



THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

June 4-7, 1942



THE SETTING

- Following the devastation at Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Pacific Fleet was reeling. The Imperial Japanese Navy, emboldened by a relentless string of victories across Southeast Asia, sought a definitive knockout blow by capturing the Midway Atoll—a strategic gateway to the Hawaiian Islands.
- When U.S. codebreakers cracked the Japanese cipher, Adm. Chester Nimitz set an intricate trap, sending the carriers Enterprise, Hornet and Yorktown to lay in wait near Midway on June 4, 1942.

A TALE OF TWO NAVIES

U.S. Navy Force Composition:

- 2 Task Forces (16 and 17)
- Midway (Island) Garrison
- 3 Carriers
- 8 Cruisers (7 Heavy / 1 Light)
- 15 Destroyers
- 16 Submarines
- 9 PT Boats
- 233 Carrier Aircraft
- 127 Land-Based Aircraft

AND TWO FATES

Imperial Japanese Force Composition:

- Combined Fleets (4 Fleets)
- 4 Carriers (Heavy)
- 2 Battleships
- 3 Cruisers
- 12 Destroyers
- 13 Submarines
- 248 Carrier Aircraft,
- 16 Floatplanes

320+



Navy medical officers and enlisted served with Task Forces 16 and 17 at the Battle of Midway.

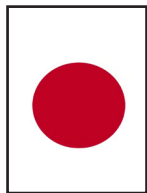


AMERICAN LOSSES:

- One carrier (Yorktown)
- One destroyer sunk (Hannam)
- 150 aircraft destroyed
- 307 KIA

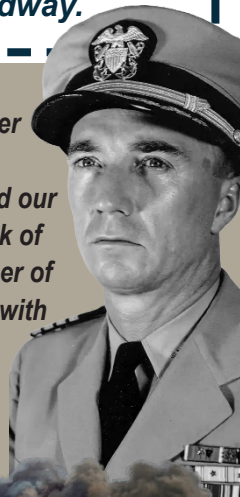
JAPANESE LOSSES:

- Four fleet carriers sunk
- One heavy cruiser sunk
- One heavy cruiser damaged
- 248 aircraft destroyed
- 3,057 KIA



"We took aboard, in all, 725 survivors of the aircraft carrier [Yorktown], by cargo nets, lifelines, rafts, stretchers, and our damaged lifeboat . . . The task of caring for such a large number of survivors in so small a ship, with such limited facilities, was a stupendous one."

~Capt. Joseph Worthington
CO, USS Benham, June 1942



A THEATER OF FIRE

- At 10:22 a.m. on June 4, U.S. dive-bombers plunged from the sky, and within minutes, the pride of the Japanese fleet—the Akagi, Kaga, and Soryu —were transformed into floating infernos. By day's end, a fourth fleet carrier, the Hiryu, was crippled and later sent to the bottom.
- The Navy lost USS Yorktown (CV 5) (struck by a multitude of bombs and torpedoes) and the destroyer USS Hammann (DD 412) which was struck by a torpedo breaking her hull in half.
- Within minutes of Hammann's sinking several of the ship's depth charges exploded underwater killing 81 and injuring many of the ship's Sailors in the water.
- Casualties from Yorktown and Hamman were brought aboard a number of destroyers including USS Balch (DD 363) and USS Benham (DD 397).
- Sailors from Benham alone rescued 725 Sailors from Yorktown and 188 from Hammann.



USS HAMMANN



NAVY MEDICINE FAST FACTS



Listing deck of Yorktown, June 1942
Navy History and Heritage Command

With the salvage party which returned to the Yorktown, there was one Medical Officer and six hospital corps[men]. . . This group proceeded with attempts to identify the remains of those dead who were still on board and in the preparation of them for immediate burial. Thirty-five were found, and all but 10 were identified. Finger prints of all were obtained. These men were buried at sea after services [were] conducted by the Captain. When the torpedo attack occurred in mid-afternoon the identifications, finger prints, and valuables of these men, which had been placed on the hangar deck, all slid down the sloping deck and were lost over the side."

Lt. (j.g.) C.M. Lee, Jr.
Medical Officer, USS Balch

IDENTIFICATION OF THE DEAD

MEDICAL HEROES

- Lt. **Seymour Brown**, MC, USN. Medical officer aboard Benham. He attended to 82 seriously wounded and 153 other wounded.
- Lt.(j.g.) **Edward A. Kearney**, MC, USNR. While others were abandoning the crippled Yorktown, Kearney volunteered to go back onto the ship. He spent his time identifying the dead and treating survivors until a second torpedo strike finally forced him off. Later assigned as the medical officer aboard the Benham where he attended 70 wounded, including 45 in critical condition.
- Lt.(j.g.) **C.M. Lee, Jr.**, MC, USNR. Lee was responsible for 545 Yorktown survivors received aboard the Balch. He performed numerous lifesaving surgeries throughout June 4 and June 5.
- Lt.(j.g.) **John H. Peterson**, MC, USNR. Despite being injured by a torpedo blast on the Hammann, Peterson refused to be a patient. He directed rescue efforts for days, providing care even after his own ship had vanished beneath the waves.
- PhM1c **J.N. Pipkin**, USN received casualties aboard the Balch and treated hundreds of cases of lacerations, brush burns and powder burns in the aft dressing station. He later joined Kearney in the detail to the sinking Yorktown to identify remains.
- Heroism was not in short supply at Midway, in addition to these individuals there were many Sailors who risked their own lives diving into the water to retrieve wounded and exhausted Sailors and lead rescue parties aboard lifeboats and rafts.

