

Collection #
M 0645
OM 0309
CT 0592
F 1167
DVD 0005

USS INDIANAPOLIS
COLLECTION, 1898–1991
(BULK 1945–1946 AND 1984–1991)

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	4 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize manuscript folder, 1 audio cassette tape, 1 microfilm reel, 1 DVD, 1 slides box, 1 video cassette tape, 2 OVA photograph folders, 1 painting, 5 artifacts
COLLECTION DATES:	Inclusive 1898-1991; bulk 1945-1946 and 1984-1991
PROVENANCE:	John Ferzacca, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675, 6 December 1993; Virginia Miller, Jefferson City, MO, 15 September 1999; Giles G. McCoy, 5 Wills Place, Palm Coast, FL 32137, 21 January 2000; Martin David and Joan J. Dubin, Highland Park, IL, 21 August 2001
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.
ALTERNATE FORMATS:	None
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Kurzman, Dan. <i>Fatal Voyage: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis</i> , New York: Atheneum, 1990 (D774 .I5 K87 1990); <i>Indianapolis: Ship of Doom, Parts 1 & 2</i> (Video D 774 .I5 I53 1992).
ACCESSION NUMBER:	1994.0193; 1999.0639; 2000.0304, 2001.1081
NOTES:	<p>Photocopied material donated by John Ferzacca is available for research use only, though notes may be made. Photocopy requests for materials the originals of which are at the National Archives should be directed to NARA, Washington, D.C. Photocopies of other materials donated by John Ferzacca will be made only if permission is obtained in writing from Ferzacca.</p> <p>Cataloged as: Indianapolis (Cruiser). Collection, 1898–1991 (bulk 1945–1946 and 1984–1991)</p>

BIOGRAPHICAL/ HISTORICAL SKETCH

The heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis*, CA 35, was commissioned in November 1932. It saw its first combat of World War II in the South Pacific Theater in February 1942. The *Indianapolis* became the flag ship for the 5th Fleet and it saw extensive combat duty in the South Pacific, receiving ten battle stars for action in numerous engagements including the assault on the Marianas ("The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot"), June-August 1944, the covering of the Iwo Jima landings, February-March 1945, and the pre-invasion bombardment of Okinawa, March 1945.

On 16 July 1945 the ship departed from Mare Island Navy Yard in California on a secret cargo mission to Tinian Island in the Marianas. The cargo mission entailed carrying several parts for the assemblage of the atomic bomb, including uranium. After successfully delivering its cargo on 26 July, the ship was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine between Guam and Leyte four days later. Because of the secret nature of its mission, there was some confusion after the ship's sinking and it was four days before all the survivors were rescued. Of the 1,196 men on board only 316 survived, many perishing because of the elements while waiting to be rescued. The ship's commander, Captain Charles Butler McVay, III, was court martialled and found guilty of negligence in failing to issue the order to "zig-zag" in hostile waters. McVay was the first officer in the history of the United States Navy to be court martialled for losing his ship to the enemy in time of war. He was sentenced to lose one hundred numbers in his temporary grade of Captain and also in his permanent grade of Commander. The Navy granted McVay clemency in February 1946.

Charles Butler McVay, III (1898-1968), was a 1920 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War he served as senior naval aide to President Roosevelt. During the war McVay won the Bronze Star, Silver Star, and the Purple Heart. In November 1944, he was given the command of the *Indianapolis*. After his court martial, McVay was assigned to the 8th Naval District in New Orleans. He retired as a Rear Admiral and chief of staff from that district in 1949. McVay died from a self-inflicted pistol wound to the head. On 13 July 2001 Navy Secretary Gordon England officially exonerated Captain McVay of any negligence resulting in the ship's destruction.

Sources:

Newcomb, Richard F. *Abandon Ship*. New York: Bantam Books, 1975.

Wylie, Evan McLeod. "The Last Secret Voyage of the USS *Indianapolis*," *Yankee*, July 1978.

Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This is an artificially created collection of materials regarding the history of the heavy cruiser USS *Indianapolis* (CA 35). While the bulk of the collection represents John Ferzacca's research materials used in writing his play, *The Failure to Zig Zag*, it also includes other items relating to the ship and its crew. Additions are made to the collection from a variety of sources.

The collection contains photocopies of the official records regarding the sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*, and the court martial of its captain, Charles B. McVay. Among the documents are the official reports of the sinking and the rescue of the survivors and the narrative of the tragedy given by McVay. Also included are the records of the Judge Advocate General's investigative report pertaining to the ship's loss including the court of inquiry's records containing such items as dispatches, reports, and witnesses testimonies, October 1945. Among the items in the copy of the McVay court martial materials are transcripts of the proceedings including testimonies by witnesses, evidence entered by both the defense and the prosecution, and the prosecution's preparation notes for the trial, December 1945-February 1946.

Also included in the collection are photocopies of magazine articles and newspaper clippings regarding the sinking of the *Indianapolis*, 1945-1991. Most of these items were collected by John Ferzacca for his play, *The Failure to Zig Zag*, and by McVay's son, Kimo Wilder McVay, in an attempt to clear his father's name. There are also originals and copies of correspondence by both men from government authorities, survivors, and other related individuals concerning the clearing of McVay's name and the events surrounding the ship's destruction, 1970-1991.

The collection also consists of rough drafts, rewrites, inserts, and the final published copy of Ferzacca's play, *The Failure to Zig Zag*, as well as reviews and related items to productions at the Indianapolis Repertory Theatre, 1981, and the Laguna Moulton Playhouse, 1978. Also included are the storyline, research, technical authentication corrections, and screenplay for the motion picture adaptation of the *Indianapolis* by Alan Sharp, entitled *The Mission of the Shark*, 1990-1991.

There are also several reels of U. S. Navy motion picture film about the War in the Pacific, a videotape of a documentary of the *Indianapolis*, and slides taken from Navy photographs of similar events including those of the ship and the rescue of its survivors. The slides were used by Ferzacca for his Orange College Coast production of the play. Other items in the collection include a diagram of the *Indianapolis*, a map of the region around the Marianas in the Central Pacific, an 18" x 41" copy photograph of the ship, and an audiocassette of the story of the ship narrated by Kevin James.

Other items added to the collection include videotapes, photographs, and medals regarding the ship and its crew. Among these items are medals belonging to Wilbur Miller, a casualty, two photographs of the ship refueling at Iwo Jima, February 1945 and an original painting of the sinking by Chris Mayger used in a reprint of *Abandon Ship*.

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Series 4: Correspondence and Dramatic Productions, 1898-1991

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Series 5: Visual Materials and Artifacts, 1940s-1993

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Motion Picture Film of U.S. Navy in WW II (2 Episodes from <i>Victory at Sea</i> series, 1950s—“The Pacific Boils Over” and “Fury in the Pacific”)	DVD 0005

5 Medals & Photo of Wilbur H. Miller, 1941-1945:
2 Purple Hearts (one engraved); 1 WW II Victory
Medal; 1 Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; 1
American Campaign Medal

Artifacts:
1999.0639

I've Seen Greatness, Videotape of Adrian Marks talk
to Indianapolis Aero Club, October 12, 1993

Manuscript Video:
M0645

Acrylic painting of the sinking of the U.S.S.
Indianapolis, by Chris Mayger

Hanging Paintings:
Carriage 14B

2 oversize photographs of *Indianapolis* taken refueling
at sea during Iwo Jima Operation, February 1945

OVA Photographs:
Folder 1-2

Enlarged photograph of the USS *Indianapolis*
(18" x 41")

Panoramic Photographs

Audiocassette of the story of the USS *Indianapolis* by
Kevin James

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