



ALL EARS!!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

"OUR EARS SPAN ALL FIELDS"



TRADITION! As *Fiddler on the Roof* begins, Tevye sings of his Orthodox Jewish family's traditions. Memorial Day is the start of summer & many families' summer traditions. At **ALL EARS!!**, Memorial Day is a time of reflection & remembrance, with a visit to the National Cemetery or a local service. We are able to celebrate our traditions because of those who sacrificed to ensure us that freedom. Seven years ago, we began our own Memorial Day tradition by sharing an important story honoring those who have fallen. We didn't know that **ALL EARS!!** would still be here on the 80th anniversary of that first crucial & pivotal story, with an opportunity to update it in our own **ALL EARS!!** tradition.

MIDWAY: 1942. The most critical year in USA history. Yes, there were times in the American Revolution when it seemed as if this fledgling Nation would not survive its infancy. Despite the outcome at Gettysburg, Lincoln still wondered in his Gettysburg Address if a country conceived in liberty could long endure or would it perish from the Earth. Lincoln would perhaps think the same today about our Nation on its current path. But in 1942, the world was one lost battle from being entirely in the hands of evil, totalitarian regimes. These countries believed that the ruling elite knew best for everyone. They demanded loyal, cowed, silent followers who would do their bidding & fanatically agree with them. And above all, they wanted to eliminate those who disagreed with them, those who believed in the God-given rights of the individual - those same precious, fragile, sacred, *self-evident, unalienable* rights upon which our country was founded. Hitler & his National Socialist Workers' Party, the Nazis, had control of everything in Europe & Scandinavia, from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Sea. Their troops were still near Moscow. Britain was isolated, just a few miles across the English Channel from Nazi-controlled France. Nazi U-boat wolfpacks were destroying the USA ships supplying arms & goods to Britain; these attacks often directly off the coast of New Jersey & Florida. Burning ships could be seen from shore. America's industrial power was still being ramped up. Britain was barely maintaining a foothold in North Africa, trying to protect the Suez Canal. The ancient fortress at Malta was all that hindered complete Italian control of the Mediterranean Sea. Japan had destroyed the USA fleet at Pearl Harbor; then marched through the Pacific Islands & now everything between India, China & Australia was theirs. In January, the Wannsee Conference had issued Hitler's Final Solution for the extermination of all Jews, while Japan was busy enslaving & murdering the people of China, the Philippines, Indonesia & every other country they had usurped. Their British, Australian & American POWs were served the same brutal & torturous deaths. Yes, in May, 1942 the freedom of the world was in serious jeopardy.

This changed just a bit in early May, 1942 when the USA Navy encountered the Japanese Imperial Fleet at the Battle of the Coral Sea. For the first time in history, two opposing naval forces battled each other without ever laying sight on the other. The naval air forces battled in the skies, trying to attack the others' task force. The USA Navy fought the Japanese to a draw, turning back the Japanese for the first time. The Japanese pulled their invasion force, scuttling their plans to take Port Moresby. For the USA, this was a strategic victory that opened up the possibility for the American invasion of Guadalcanal & New Guinea later in 1942. But this victory came at a heavy cost. The USA fleet carrier *Lexington* was sunk, the carrier *Yorktown* was badly damaged, with more than half of her aircraft lost.

The USA knew Japan was planning another invasion, but did not know where. Unknown to the Japanese, the USA had access to Japanese radio transmissions. The invasion was planned at somewhere designated AF. Where was AF? In the first of many gambles, a far-off post was instructed to send an open-air message that the Japanese would hear. The post announced their 'not secret' message, that their water treatment plant was not functioning. Soon the USA intercepted a Japanese communication, "*AF needs water.*" The Japanese were going to attack at Midway, a strategic point that would allow the Japanese to mount an invasion of Hawaii, refuel their submarines to operate near the USA west coast & ready an invasion of the USA homeland.

In today's parlance, Admiral Chester Nimitz went 'all in'. Hastily, the *Yorktown*, barely repaired, joined a naval task force with the carriers *Enterprise* & *Hornet*. PBY Catalinas, B-17 & Avenger bombers, & other assorted & outdated aircraft, obsolete for this type of warfare, were assembled on the 2.4 sq. mile Midway Atoll. Nimitz ignored the Japanese diversion toward the

Aleutians on June 3, which allowed the Japanese to occupy USA territory & put the west coast of the USA at the risk of attack. Instead, Nimitz put his pilots in search of the Japanese Navy.

In the fog of war, there may be only two things that really matter, bravery & the Hand of God; what some may call a lucky gamble. The Japanese naval task force was spotted early in the morning of June 4 by PBYs flying off of Midway. Soon Japanese bombers attacked the island. Their bombs did little damage & their planes were repelled. They returned to their carriers to refuel & rearm with heavier Ordnance. Meanwhile, the American carriers launched their planes, looking for the Japanese in the reported area. Before takeoff, Lt. Cmdr. John Waldron had words with his flight commander, Stanhope Ring & USS Hornet CO Mark Mitscher. They had set a course in the wrong direction. In the air, Waldron tried to get the flight group to change direction. Failing, he took his own team, the now famed Torpedo Squadron 8, 15 Douglas TBD Devastators, on the correct course. They found the four Japanese carriers & attacked, without fighter cover or support. All 15 planes were lost. But Waldron's gamble & the sacrifice of Torpedo Squadron 8 made the Japanese commander wonder if he should change from rearming the land bombers & prepare for a naval engagement. The Japanese Zeroes had used up their fuel & ammo, so they had to land to refuel & rearm. When the Americans found the Japanese carriers, their delay in refueling, rearming & relaunching left their decks covered with planes, men, fuel hoses & Ordnance. By another strange piece of luck, all three USA squadrons arrived at the same time, though they were on separate routes looking for the enemy. The Japanese were completely vulnerable, with little defensive air protection. Within minutes, three of the four Japanese carriers were destroyed, along with planes & personnel. The surviving carrier, Hiryū, remained engaged in counterattacks. Marine Major Lofton Henderson led one of those counterattacks on the Hiryū. He was lost at sea as he led his squadron into a long glide attack on the carrier. So fearless was his leadership, the Marines named the Air Field they established on Guadalcanal later that year in his honor. Captain Richard Fleming, who was just 25 when he took over Major Henderson's command, was lost leading an attack on the heavy cruiser Mikuma, which was sunk. He was awarded the Medal of Honor. The Japanese began to retire from the fight, with the Americans attacking the stragglers for the next two days, sinking heavy cruisers & destroyers. Despite the loss of the Yorktown & soon to follow the Hornet, their planes & men, the Americans won the battle at Midway.

But from this point forward, the United States had one serviceable fleet carrier in the entire Pacific Theatre. (Yes, there was also the USS Saratoga, an early 1920s cruiser that was converted to a jeep carrier in compliance with worthless treaties to which USA leaders had foolishly agreed. Jeep carriers brought new planes & crews to the battle carriers.) It is hard to imagine that well into 1943 this one & only USA aircraft carrier, commissioned in 1936, was all that stood in the way of a Japanese invasion of the USA homeland. The *Big E*, the USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), was alone against the Japanese. She fought battles, sunk battleships & shot down planes; all while Seabees (Navy Construction Battalions: CBs) worked on her decks, fixed her flight elevators & repaired her waterline. These were not the regular repair personnel, the Seabees were employed due to a shortage of repair personnel, who were busy with repairs on other USA ships. Legend or truth, one *enterprising* sailor placed a sign on the ship: *The Enterprise vs. Japan*. The *Big E* was the only USA ship to engage in all 20 of the major USA South Pacific naval battles during WWII. It's no wonder that Gene Roddenberry was inspired to name his starship for the *Big E*!

Sadly, there will always be evil people that will use war, terror, violence, bigotry, lies, manipulation, panic, fear & corrupt politics to trample on the rights of free people for their own power, wealth & prestige. There will always be those with ruling or societal power that insist on mindless & fanatical agreement & the elimination of dissenters. The men who served the *Enterprise*, those who sacrificed at Midway, likely did not have a deep textbook understanding of the difference between totalitarian & free societies. But because of strong moral upbringing & conscience, they clearly understood the difference between good & evil, right & wrong, freedom & bondage. Hopefully, there will always be men & women of good conscience who will stand for freedom & those precious, sacred, God-given rights of mankind, the right to Life, Liberty & the pursuit of Happiness.

After the war, one airman from the USS *Enterprise* went back to St. Louis & went to work in a Cadillac dealership, rising to be its sales manager. In 1957, he took a pay cut, put his own money at stake, bought 8 cars & started to lease them to customers of the dealership while their cars were in for repairs. Like Admiral Nimitz, this entrepreneur went all-in. Today, most people really don't know the names John Waldron, Lofton Henderson or Richard Fleming, what these men did & why they died at Midway. Most people think that flying through Midway airport in Chicago is just easier than flying through O'Hare, & they don't realize why either of those airports carry their respective names. When they stop to rent a car to safely drive to their destination, whether it be to enjoy the freedom of a family vacation, or to work in a profession they were free to choose, they likely don't know that the airman who started that rental car company, Jack C. Taylor, named his company for the ship he served. And those people really don't know what she, the *Enterprise*, stood for & stood against in 1942!

SEEDS, SPROUTS, GROW, HARVEST!

THE LITCHFIELD FUND – *Tom Malenka*

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