



MAY 2021

USS Indianapolis Legacy Organization 3-Minute Update: Special Reunion Edition

Greetings, Indy Family!

With the 2021 Virtual Reunion just under three months away, we thought it would be a great time to reminisce about the storied tradition of Indy reunions—and also look ahead to **next year**, 2022, when we will finally, hopefully (!!) be able to gather in person again.

At the end of this special edition of the *3-Minute Update*, we're going to ask you to fill out a quick survey that will help determine the direction of future reunions. If you're running short on reading time, you can [skip to the survey by clicking here.](#)

Welcome New Members

Before we dive in, we'd like to welcome new Legacy members, J. Douglas Boles, Jaiden Seeliger, and Keanu Seeliger.



🔍 Welcome Aboard!



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Who Doesn't Love a Discount?

Also, in honor of Memorial Day, we are pleased to announce a limited-time 15% discount on our beautifully written and illustrated 75th Anniversary Commemorative Book, [available for purchase here](#). All proceeds are reinvested in Legacy Organization programs. To get your discount code, please contact Julie Haas: julie.haas@bruceoakley.com

Reunions...Then and Now

Without further ado, let's talk reunions!

For more than 60 years, we've gathered to honor the lost and to fellowship with survivors and families. Here's how it all began...

The Outlands Take a Roadtrip

A rainstorm of biblical proportions drenched Sunbury, North Carolina, the day Felton and Viola Outland hopped in their '55 Ford and struck out on a trip that is still touching lives. It was a book that triggered the trip. In 1958, Associated Press news editor Richard Newcomb published *Abandon Ship*, the first major book about the sinking of USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35).

Outland refused to read it. He just didn't think he could stand to relive the Indy crew's fight for survival in the Philippine Sea in July 1945. **But Newcomb's**

work did motivate Outland to reconnect with a shipmate. In 1959, he and his wife Viola drove a thousand miles to St. Louis to find Marine Corps Private First Class Giles McCoy, Outland's raft-mate and fellow survivor.

McCoy told Outland, "If you thought enough of me to come look me up, we're *all* going to have a reunion."

Reunions of USS Indianapolis shipmates began the very next year, in 1960, when the survivors organized their first gathering in the namesake city of Indianapolis, Indiana. The survivors were in their mid-30s to mid-40s at the time and their families were young. The time together allowed them to process the pain of their ordeal and create a pathway toward recovery and reckoning in their lives.

With the healing came bonds of friendship and a sense of purpose to honor their fallen shipmates, exonerate their captain, and memorialize the ship. They brought their families along, and the kids formed friendships through those experiences. The "kids", now adults, have kept in touch over the years because of our shared experiences when we were young.

A Special City

Indianapolis is a special place for our group. It is our home base. It is where the USS *Indianapolis* CA-35 National Memorial stands on the banks of the canal near downtown, and where the USS *Indianapolis* CA-35 Museum is housed within the walls of the War Memorials building. The city of Indianapolis will remain a draw as we develop our longer-range plans for reunions.

Those of us who recall the early days remember that reunions did not always happen every year. The survivors held their second reunion in 1965 and every five years after

that. It wasn't until the early 1990s when the schedule of reunions became more frequent. It became an annual event only in the past decade as the numbers of survivors dwindled and the surviving men approached their 80s and 90s.

"Mini-Reunions" Begin

The reunions have been the heart of the Survivors group. Buoyed by their common bond and trust in one another, they formed great friendships through the years, and often scheduled mini reunions in between the five-year spreads. The mini reunions were typically held in places of significance to *Indy's* history. For example, groups of survivors met in such places as Connecticut to christen the namesake submarine, and eighteen years later in Hawaii when the submarine was de-commissioned.

A few dozen survivors and their wives took an organized cruise to the Hawaiian Islands one year, and in another year, they gathered in Vallejo and Mare Island, California and in Texas. Air shows in the Indianapolis area were also a draw for many in between the larger reunions. As events happened, they showed up for each other, whether it was a milestone birthday, anniversary, child's wedding, celebrations of life, or local honors to the ship as in the monument erected in Paul Murphy's hometown of Broomfield, Colorado.

Looking Toward the Future

Covid-19 has presented us with a unique opportunity to look at reunions in new ways. Having a program that can be held in the open-air is particularly appealing as we work our way out of the pandemic. The reunions are now the responsibility of the Legacy Organization and we must consider the entire final sailing crew – the 316 survivors and those 879 men who were lost-at-sea.

Indy's story is more than just a final mission and sinking story. She was an important ship in World War II. She was the flagship for the Fifth Fleet and earned ten Battle

Stars for her contributions in the Pacific Theater. Her story is told in World War II museums across the United States. One such museum is The National Museum of the Pacific War, located in Fredericksburg, TX, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's hometown. There, in the Nimitz Memorial Courtyard is a wall of honor for USS *Indianapolis* CA-35 where the rescuers and rescue vessels, as well as some Survivors are recognized with descriptive plaques. Within the state-of-the-art museum is an interactive exhibit on *Indy's* contributions at the end of the war. The location has hosted various *Indy* events, including the dedication of the Memorial Wall in 2015, and a screening of the documentary, *USS Indianapolis: The Legacy*, with special guest speaker, William Toti.

The Legacy Organization is committed to having in-person reunions to build upon what our parents and grandparents started. We recognize that to keep this story alive and relevant in the future, we need to spark the interest of young families and create new opportunities to learn about the ship.

A Very Special Invitation

The Nimitz Foundation has invited the Legacy Organization to host our reunion in Fredericksburg, TX in the spring of 2022. Located in the hill country of Texas equal distance from San Antonio and Austin, it offers plenty of opportunities to expand our knowledge of USS *Indianapolis* CA-35 in fun and engaging new ways that the whole family will enjoy.

Bluebonnets, Texas wine country, a battle re-enactment, and learning about *Indy's* place in history beckons us, but before we commit to planning the event, we want to know your opinions.

Please take a few moments to complete the survey about future reunions here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2022IndyReunion-TX>

The deadline to complete the survey is May 10, so hop on over and fill it out ASAP.
We value your input!

Sincerely,

USS Indianapolis (CA-35) Legacy Organization Board of Officers

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