

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

PRIMARY SOURCES

DOCUMENT A

WAR JOURNAL OF CAPTAIN N.J. "DUSTY" KLEISS
SERVING ABOARD THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS ENTERPRISE
THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY, JUNE 1942

CLASSIFIED



The code breakers guessed that Midway Island might be the target but they weren't at all sure. Admiral Nimitz gave them a go-ahead to have a fake, unclassified signal sent from Midway Island. It said that the fresh water distilling system was out of commission and fresh water supplies were running low. The Japanese bought this garbage and reported, in their new code, that target X was running short of fresh water. Midway Island was definitely the target.

The United States won (the Battle of Coral Sea), but the old LEXINGTON was sunk and the YORKTOWN barely made it afloat to get back to Pearl Harbor. The repair facility said that her repairs would take several months. Admiral Nimitz said the YORKTOWN had to be repaired as best as could be accomplished in a couple of days. Like the ENTERPRISE, the YORKTOWN was to lie in ambush for the midway attack. The one thing he didn't tell us was the Japanese were sending 189 ships and ... eight of their aircraft carriers and we had the HORNET, the ENTERPRISE and the battle damaged YORKTOWN.

On 3 June 1942 we waited in ambush. All pilots were ready for take-off on a minutes notice. Later in the day we were told that an Air Force pilot had reported, "Enemy sighted. Main body", nothing further. McClusky found an empty ocean where the enemy carriers were supposed to be. Suddenly we saw the KAGA, the AKAGI and the SORYU almost below us, in an open stretch of clouds. "Earl and I will take the one on the right. Dick, you take the one on the left."

We went into echelon formation. McClusky and his two wing men dived first, then Gallaher and two wingmen, then me and then the rest of Scouting Six, all heading for the KAGA. Dick Best and Bombing Six dived for the AKAGI. The YORKTOWN dive bombers dived for the SORYU. The situation was a carrier pilot's dream. No anti-aircraft, all three carriers heading straight into the wind. Earl Gallaher's 500 pound bomb hit squarely on a plane starting its take-off. His two 100 pound incendiaries hit just beside it. Immediately the whole pack of planes at the stern were in flames 50 feet high. I couldn't see the bombs landing from the next two planes, but flames had spread. to the middle of the ship. My bombs landed exactly on the big red circle forward of the bridge. Seconds later the flames were 100 feet high. Walter Lord later learned from the Japanese that my bomb splashed a gasoline cart, throwing its flaming contents into the KAGA's bridge.

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Our second attack was different. Lots of fighters everywhere. Four of them attacked the plane ahead. Adkins, the radioman-gunner started aiming at them. Somehow his twin machine gun broke loose. He shot down the first fighter holding the twin machine guns like a shotgun. The three other three fighters ran away. Gallaher was first to dive. He and the next pilot missed because the HIRYO made a tight semi-circle. The third pilot made a hit directly in the center of the flight deck. Mine landed on the same spot. More hits were made. Explosions and flames appeared but they were mild as compared with the damage witnessed on the KAGA and the other carriers. We launched 24 planes for this attack. We lost none of them.

During the middle of the night Nagurna sent out a message to his fleet to take Midway regardless of all cost. Meantime a U.S. submarine reported seeing a silhouette of a Jap Carrier. It could be the damaged HIRYU or maybe a 5th carrier. At dawn we found only an empty ocean, The Japanese had headed hell-bent for home.



Photo # 80-G-414422 Burning Japanese cruiser Mikuma, 6 June 1942

On the fifth of June we could only catch up with a small cruiser at dusk. She did everything right. We scored no hits. She shot down one of our planes. On the sixth of June we caught up with the battle cruiser MIKUMI and sank it. Her picture is on the left, with its few survivors on its stern, just before she sank. Some destroyers were badly damaged. The HORNET dive bombers found some more large cruisers, sinking at least one. Then we could no longer chase the Japanese. The destroyers were bone dry. So we headed back to Pearl Harbor for a beer.

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DOCUMENT B

INTERVIEW WITH PRIVATE GUY GABALDON, USMC
SERVING IN THE PACIFIC
THE BATTLE OF SAIPAN, JUNE 1942

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Many Japs, both military and civilians, committed suicide. It was sad to see children struggling with their parents pleading not to be thrown off the cliffs - "Please father, do not kill me. I do not want to die!" These parents were dangerous, desperate people who wanted nothing more than to kill the "American Savages" who they thought would roast and eat their children. "Hurley, look at all those people lined up at the edge of the cliff! They're jumping off by the numbers. My God, man, we've got to stop them. Let's go."

One group was about two hundred yards away from us. I shouted at them as we ran. "Tomare, tomare - seppuku shinaide. Kodomo korosanaide. Dozo, korosanaide!" I'm begging them to stop killing their children. But I can see that as we approach they jump off in greater numbers. "Hurley, stop. If we get any closer they'll all jump off. I'll try talking to them again."

As we stop we can see four children thrown off. They were pleading with their parents not to kill them. It seems that the children had more faith in us than did their parents. There were about fifty in that group - it seems that there are about ten left. One who apparently is a leader is yelling at the rest I can't make out what he's saying but it is obvious that he's telling them not to surrender. The people look down at the rocks below and see their friends moaning down there. Just about then one of them grabs an infant and tosses him off. That seems to have been a signal because they all start jumping off. In a couple of minutes it's all over. The whole bunch lies down below either dead or dying.

Before leaving Saipan, I went to the Stockade to bid adios to the many people I knew there. There were actually hundreds who I had personally saved from sure death. One guy, Shimabukuro, was a special friend, and he had become my personal barber. "Guy-san, before you leave us, I want you to see someone here who you saved from jumping over the cliff. Do you remember that woman you grabbed right after she had thrown her baby to the rocks down below? The people who were there say that she screamed and fought you, but you held her down. Well, she lost her mind a few days after she was brought here to the stockade. It seems that when she realized that she had killed her child unnecessarily - that the Americans were not going to roast and eat the children - she became "hidari-maki" (lost her mind). Come, I will take you to her." There she sat, motionless, just staring straight ahead. My God, what a pathetic sight. I should have let her join her baby that day at the cliffs. This was truly the horror of war.

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INTERVIEW WITH KASUGA TAKEO
SERVING IN THE MESS HALL AT TSUCHIURA JAPANESE NAVAL BASE
1945

At the hall where their farewell parties were held, the young student officers drank cold sake the night before their flight. Some gulped the sake in one swallow; others kept gulping down [a large amount].

The whole place turned to mayhem. Some broke hanging light bulbs with their swords. Some lifted chairs to break the windows and tore white tablecloths. A mixture of military songs and curses filled the air. While some shouted in rage, others cried aloud. It was their last night of life.

They thought of their parents, their faces and images, lovers' faces and their smiles, a sad farewell to their fiancées – all went through their minds like a running-horse lantern [a rapidly revolving lantern with many pictures on it]. Although they were supposedly ready to sacrifice their precious youth the next morning for imperial Japan and for the emperor, they were torn beyond what words can express – some putting their heads on the table, some writing their wills, some folding their hands in meditation, some leaving the hall, and some dancing in a frenzy while breaking flower vases.

They all took off wearing the rising sun headband the next morning. But this scene of utter desperation has hardly been reported. I observed it with my own eyes, as I took care of their daily life, which consisted of incredibly strenuous training, coupled with cruel and torturous corporal punishment as a daily routine.

