

Collection #

M 0645

OM 0309

CT 0592

F 1167

DVD 0005

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

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical/Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Series Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Paul Brockman

28 January 1994; Revised 9 August 2001

Updated 13 October 2006

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department

William Henry Smith Memorial Library

Indiana Historical Society

450 West Ohio Street

Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:

Manuscript Materials: 4 boxes, 1 oversize folder, 1 audio cassette tape, 1 reel of microfilm

Visual Materials: 1 DVD, 1 box of slides, 1 video cassette tape, 3 oversize photographs, 1 painting.

Artifacts: 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

COPYRIGHT:

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. *Fatal Voyage: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis*, New York: Atheneum, 1990 (D774 .I5 K87 1990); *Indianapolis: Ship of Doom, Parts 1 & 2* (Video D 774 .I5 I53 1992).

ACCESSION NUMBERS: 1994.0193; 1999.0639; 2000.0304, 2001.1081

NOTES: 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.

Cataloged as: Indianapolis (Cruiser). Collection, 1898–1991 (bulk 1945–1946 and 1984–1991)

HISTORICAL/BIOGRAPHICAL 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*..

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Reports and Investigations, 1945

CONTENTS

Reports, August 1945

Reports, August 1945

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

OM 0309

Reports, August 1945	F 1167
McVay, Narrative of Sinking, September, 1945	Box 1, Folder 2
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (1 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 3
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (2 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 4
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (3 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 5
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (4 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 6
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (5 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 7
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (6 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 8
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (7 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 9
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (8 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 10
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (9 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 11
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (10 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 12
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (11 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 13
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (12 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 14
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (13 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 15
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (14 of 21)	Box 1, Folder 16
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (15 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 1
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (16 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 2
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (17 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 3
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (18 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 4
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (19 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 5
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (20 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 6
Navy Investigation of Sinking, 1945 (21 of 21)	Box 2, Folder 7

Series 2: McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Court Martial, Prosecution's Files, 1945-1946 (1 of 3)	Box 2, Folder 8
Court Martial, Prosecution's Files, 1945-1946 (2 of 3)	Box 2, Folder 9

Court Martial, Prosecution's Files, 1945-1946 (3 of 3)	Box 2, Folder 10
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946 (1 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 11
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946 (2 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 12
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946 (3 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 13
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946 (4 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 14
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946 (5 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 15
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, 1945-1946, McVay's Testimony (6 of 8)	Box 2, Folder 16
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Exhibits, 1945-1946 (7 of 8)	Box 3, Folder 1
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Defense Exhibits, Numbers 1-4, 1945-1946 (8 of 8)	Box 3, Folder 2
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Exhibits, 1945-1946	Box 3, Folder 3
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Exhibits, Numbers 1-4, 1945-1946	Box 3, Folder 4
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Defense Exhibit, Number 5, 1945-1946 (1 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 5
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Defense Exhibit, Number 5, 1945-1946 (2 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 6
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Defense Exhibit, Number 5, 1945-1946 (3 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 7
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Defense Exhibits, Numbers 18-28, 1945-1946	Box 3, Folder 8
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Prosecution Exhibit, Number 1, 1945-1946	Box 3, Folder 9
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Prosecution Exhibits, Numbers 2-11, 1945-1946	Box 3, Folder 10
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Prosecution Exhibit, Number 12, 1945-1946 (1 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 11
McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Prosecution Exhibit, Number 12, 1945-1946 (2 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 12

McVay Court Martial Proceedings, Prosecution Exhibits, Numbers 13-20, 1945-1946

Box 3, Folder 13

Series 3: Articles And Publications

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Articles and Publications (1 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 14
Articles and Publications (2 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 15
Articles and Publications (3 of 3)	Box 3, Folder 16
Publication, <i>Ordeal By Sea</i> , n.d.	Box 3, Folder 17

Series 4: Correspondence and Dramatic Productions, 1898-1991

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> (Published Copy), 1982	Box 4, Folder 1
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> (Published Copy, Hand Edited), 1982	Box 4, Folder 2
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Rough Draft and Notes	Box 4, Folder 3
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Inserts	Box 4, Folder 4
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Rewrites	Box 4, Folder 5
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Orange Coast College	Box 4, Folder 6
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Laguna Moulton Playhouse Production, 1978	Box 4, Folder 7
<i>The Failure to Zig Zag</i> , Indianapolis Production, 1981	Box 4, Folder 8
John Ferzacca, Research-Related Correspondence, 1979-1987	Box 4, Folder 9
John Ferzacca, Research-Related Correspondence, 1988-1991	Box 4, Folder 10
Kimo W. McVay, Correspondence and Newsclippings, 1970-1983	Box 4, Folder 11
Kimo W. McVay, Correspondence and Newsclippings, 1984-1987	Box 4, Folder 12
Kimo W. McVay, Correspondence and Newsclippings, 1990-1991	Box 4, Folder 13

Kimo W. McVay, Photocopies of Father's Materials, 1898-1968	Box 4, Folder 14
<i>The Mission of the Shark</i> , Storyline and Changes, 1990- 1991	Box 4, Folder 15
<i>The Mission of the Shark</i> , Screenplay, 1991 (1 of 2)	Box 4, Folder 16
<i>The Mission of the Shark</i> , Screenplay, 1991 (2 of 2)	Box 4, Folder 17
<i>The Mission of the Shark</i> , Authentication and Comments by John Ferzacca	Box 4, Folder 18

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

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Slides of WW II, Pacific Theater, used in Laguna Moulton Production, 1978

35 mm Slides
Box 1

Motion Picture Film of U.S. Navy in WW II (2 Episodes from *Victory at Sea* 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
Folder 2

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

Panoramic Photographs

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

CT 0592

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 0645).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.