

My Hero John, by Jean Stene

It was the year 1957 when we met the Anunti family, John, Kay and their three children, Cathy, Linda, and Johnny. Even though we visited often, John never mentioned his time in the Navy. Sometime in the late 1970's I stopped to visit John and Kay. They had a very large picture of the USS Indianapolis Cruiser called the "Indy" by the crew.

I started asking questions about it and found out John served on it and was one of 1195 sailors on it when it was sent on a very secret mission. The year was 1945. The Indy docked on the Island of Tinian where the guarded cargo was unloaded. They later found out it was two uranium cores for the atomic bomb.

On the return trip all went well until the moon lit night of July 30th. The Indy was between Guam and the Philippines when a Japanese submarine spotted the Indy. The Captain of the sub knew that the war was about over but wanted to torpedo the Indy so he could show honor to the emperor Hirohito. He gave the order to fire. The first torpedo hit the Indy. The second one hit fuel tanks causing the Indy to explode. It went down in 12 minutes.

John told of them jumping in pairs. His partner was a cook with an open can of Spam. When he saw the cook snatch the Spam out of a shark's mouth, he immediately swam away. He never saw the cook again.

John did not have a life jacket. He swam and treaded water for two days until one of the other sailors died. They had to be careful that the life jacket wasn't waterlogged.

There were some who were lucky to be in life rafts who were further away.

On the fourth day there was a reconnaissance plane that decided to drop in altitude. He was not aware of the Indy when he spotted the large oil slick and decided to have a closer look. When he got closer he could see what looked like black figures waving their arms. He landed in the water but kept his engine and propeller going as he circled the men. He radioed the closest ship for help in the rescue. They lifted the weakest onto the wings where they were strapped.

John was in the water five days by the time the boat arrived.

When they arrived at the hospital the Doctors found all the sailors were so sunburned and blistered from the oil and water that they needed to remove their burned skin daily to prevent gangrene from setting in.

It was estimated of the 900 who abandoned the ship, 1/3 died from sharks 1/3 died from hallucinations, of drinking too much salt water, and of just giving up.

After being in the hospital until they healed, they returned to their homes scattered across the States. Little did they know that the Navy had plans to Court-martial Captain McVey, for allowing the Indy to be destroyed. Again, John became a hero again by testifying for Captain McVey and against the Court-martial. Even the Japanese Captain of the submarine, Captain Hashimoto testified that there was nothing that Captain McVey could have possibly done to save the Indy.

The Navy Court-martialed Captain McVey. John and all the saved sailors were heart sick. In my opinion all the crew on the Indy including Captain McVey were heroes on that doomed ship and especially my friend John.