



JANUARY 2021

USS Indianapolis Legacy Organization Three-Minute Update -- January 2021 Edition

Hello again, Indy family!

This month's Update is full of important news, so grab a tasty beverage, sit still for three minutes, and get yourself up to date...

We're Presenting a Two-Part Webinar...and You're Invited

Never give up! These three words embody the spirit of surviving sailors and marines who served aboard the cruiser USS *Indianapolis* when she was torpedoed by the crew of a Japanese submarine during World War II. Just days before, the captain and crew of *Indianapolis* made history by delivering components of the first operational atomic bomb to an airbase on Tinian Island in the South Pacific. For four days and five nights following the sinking, they faced thirst, drowning, exposure, sharks—and uncertainty about whether rescuers would ever come.

USS *Indianapolis* Legacy Organization will air a Webinar in two parts to present the history of *Indianapolis* through its members and cherished *Indianapolis* survivors.

- Part I:** Thursday, March 4th from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. EST
Focus: 1932 launch, World War II missions, and the ship's tragic sinking
- Part II:** Thursday, March 18 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. EST
Focus: Survival, rescue, and the fight to exonerate Captain McVay

This is a great opportunity to invite your children and grandchildren to join us and hear an inspiring tale of survival.

If you are receiving this newsletter, you will also receive an invitation from us on March 2nd with a Zoom link to sign in. Hope to see you there!

U.S. Navy Honors Father Conway

“I am here to correct the record and right a wrong,” Secretary Kenneth Braithwaite told an audience assembled at Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Waterbury, Connecticut, on January 8.

The occasion was a long-awaited ceremony in which the Navy finally recognized Father Thomas Conway, who was chaplain aboard USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35), for his heroic actions following the ship's sinking on July 30, 1945. Secretary Braithwaite posthumously awarded to Fr. Conway the Navy Cross, the service's second highest combat honor.

The citation for the award reads in part:

“Completely disregarding his own well-being, Chaplain Conway continually swam between the clusters of adrift sailors — many of whom were severely injured, delirious and dying — to provide them encouragement and comfort, pray with and for them and administer them sacraments. After three days of tireless exertion to aid his shipmates, he finally succumbed to exhaustion and his body was committed to the deep.”

In his remarks, Braithwaite, a veteran of many years of sea duty, pointed out that the sea is often serene and beautiful at night. But not that night, he said. Braithwaite could not imagine the terror the Indy crew faced, and he praised Father Conway, whom he said served as a beacon of hope for his shipmates.

To watch a video of the entire Navy Cross ceremony, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqxzl-P5o5U>. (The actual ceremony begins at about the 30-minute mark.)

Underwriting Opportunity

As we all know, the pandemic has forced businesses and organizations of all kinds to find new ways to operate. In response, Legacy in 2020 moved our reunion and educational efforts to online platforms with resounding success. However, in the case of our Zoom presentations, that move comes at a cost.

We are looking for a handful of donors to make small contributions to a fund that will help us keep the Indy legacy alive via Zoom webinars across America and around the world.

Here's the good news: You can underwrite a Legacy webinar for just \$140!

In November, nearly that many people attended the webinar we conducted for the National History Club, meaning that we reached all those students with the Indy story for about \$1 per person.

As a bonus, \$140 pays for an unlimited number of webinars in a given month.

Your small donation will make a huge difference! To underwrite one month of Legacy webinars, please email Bonnie Buckett: dockjock@aol.com

(The Legacy Organization is a 501c3 nonprofit. All donations are tax deductible.)

Student Members Rock!

The USS Indianapolis Legacy Organization Student Membership program is up and running! Congratulations and thanks go to the inaugural class: Shea Groves (age 12), David Groves (age 10), Bryce Haas (age 8), and Reagan Haas (age 12)—all great-great nieces and nephews of Robert Rutherford, RM2, Lost at Sea.

Student Member Shea Groves recently attended a Zoom call with Survivors Dick Thelen and James Smith, as well as family members of Survivors and Lost-at-Sea. Shea presented the Student Membership mission statement, as well as a brief autobiography on herself and how she is related to the story. Afterward, she commented on how much she learned from just listening to these treasured Survivors and family members. Shea is so excited to learn more about Indy.

Lots of fun and interesting things are in the works for this group of students, so please let family, friends, and others know about our Student Membership. It is open to all students from kindergarten to 18 years of age. These young people will be the next generation to keep the Indy story alive.

You can register online or if you would like us to send the registration form to you, please contact Julie Haas: julie.haas@bruceoakley.com. As Julie says, “This group is going to Rock!”

Survivor-Reviewed, Survivor-Approved

Did you know that the Legacy website features a list of multimedia resources about USS Indianapolis (CA-35)? The list of books and documentaries has been endorsed by the USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization and appears in reverse chronological order of release, beginning with the most recent. To view these resources, please visit USSIndianapolis.org, click on “The USS Indianapolis Story,” and scroll down to “Multimedia.”

Cash for College

What better way to earn money for college than by telling your family's story? The application period for the USS Indianapolis/Gwinn "Angel" Scholarship is now open through March 31, 2021. Applications are available at <https://gtrcf.academicworks.com/opportunities/895>.

Requirements include:

- Applicant must be a descendant (including stepchildren) of a survivor, honorary survivor, lost at sea (LAS) or rescue crew.
- Attend or be a prospective full-time attendee of an accredited 2 or 4-year college or university.
- Academic performance – including GPA – will be considered. A GPA of 3.0 and above is preferred.
- A copy of your most recent transcripts.
- Two essays are required for this scholarship.

Legacy is Still Growing

Here's a snapshot of Legacy by the numbers:

Total members: 136 (up from 128 at end of December)

Membership includes:

- 43 Lifetime (same as before)
- 53 General Memberships renewed (up from 50 at end of December)
- 36 New Members in 2020-2021 (up from 35 at end of December)
- 4 New Student Members

Welcome to new member, Brian Fruits, and many thanks to renewing members, Todd Oberkfell, and Jim & Sandi Belcher.

You Can Help Chart Legacy's Future

If you've been looking for a way to become more involved in the Legacy group, here are two great opportunities. First, the Nominating Committee is in need of a few good people to help identify, prescreen, and propose a slate of candidates for the election of a new Vice Chairperson and Secretary this July. The committee will begin meeting in late winter/early Spring and complete its tasks before the start of summer to allow time for the Legacy general membership review and voting. To volunteer for this critical committee, please contact Jim Belcher: jimbelcherjr@gmail.com

Second, the Strategic Planning Advisory Group is focused on longer range plans for the organization. This annual process produces a big-picture view of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks to the Legacy Organization, and makes priority recommendations to the leadership team. If you have an interest in strategic planning, please contact Ray Wilson to volunteer: Ray557@comcast.net

That's it for this month's Three-Minute Update. See you next month!

Lynn 😊

Legacy Chair

Honorary Survivor