy that broke the back of the script before we ever got to Martha's Vineyard to shoot the movie.

I hired later Carl Gottlieb to come onto the island, who was a friend of mine, to punch up the script, but Howard conceived of the Indianapolis speech. I had never heard of the Indianapolis before Howard, who wrote the script at the Bel Air Hotel and I was with him a couple times a week reading pages and discussing them.

Howard one day said, "Quint needs some motivation to show all of us what made him the way he is and I think it's this Indianapolis incident." I said, "Howard, what's that?" And he explained the whole incident of the Indianapolis and the Atomic Bomb being delivered and on its way back it was sunk by a submarine and sharks surrounded the helpless sailors who had been cast adrift and it was just a horrendous piece of World War II history. Howard didn't write a long speech, he probably wrote about three-quarters of a page.

But then, when I showed the script to my friend John Milius, John said "Can I take a crack at this speech?" and John wrote a 10 page monologue, that was absolutely brilliant, but out-sized for the Jaws I was making! (laughs) But it was brilliant and then Robert Shaw took the speech and Robert did the cut down. Robert himself was a fine writer, who had written the play, The Man in the Glass Booth. Robert took a crack at the speech and he brought it down to five pages. So, that was sort of the evolution just of that speech.