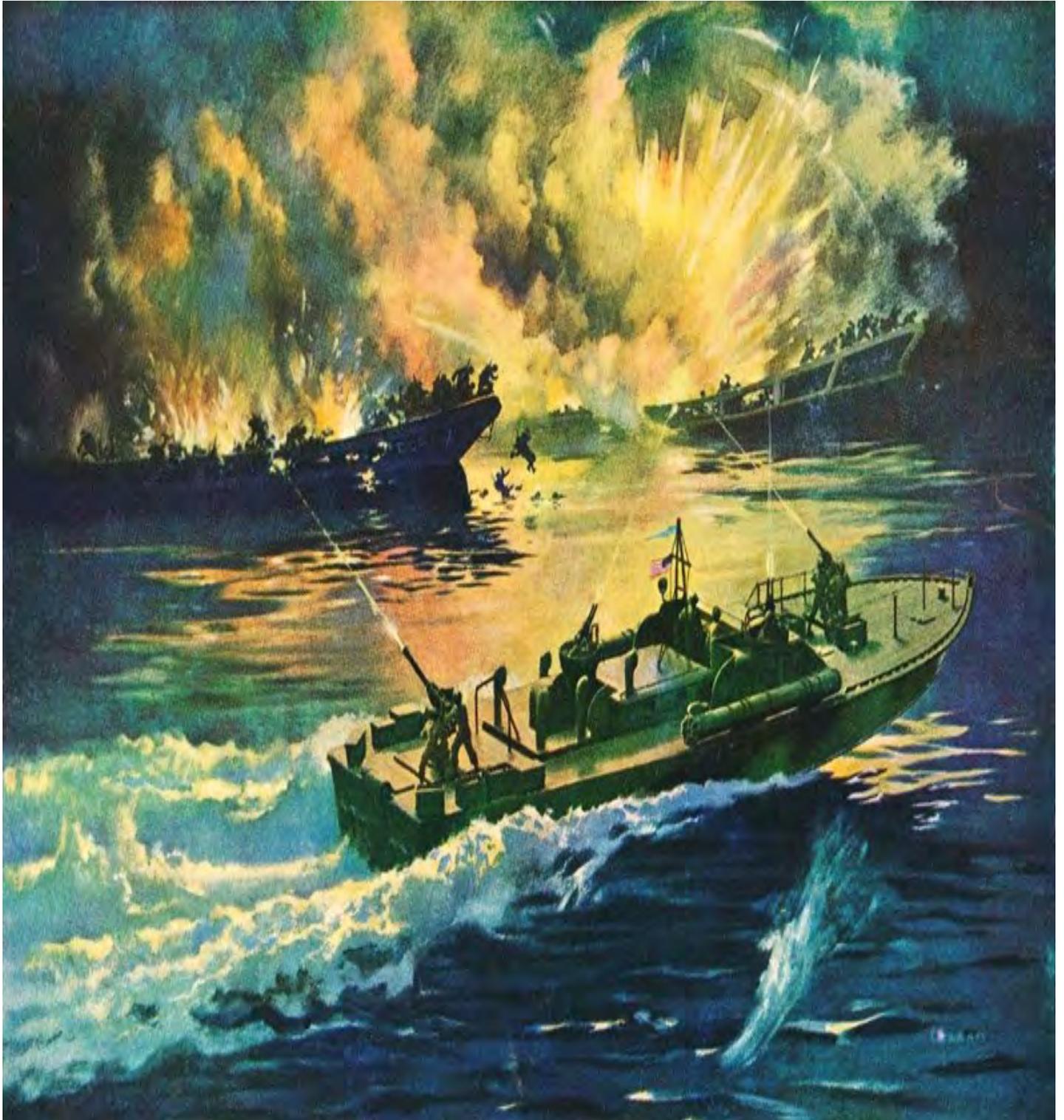


A PT Boat Captain in the Pacific: Howard L. Terry's World War II Service



By Edward T. Cotham, Jr.



Photo of H. L. Terry, Navy
Commission Application, 1943

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When World War II broke out, Howard Terry was a 26-year old Kansas City salesman starting a career and trying to take care of a wife and two young children. In 1943, while he was working for Procter & Gamble, Mr. Terry decided that the time had come for him to serve his country by joining the U.S. Navy. He applied for a commission and listed as his reason for joining "I am applying because I think my country now needs men like myself." When asked to list any amateur activities that might have a bearing on his placement in the Navy, Mr. Terry offered "hunting, golf, boxing, and football." One of his three character references was D.X. Bible, his former football coach at the University of Texas.

Terry was accepted by the Navy with the rank of Ensign and spent four months at an officer training school at Cornell University. Following that training, Terry volunteered for service in the PT boats. He remembered being called into a large room where all the young officers received a presentation on PT boat service. The recruiting officer decided to appeal to the men's spirit of danger and adventure. He directed each man to look at the man on their left and then the man on their right. The recruiter said it was likely that at least one of those two men would not make it through the war serving on PT boats. That night, Mr. Terry and a friend compared notes on the talk. They both agreed that they didn't believe the part about the men on their left and right, but both decided to volunteer anyway. The prospect of running his own boat was irresistible to Terry, and he looked forward to the day he would become a captain.



Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Training Center at Melville, Rhode Island

Terry was then sent to the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Base Training Center at Melville, Rhode Island, where he received a crash course in operating and serving on a PT boat. In the spring of 1944, Terry was sent out to the Pacific as a replacement officer.

The PT boat service for which Mr. Terry volunteered was a unique branch of naval service. The initials "PT" stood for Patrol Torpedo. Called the "Mosquito Fleet" by sailors on larger American vessels, the Japanese knew them by an even more colorful name: "Devil Boats." As the Japanese quickly came to realize, the PT boats were some of the fastest ships in the Navy, and despite their small size, they were (pound for pound) some of the most heavily armed. They needed this protection. As one PT boat historian commented, "PTs were in more frequent contact with the enemy, and at closer range, than any other type of surface craft."

Like Mr. Terry, many of the officers chosen for PT boat service had been successful college athletes. The Navy believed that the experience of participating on a team in a competitive sport would be particularly useful to an officer in command of a PT boat, which typically had a crew size of 3 officers and 14 men. In fact, Kenneth D. Molloy, who Mr. Terry was eventually to replace as captain of PT-326, was a two-time All American Lacrosse player at Syracuse.



PT-170 with zebra camouflage

After completing his training in Rhode Island, Terry's first active service was to join Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 10 ("Ron 10") operating out of Milne Bay at the southern tip of New Guinea. His first formal assignment was to be the Executive Officer on PT-170. Nicknamed "Zebra," the 170 boat had originally been painted with an experimental zebra camouflage. By the time Mr. Terry served on her, however, 170 had been repainted to a camouflage color that blended in with the jungle. In news coverage back home, American journalists referred to the New Guinea boats as "Green Dragons." On PT-170, Terry learned the art of patrolling coastal waters at night seeking enemy barges and shipping that could be destroyed.



Barge Busting

Called "Barge Busting," this type of patrol was an extremely effective way of cutting off the movement of enemy supplies. It was also a source of risky entertainment. As one Captain later described barge busting, "It's like waiting for the kick-off in a football game. There's no sport in the world like closing within 50 yards of a barge and literally blowing it apart."



An 80-foot Elco PT boat cruises off New Guinea coast, 1943

Mr. Terry's most active duty on PT-170 included two missions on the nights of May 10-14, 1944, when he first came under enemy fire. PT boats usually patrolled in pairs and on this occasion PT-170 was paired with PT-343, which had a more experienced crew. Their assignment was to patrol the northern New Guinea coast and destroy enemy barges. Just after midnight on the morning of May 11, the PTs spotted two large 110' barges.



Captured Japanese barge

The Japanese barges were usually armored and armed, sometimes being equipped with heavy weapons. On this night, the PT boats encountered two barges with machine guns. At a distance of about 75 yards the barges opened fire on the PTs. Japanese batteries from the shore soon joined in the action. The PTs responded by firing hundreds of rounds from their own guns at the barges, sinking the two barges in an action that lasted only five minutes. The Captain of PT-170 later wrote about his men that “the crew of the 170 behaved very well and without undue excitement despite the inexperience of them and the suddenness of this attack.”

On the following evening, the exercise was repeated, this time with PT-342 as the lead vessel. This patrol started as a routine rescue mission. A radio report said that two planes were down and the PTs were sent to the possible crash location to see if they could recover the crews. After searching a 15 mile area, however, no sign of the planes could be located and the PTs were instructed to continue their patrol. At about 11:00 that evening, four barges were spotted close to the shore. As the PTs approached, all four barges suddenly opened fire. The PTs then returned fire with all available guns. Direct hits were observed on all the barges and the two trailing barges were sunk. By this time, Japanese guns from the shore had found their range and the two PTs were about to become caught in a cross-fire. They headed out to sea at high speed and through the use of evasive tactics managed to avoid significant damage.

Captain H. W. Panches of PT-342 later wrote in his action report that “These 110 foot heavily armed and sometimes armored barges are at least an even match for a PT and if numbers are in enemy’s favor the odds are decidedly with them, not taking the speed factor into consideration. It is remarkable in this instance that [our] PTs came through unscathed, as there was an enormous concentration of fire power emanating from the barges, to say nothing of shore battery fire.” The Captain of PT-170, the boat on which Mr. Terry was serving, also spoke well of his crew, noting that “All members of the crew of PT-170 behaved exceptionally well, especially in view of the fact that many were experiencing their first or second engagement.”



Up a lazy river in New Guinea

At the end of June, Terry was finally given command of his own boat, PT-171. But his new boat, along with the rest of the squadron, was sent almost immediately to Dreger harbor for overhaul and repairs. By this time, Dreger harbor had transformed from being an advance base to become the biggest PT supply and repair facility in New Guinea. Mr. Terry spent most of two months at Dreger with the squadron. He remembered spending much of his time there playing cards and serving as the athletic officer.

At about this time, Mr. Terry received a very positive endorsement from Christopher B. Armat, who had been his commanding officer on board PT-170. Armat wrote:

This officer is well able to perform the duties expected of his grade. He possesses considerable executive ability and great drive. He is a “go-getter.” Under fire he remains calm and cool and can be counted on to keep his head.



MTB Ron 21 Squadron Patch

On the basis of this recommendation, Mr. Terry was eventually promoted to the rank of lieutenant (jg). He was also transferred to much more active duty in Squadron 21, where he was given the command of PT-326 in early September, 1944. Nicknamed the “Green Harlot,” PT-326 was an 80’ boat built in 1943 by the Electric Boat Company (ELCO) of Bayonne, New Jersey. The base for Squadron 21 (“Ron 21”) was Mios Woendi, an island off the northern coast of New Guinea that was quickly in the process of becoming the major base for PT boats in the Pacific. Mr. Terry was a good fit for his new squadron. Squadron 21 was known as the “All American

Squadron” because there were so many All American football player officers. September was spent in a series of fairly routine anti-barge patrols, as Mr. Terry became accustomed to his new boat and crew. On several of these missions the PTs encountered local natives, who were questioned to get intelligence about the Japanese and their movements.

On October 13, 1944, all of the PT boats departed Mios Woendi in a massive convoy for Leyte Gulf, 1,200 miles away, where the American forces were staging for the invasion of the Philippines. Mr. Terry always enjoyed telling the story of one particular event associated with

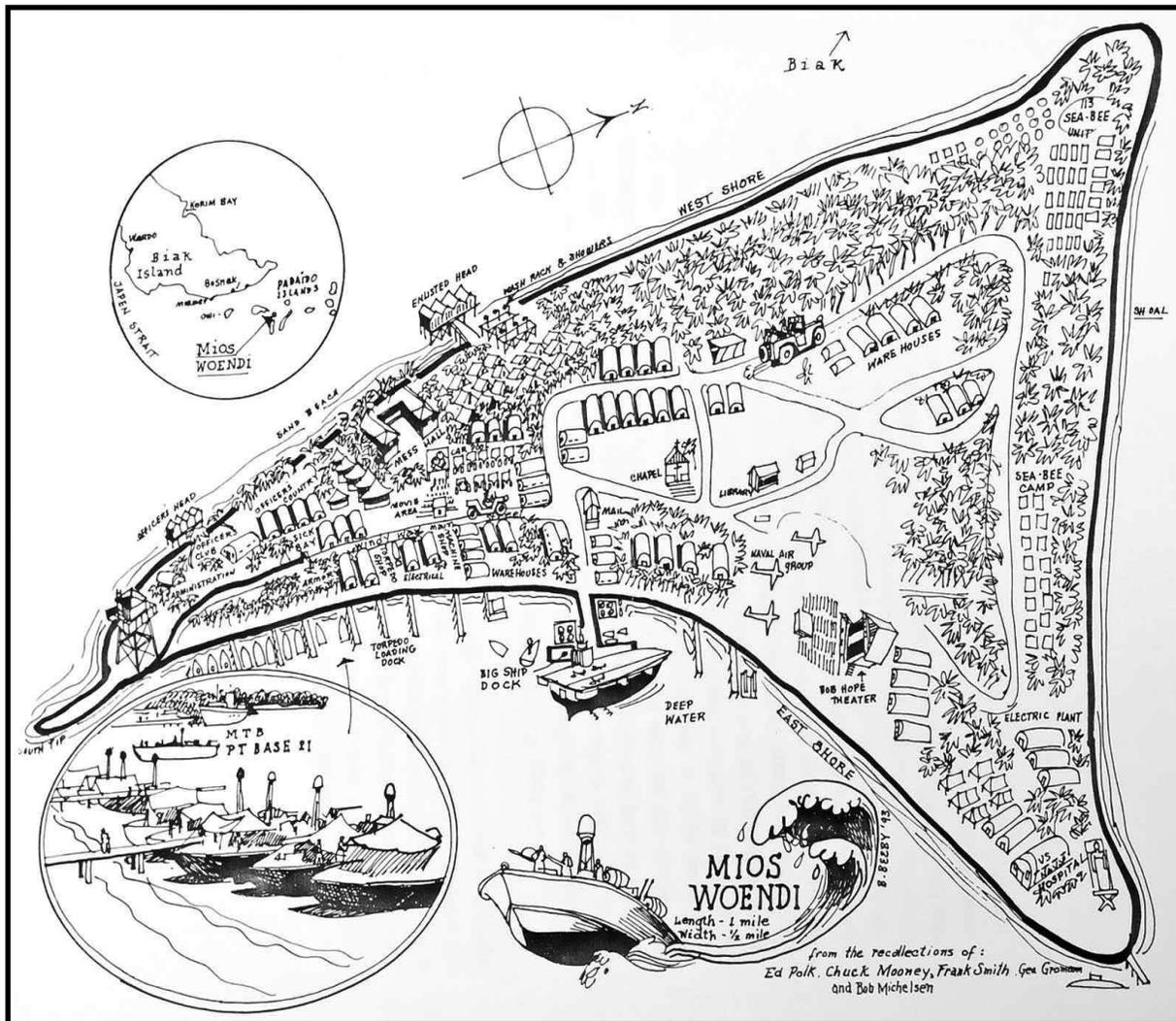


PT 326



Mios Woendi in New Guinea

the departure from Mios Woendi. One of the primary occupations of the PT boat captains in the Officer's Club at Mios Woendi was gambling. Mr. Terry and another captain had managed to construct a really good table for craps (a popular game featuring dice). They had talked it over and decided to try to take the table with them to the new base in the Philippines. During the night, the other officer got some men to carry the table on board his boat and covered it with a tarp. As they were getting ready to leave the next day, one of the senior officers in the squadron came by to inspect the boats and noticed the large covered object on deck. "What the Goddamn hell is that?" he thundered. When the object was revealed, the officer ordered it chopped into kindling wood while the rest of the officers watched. Gambling would resume at other bases, but it would not involve that particular table.



Hand-drawn map of Mios Woendi

Mr. Terry was not unfamiliar with gambling himself. Not long after joining the Navy, the young officer had gained a reputation as a highly skilled poker player and used his gift for numbers to make quite a bit of money in his spare time. One of the youngest members of his crew, Bud Layman, recalled in 2013 at the age of 88, that Mr. Terry was a "genuinely nice guy." He also

remembered that Mr. Terry kept a large wad of cash handy on the boat and headed off to check out the action in the poker game whenever he hit shore.

The movement from New Guinea to the Philippines was by far the largest and longest mass movement of PT boats during the war. It was not an easy journey. A PT boat could use as much as 500 gallons an hour of fuel. Mr. Terry remembered that on one occasion he almost ran out of fuel before his boat could be resupplied. The PT boats were all refueled just before reaching the Philippines so they could be ready for action.



PT Boat refueling on way to Leyte (Oct 20, 1944)



MacArthur debarks from USS Nashville onto PT 525 for return to Philippines

It is now time to discuss Mr. Terry's role in General Douglas MacArthur's return to the Philippines, one of the most famous events of World War II. On March 11, 1942, General MacArthur and a small party of family and staff had escaped from the Philippines in four PT boats. Their departure point was the island fortress of Corregidor, near the entrance to Manila Bay. After MacArthur reached safety in Australia, he issued a statement to be passed along to those still fighting in the Philippines, defiantly proclaiming "I shall return."

MacArthur's famous statement led to some confusion about the general's meaning. What did MacArthur mean when he said he would return? Did he mean he would return to somewhere in the Philippines? Did he mean he would return to the Island of Luzon, where Manila was located? Or did he mean literally that he was going to return to Corregidor? Neither

MacArthur nor the press was going to take any chances. All of these potential avenues of return would be thoroughly documented and celebrated.

On October 20, 1944, American forces stormed ashore on the island of Leyte, reclaiming the first part of the Philippines. MacArthur was eager to make his first return and wanted to get ashore as soon as possible. But as his boat neared the beach the beachmaster was too busy to send a vessel to ferry the general to a dock. A furious MacArthur decided not to wait any longer, proceeding to wade ashore with an angry expression on his face. Capturing this moment for posterity was Gaetano Faillace, a New York photographer who acted as the general's personal photographer. The general's public relations staff members later told MacArthur that they thought the wading and determined expression on his face made for good news coverage. In fact, it was so good that the general offered to recreate the wading ashore the next day for the newsreels and motion picture photographers. By some accounts the general recreated his first return to the Philippines six times for the press.

On the 21st of October, Lt. Howard Terry and PT 326 reached Leyte Gulf. One of the first jobs he was assigned was helping MacArthur recreate his landing for Hollywood.

“We were one of three PT boats that were summoned to move the General and his entourage to shore from the big ship (*USS Nashville*) on which he arrived at Leyte Gulf. General MacArthur liked using the PT boats for this kind of service, as they had rescued him from the Philippines when he had evacuated in 1942 and he was fond of them. I remember that my boat had a load of photographers and Hollywood people. We landed them in advance of the General's wading ashore, which was carefully staged for the cameras. You never saw such a crowd and commotion as the people on that beach when MacArthur came wading in.”

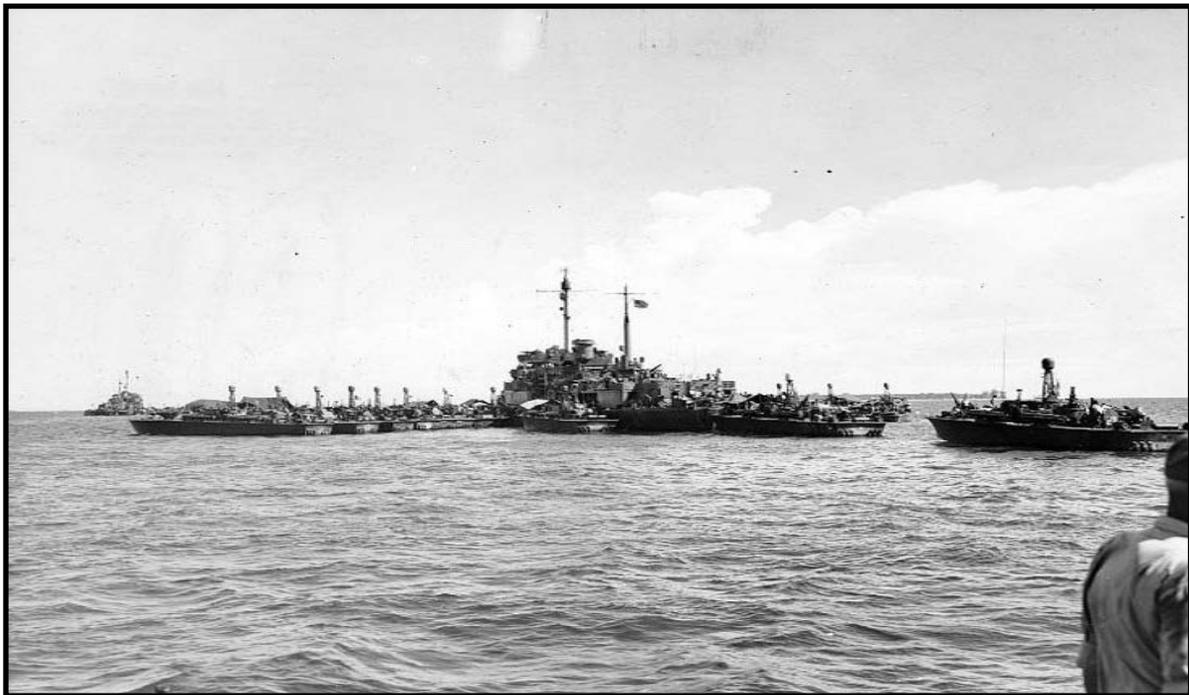


MacArthur Wading Ashore



General MacArthur inspects the Leyte Beachhead

Mr. Terry remembered that everybody was proud and excited as MacArthur's arrival signaled the official start of what was commonly believed to be the campaign that would liberate the Philippines and bring the war against Japan closer to a successful conclusion. What Mr. Terry and the rest of the Allied forces did not know was that the next couple of weeks would be the most difficult and dangerous part of the war for him. The largest sea battle in history (the Battle of Leyte Gulf) was about to begin.



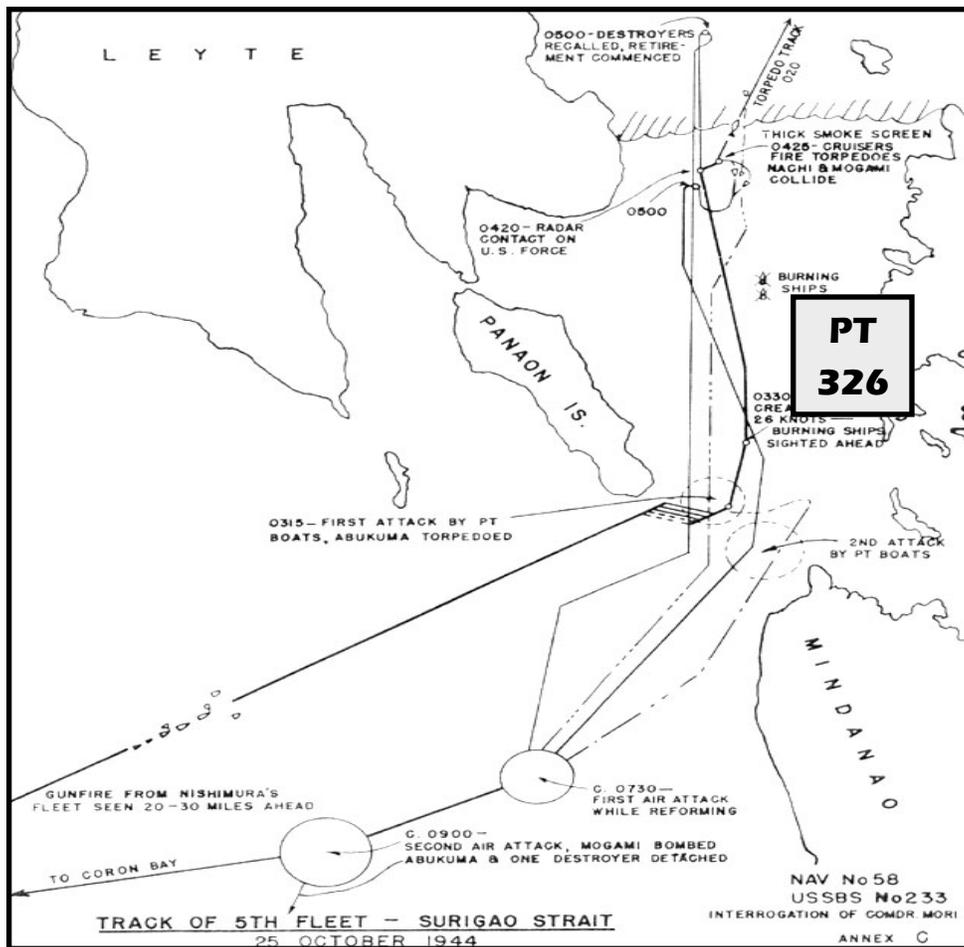
PT Tender USS *Oyster Bay* in Leyte Gulf with PT boats



Leyte Gulf 1944

On the morning of October 24, 1944, American carrier planes spotted a large fleet of Japanese warships approaching the Philippines. It was part of an elaborate Japanese plan to split the American naval forces into pieces and then destroy the ships in Leyte Gulf that were covering and supplying MacArthur's army. The Japanese plan called for a "Northern Force" to lure the main American covering forces away from Leyte. The Northern Force was built around several aircraft

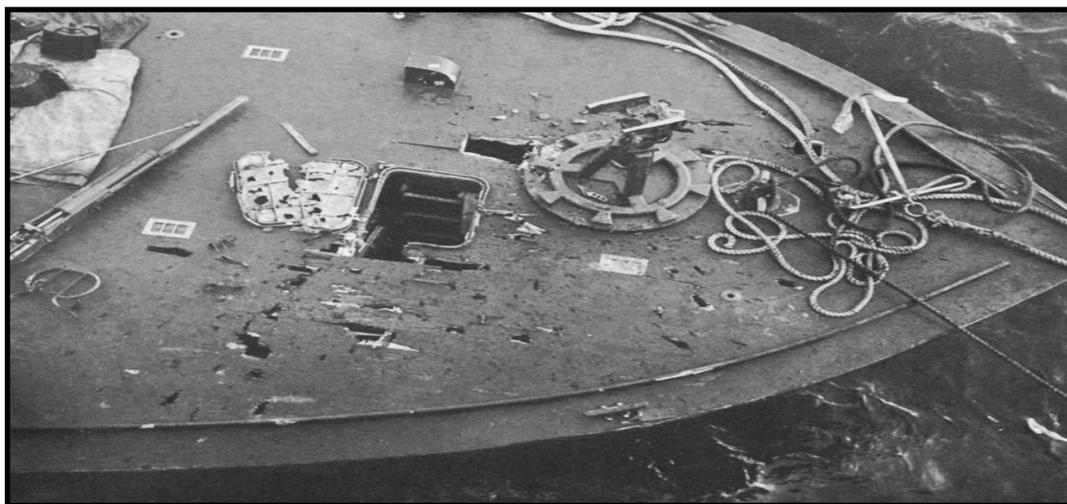
carriers that served as the main bait. As the US covering forces were lured away chasing the Northern Force, two other surface forces advanced on Leyte from the west. The "Southern Force" planned to strike at the landing area via Surigao Strait. The "Center Force," by far the most powerful of the attacking forces, would pass through San Bernardino Strait into the Philippine Sea, turn southwards, and then also attack the landing area. Mr. Terry and his PT boat (PT-326) were stationed at Leyte Gulf, near the entrance to Surigao Strait.



On the afternoon of October 24, Mr. Terry received urgent orders to take his PT boat (PT-326) and deploy in the upper part of Surigao Strait to face the Japanese Southern force. “We didn’t know exactly what was coming at us but we knew that there were a lot of big Japanese ships coming our way. There were about 33 of us deployed in groups of three all along the Strait. Our orders were to report the movements of the ships and to try and make torpedo runs to harass them or disable them. My friend Jackson Hinds, a supply officer on one of the PT boat tenders, requested permission to come along on our mission and was granted permission to accompany us.”

Late that evening the PT boats started making radar contact with the approaching Japanese vessels: “We had radar on our boat and we watched the enemy ships coming up the Strait. On the radar you could usually see big stationary shapes that were islands. At one point, one of my crew pointed with amazement at the edge of the radar screen and said ‘Captain, that isn’t an island. It’s moving. That’s a ship.’” It took several hours for the first of these big Japanese ships to reach Mr. Terry’s position. After a delay while the destroyers made a preliminary attack on the lead vessels, the three boats in Mr. Terry’s section readied for action and were ordered to commence their torpedo run at a little after 4:00 a.m.

Mr. Terry vividly recalled the scene as they sped up to make their torpedo run at a couple of enemy destroyers. “As we got within a few thousand yards the secondary batteries on the big Japanese ships opened up and it looked like a solid wall of fire ahead of you. You just knew that nothing could survive in there. And here we were going at them in a plywood boat. I’ll never forget that moment. I turned to my friend Jackson Hinds and said “I’m sorry” and he said “Why’s that?” “Because I think I’ve gotten you killed,” I replied.



View of PT Boat Damage Inflicted in the Battle of Surigao Strait

The worst part of the torpedo runs was when the PT boats took turns being illuminated by the large Japanese fleet. As one Captain later recalled:

I had just radioed the other boats when the cruisers opened up on us with 8 inch and 4.7 guns. A dozen star shells burst over our heads and at the same time they pinned each boat with a searchlight and it was bright as daylight. From there on, brother, we weren't scared. We were terror stricken.



Torpedo

The three PT boats in Mr. Terry's section proceeded straight for the enemy ships. Directly ahead of him was *Shigure*, one of the largest and most powerful destroyers in the world. Firing a torpedo from a PT boat meant starting the torpedo's propellers and rolling it off a rack to the side to continue in the direction the boat was heading. Then the boat turned to get out of the way. It was during this turn that the boats were most vulnerable to enemy fire.

The first boat in Mr. Terry's section of three boats launched its two torpedoes, but one of them exploded prematurely with a tremendous explosion, drawing intense Japanese fire at the PT boats. Mr. Terry's 326 boat then released its torpedo but it went wide of the Japanese destroyer as it turned toward them. The last boat, PT-321, tried to fire its torpedo but experienced a malfunction. That torpedo ended up on the deck with its propeller spinning madly and a fire breaking out.

By this time several Japanese ships were firing at the PT boats, and one crewman on the 321 boat was severely injured by enemy fire in the frantic scramble to roll the defective torpedo overboard. Mr. Terry's boat had a smoke generator on it and it was put to good use on this occasion as the three PT boats in his section roared off to safety through the covering smoke.

With the aid of the intelligence provided by the PT boats, the American battleships at the top of the Strait were able to pinpoint intense artillery fire on the Japanese fleet. By morning, virtually the entire Southern force had been destroyed. Mr. Terry recalled that he and his crew congratulated themselves on having survived the experience. But the next day, the situation took another unexpected turn.

At 10:00 a.m., a group of nine Japanese planes came into view. Five of them began diving runs aiming directly at American ships, sinking the carrier *St. Lo* with heavy casualties. The Kamikazes, as the suicide planes eventually became known, were a new development in the war in the Pacific. Mr. Terry remembered the shock that accompanied these first attacks. “I remember my first reaction to the Kamikazes was ‘That’s not fair...the Japs are cheating.’ I know that sounds odd today but that was my first reaction, like they weren’t following the rules.”



PT boat captain briefing

On the afternoon of the 25th the PT boat captains were called to an emergency meeting where they were briefed on the grim new situation facing them. Mr. Terry remembered that the people who briefed them had “long faces and looked nervous and scared.” He soon learned why. Approaching them from the north was the Central Force, a fleet of big Japanese warships including *Yamato*, the largest battleship in the world. The American battleships that had destroyed the Japanese Southern force the night before had

expended almost all of their armor-piercing ammunition. All that stood between the American fleet in Leyte Gulf and the approaching Japanese forces was a group of small escort carriers and their destroyer escorts. The PT boats, the only remaining line of defense if the escort carriers failed, were ordered to ready themselves to make daylight torpedo runs against the massive enemy fleet. Mr. Terry remembered thinking to himself that the action the night before had been bad enough, but this new assignment in broad daylight was almost certainly a suicide mission. PT boats had never been designed to take on ships of this size and scale. It was with a great deal of relief, therefore, that he learned later in the day that the Japanese force had been repelled without the need for another PT boat attack.

After the battle of Surigao Strait, Admiral Chester Nimitz wrote about the PT boats: “The skill, determination, and courage displayed by the personnel of these small boats is worthy of the highest praise.” “Their contact reports,” he continued, “as well as the firing and illumination they drew from the enemy, gave ample warning to our own main body; and, while the issue of the later main engagement was never in doubt, the PT’s action very probably threw the Japanese command off balance and contributed to the completeness of their subsequent defeat.”

The end of the Battle of Leyte Gulf did not lead to rest for the weary crews of the PT boats. On the next afternoon, October 26, 1944, Mr. Terry and his boat went on patrol with PT-132 (“Sea Bat”). The first part of the mission sent the boats to recover a team of Alamo Scouts. The Alamo Scouts (formerly the 6th Army Special Reconnaissance Unit) was an elite team of men who operated behind enemy lines to provide covert intelligence and raid enemy targets where possible. The PT boats frequently dropped the scouts off and picked them up when their work

was accomplished. The Alamo Scouts had a difficult job to do and were chosen for their combat and survival skills. As one crewman on the Sea Bat remembered, he had “never seen a more qualified bunch of mean, vicious, murderous-looking sons of bitches than the Alamo Scouts. I mean those bastards would kill you and give you change . . . Everything about them said kill.”



Alamo Scouts



PT 132—Sea Bat

On the mission to pick up the Alamo Scout team, Mr. Terry's boat also carried war correspondent Spencer Davis along as a passenger. Davis later wrote an article about the mission that was highly complementary of Mr. Terry. That article was printed in newspapers all across America. As Davis wrote:

The moon was not yet up and the darkness accentuated the flickering lights of Mindinao's northern-most shoreline as this PT boat approached on a special mission.

"Those lights might cause us some trouble when we try to find him" remarked the skipper, Lt. Howard Terry of Cameron, Tex.

We were looking for a signal light from shore. For the two preceding nights an American scout, hiding out in friendly guerilla country, had sent his identification signal, but this night his vigil was to end. A machine gunner sang out: "There it is." And the signalman gave an answering blink. Soon a native boat paddled alongside. Willing hands pulled the scout aboard. He was tall, lean and hungry looking and had the air of a man who depended upon alertness and light footedness. "Got room for one more?" the scout asked Terry. "I want to bring my boy along."

Offers Target for PT

Terry agreed and almost instantly a small, cheerful Filipino of perhaps 21 materialized at the scout's side. He was "Conny," a guerilla. He had a .45 Colt strapped under his left arm. The American scout, a Rhode Islander who must remain unidentified, produced a large packet of maps and spread them out under the charthouse light. "There is a concentration of about 150 Japs here," he said, pointing to a harbor at Masipit. "If we shot them up it would do much for the guerillas who have been harassing the Jap garrison for weeks."

The PT soon was under way again, speeding southward. It gingerly nosed into Masipit harbor, taking constant soundings to avoid running aground. The engines were muffled and every man was at his battle station as the boat moved quietly to within 100 yards of the beach. It was 1 a.m. now and the moon was up and gleaming brightly. Suddenly a rifle cracked on shore.

"The first shot has been fired boys," Terry shouted, "but not the last. Let's go!"

All of PT's Guns Blaze

Every gun on the little PT blazed away at shoreline structures where the enemy troops were garrisoned. Tracers poured a crimson stream into the objective. Then the mortars lobbed their high explosives through-out the area. There was

a whoosh and a salvo of rockets scudded from their racks. It was a direct hit. When the attack ceased only two buildings were left standing at Masipit. The scout whacked his hands in glee. "I bet my life that within four hours the Japs will have pulled out of that place," he said, "and the guerillas are watching them like hawks, from the hills." Thus did the PT bring the first direct aid and comfort to the guerillas of northern Mindinao, who for almost three years have fought alone.

It was a good night for Mr. Terry and the PT boats. That night they attacked and sank two Japanese barges and did serious damage to a Japanese base. But in the process of getting close enough to make sure the barges were destroyed the PT boats had both ran aground and suffered some damage to their propellers. This damage forced the boats to return to base more slowly than they would otherwise have traveled. At about 8:00 a.m. the next morning, as the boats were limping back to base, a Japanese Zero plane dived out of the low cloud cover heading straight down on the two PT boats. There was no time at all to react. The plane dropped a bomb that landed within 10 yards of PT-132. As Mr. Terry recalled, "This plane came out of nowhere and before we could turn our guns on it the plane dropped a bomb that hit very close to the other boat. It was not more than 50 yards from me. That bomb was what we called a daisy-cutter and exploded sending shrapnel in all directions. It really ripped through the other boat, killing or wounding nearly everyone on board. I had an Executive Officer named Rardin who was studying to be a doctor when the war broke out. We transferred him over to the other boat and he did a good job and managed to save a couple of guy's lives."



Nellist Team (Nellist is lower right)

The Alamo Scout that Mr. Terry's boat had picked up on this dangerous mission was Bill Nellist. Nellist brought back valuable information about Japanese troops and defenses. As the Alamo Scout history records, Nellist "provided 6th Army G2 with a detailed map of troop positions, ammunition dumps, supply depots and travel routes, as well as sources of fresh water and whether or not the beaches could sustain invasion forces." On the day after Nellist returned from this mission he was relaxing on the beach. A Japanese plane chose just that moment to strike the beach. Ironically, having narrowly escaped injury from the bomb that hit the PT boats the day before, Nellist was grazed by bullets in the leg and neck while relaxing on the beach.

Three days following the Japanese plane attack, Mr. Terry's PT boat went on patrol again, this time with PT 494 (nicknamed "Blind Date"). As they were patrolling off Amagusan Point, the PTs spotted a Japanese Mitsubishi Ki-21 bomber coming to bomb the American forces invading the Philippines. Both boats opened fire at the bomber. By this point in the war, all of

the Japanese planes had code names, with bombers being assigned female names. Thus, the official mission report showed that the PTs drove away a “Sally” with their 50mm machine guns. They also saw two barges on the beach, but declined to blow them up because they were in close proximity to some native huts. As the photo of PT 494 records, many of the PT boats painted reminders on their upper works to record the barges, ships and planes they destroyed.

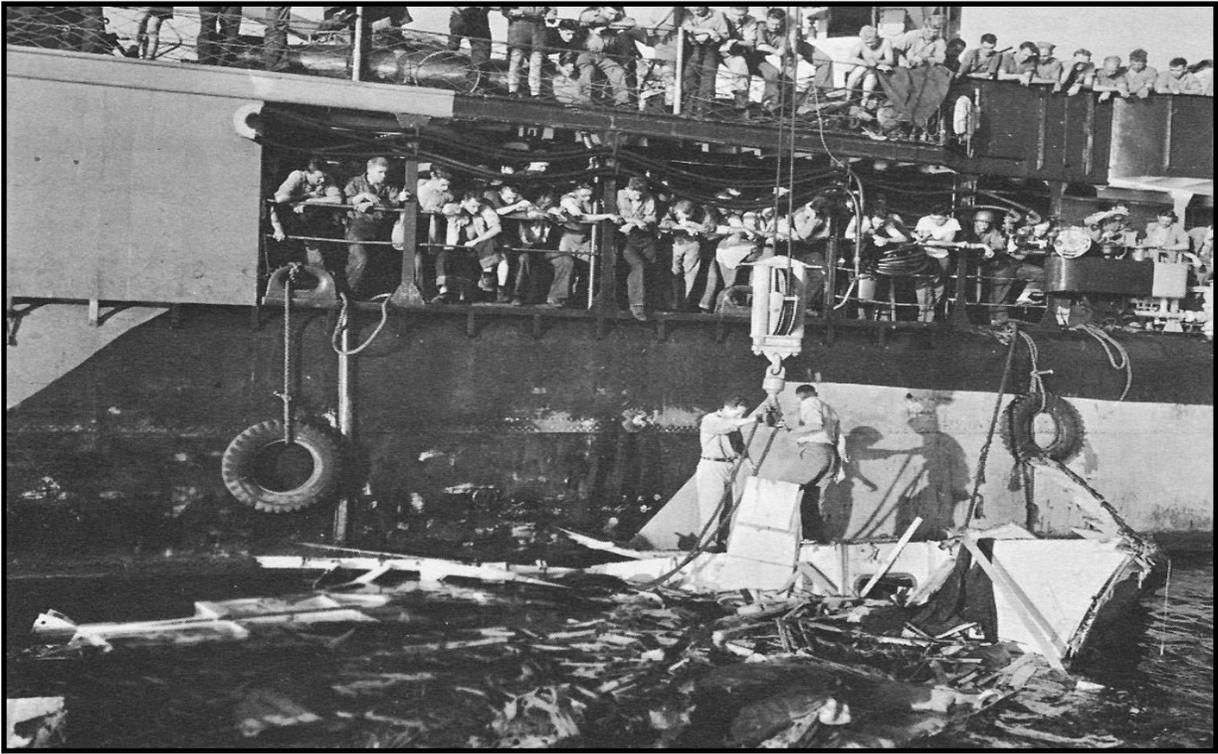


PT 494



“Sally”—a Japanese bomber

Japanese planes continued to be a threat to PT boats operating in these waters. On the night of November 5, a Japanese plane dropped a bomb that destroyed PT-320 killing almost its entire crew. A month later two other PT boats were destroyed by Kamikaze suicide planes.



Wreckage of PT 320, victim of a direct bomb hit in Leyte Gulf, November 5, 1944

The period from October 20 when the PT boats reached the Philippines to the end of the year was the most active time in Mr. Terry's military service. Exhausted and suffering from a recurrent problem with malaria, Mr. Terry was released on Christmas Eve of 1944 for rest and recuperation in Australia. The next time he rejoined his squadron they would be making the final push to occupy Manila and recapture the fortress of Corregidor.



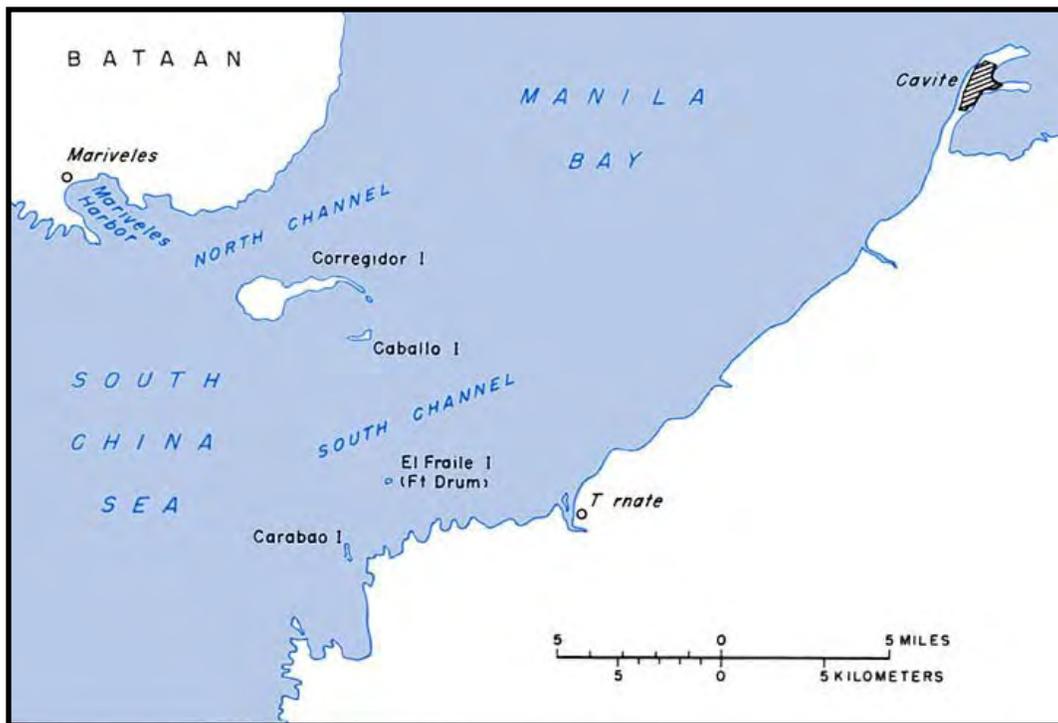
Lt. John McGowen

As the American land and sea force approached Manila it became critically important to find out as much as possible about the Japanese defenses in the area. PT boat patrols at night intensified and even some daylight missions were sanctioned. On February 11, 1945, for example, PTs 325 and 326 were sent to the San Pedro river on a special Army liaison mission. At 11:00 a.m. the boats anchored off the entrance to the river. Mr. Terry was the officer in charge of this mission. He had orders to meet Lt. John McGowen, one of the Alamo Scouts, who was setting up a radio station and checking out roads and bridges that the army could potentially utilize.

When McGowen did not appear by 12:15, Mr. Terry decided to go ashore and try to locate him. It took almost three hours, but eventually Mr. Terry located McGowen and obtained the information he had been sent to get. Mr. Terry always enjoyed telling one particular story about this unusual mission ashore.

We landed near the entrance to the river and marched through the swampy part of the island. As we were walking we came across a young kid. We didn't know what to expect since this was Japanese occupied country and we were some of the first Americans in the area. So we were a little concerned how the natives would treat us. But the kid came right up to us and said, "Hey Mack, you looking for the whorehouse?" So we knew it was going to be all right.

As MacArthur's invasion and occupation of the Philippines continued, the American forces approached the important city of Manila and the bay on which it is located. Guarding the entrance to Manila Bay was the heavily fortified island of Corregidor (known simply as "the Rock"). The key to recapturing Manila was getting control of Corregidor. But to capture the rocky island, the Americans needed first to know more about the situation in Manila Bay.



On the evening of February 13, 1945, Mr. Terry and PT-326 were part of a group of four PT boats that entered Manila Bay on a scouting mission. This mission was highly dangerous. It meant running through possibly mine-infested waters in the dark and passing the Japanese shore guns. The mission turned out to be a success and provided valuable intelligence about the Japanese defenses. As the War Diary of the squadron proudly recorded in all capital letters, "These PT's were THE FIRST U.S. NAVAL UNITS TO RETURN TO MANILA BAY." Entering through the South Channel the boats surveyed the Bay all night, destroying anything and everything that might conceivably aid the Japanese war effort. In the dark it was very difficult to tell what various objects actually were. At about 2:00 a.m., for example, the boats

made a torpedo run at what turned out to be a fish trap. At dawn the four boats made a daring rush out of the entrance to Manila Bay, going by Carabao Island where they again received fire from the shore.

Lt. Cmndr Frederick M. Binder later recalled the details of this first mission into Manila Bay:

“Four boats, two from Ron 27 and two from Ron 21, were led by Lt. (later Governor of Pennsylvania) Raymond P. Shafer. [They] made their way at night through the narrow strait between Carabao Island and Luzon into the heart of Manila Bay and up as far as the harbor breakwater. In Manila there was house to house fighting, especially in the Intra-Muros sector where the Jap Marines were holding out behind walls 10 feet thick. Our boats went through the straits because we were told by Naval Intelligence that there were no mines in that stretch of water. All the way in Jap flares were being sent up from Carabao Island, but the Japs never fired on us. When we got into the bay proper and made our sweep we managed to sink two very large sailboats loaded with personnel. The motorized sailboats did not heave to when warned. We came close aboard and decided that the passengers were Jap troops fleeing from Bataan to Luzon. We sank them. By now it was dawn and rather than risk a return trip through the narrow straits, Lt. Shafer decided to take our chances over the mine fields on the bay side of Carabao Island. Passing too close to the island, ostensibly to avoid the mines at the mouth of the bay, we drew fire. We replied. Our guns exploded a fuel and ammo dump on Carabao. What a glorious noise and blaze. We then skittered over the mine fields at 45 knots. And back to [base at] Subic.



PT boat approaches Corregidor

After softening up Corregidor with three days of bombing, the Americans launched a paratrooper assault on the fortress on February 16. The area where the paratroopers landed on top of the Rock was referred to as “Topside.” The winds were substantial and it was feared

that many of the men might drop in the water or be swept into Japanese occupied territory. Mr. Terry and his boat were deployed northeast of Corregidor to retrieve men who missed their objective. After the air drop was complete, they spent the rest of the day making close patrols of the Bataan Peninsula. During these patrols they destroyed three barges, a speed boat and a shore gun. Why did the PTs devote such attention to destroying a speed boat? The answer is that by this point in the war the Japanese were loading such boats with explosives and making Kamikaze-type runs at the larger American ship. By the end of the busy day, the Americans had gained a foothold on Corregidor and PT-326 had fired almost 2,000 rounds of ammunition.

An assessment of Mr. Terry's ability as an officer from this time period is extremely complimentary:

A very good boat captain. Keeps a well organized boat crew. He has shown himself to be cool and courageous in several actions against the enemy.

On the evening of March 2, 1945, Mr. Terry transported a number of war correspondents from the liberty ships that had arrived to the dock at Corregidor. There, the correspondents were treated to a special photo opportunity featuring the final return of General MacArthur to the place where he had originally left the Philippines. General MacArthur had left Corregidor on PT-41 in 1942. On March 2, 1945, a little less than three years later, he returned to the Rock on PT-373.



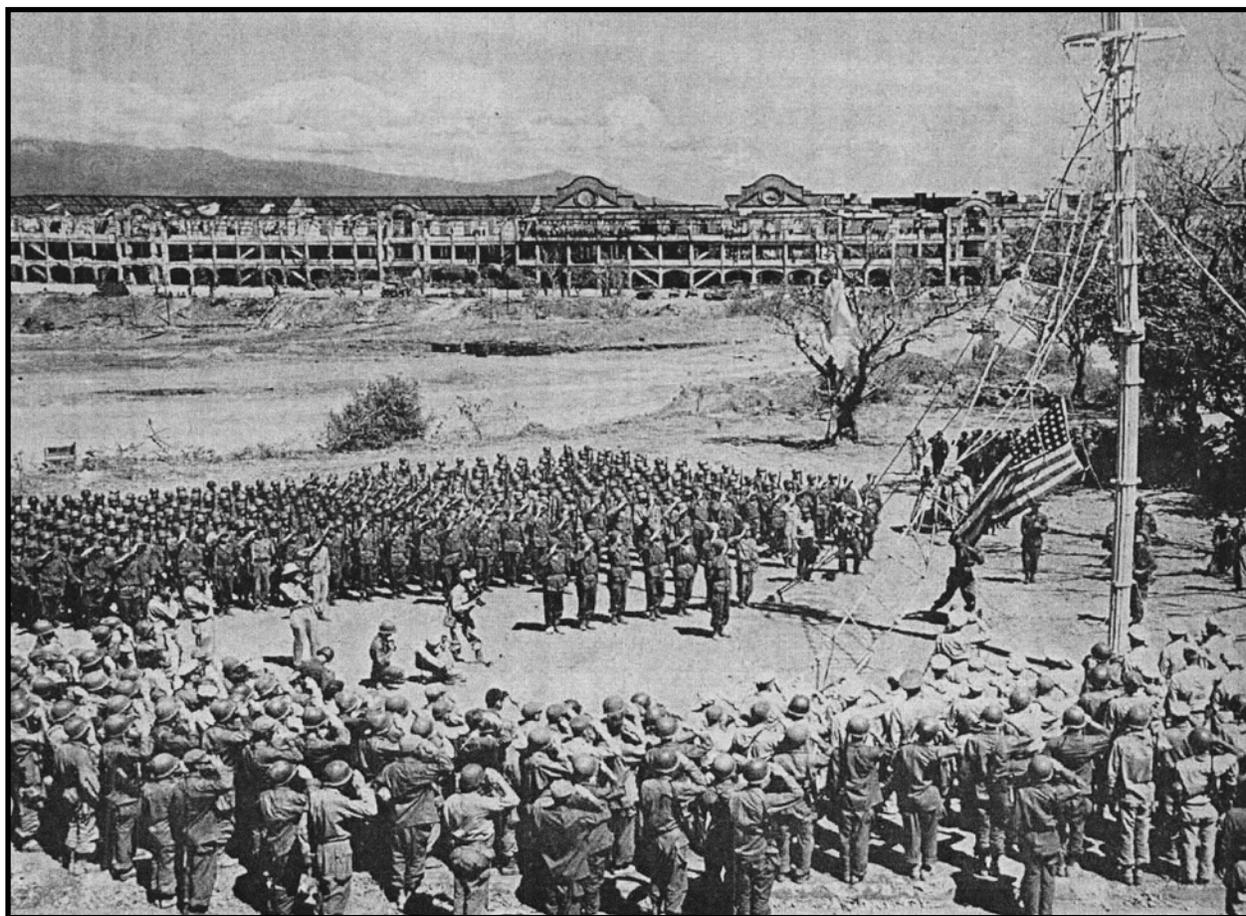
Col. Jones escorts Gen. MacArthur from the dock on his return to Corregidor. A PT boat behind him.

As MacArthur was escorted to the flag raising ceremony that symbolized American victory in the Philippines, the photographer captured an image of a PT boat next to the dock. This was highly appropriate. The PT boats had taken the general to safety in 1942 and now three years later they had returned him for good. As General MacArthur described the event in his memoirs:

There are moments of drama and romance in every life, and my first visit to recaptured Corregidor was one of these. I borrowed four PT boats from the Navy and gathered all those who had originally left Corregidor with me. We went back to the Rock the same way we had left it. We had departed in the darkness of a somber night. We came back in the sunlight of a new day. In the background, the ragged remnants of our parachute dangled from the jagged tree stumps, the skeleton remains of the old white barracks of “Topside” gleamed down on us, and a smart-looking honor guard rendered us its salute.

I was greeted by Colonel George Jones, the young man who had commanded the troops that had so recently retaken the island in such gallant fashion. I congratulated and decorated him.

“I see that the old flag pole still stands,” I told him. “Have your troops hoist the colors to its peak, and let no enemy ever haul them down.”



MacArthur witnesses the raising of the colors at Corregidor

By the end of March, 1943, it was evident that Japanese resistance was fading. Lt. Carl Gleason, who had served for a long period as Mr. Terry's squadron commander, was relieved of command. On April 2, 1945, Mr. Terry was detached from his boat and began the long journey home. His final combat assessment was as follows:

This officer is the "go-getter" type, with a strong forceful character. He has good military and personal characteristics, and is a strict disciplinarian. He is a good officer to hold a responsible position. I recommend him for promotion when due.

When he ceased active duty as a PT boat captain, Mr. Terry was suffering from the residual effects of a variety of tropical diseases. He spent almost a year in various hospital and recuperation facilities. He was formally released from active duty at Camp Wallace (a navy facility in Galveston County) on March 29, 1946.

Howard Terry always said that his experience in World War II was one of the defining events of his life. On several occasions he had almost been killed, and he was proud of having served his country. Late in life, Mr. Terry became very interested again in the events of 1944-1945. As he read accounts (including Japanese accounts) of the battles in the Philippines, he was reminded again of just how desperate the situation seemed at the time. The largest battle, the Battle of Leyte Gulf, was the largest sea battle in history. As he told Ed Cotham on several occasions, it "was probably the most important event that I was ever personally involved in." Mr. Terry's wartime experience undoubtedly shaped him and influenced him in ways that continue to impact the Foundation that bears his name. When the Terrys set up the Terry Foundation, they chose to emphasize leadership and service. These are qualities that Mr. Terry had learned and developed during World War II, as a PT Boat Captain in the Pacific.



Howard L. Terry