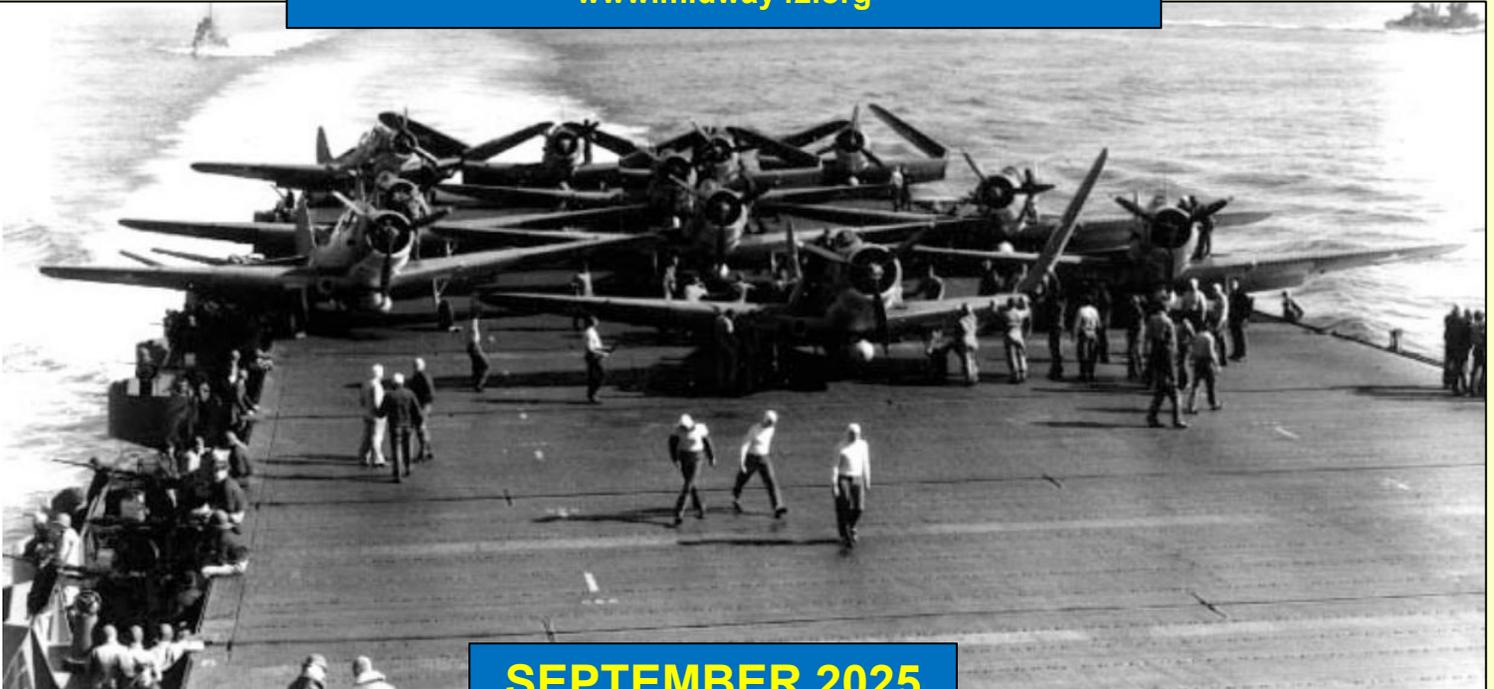


The Roundtable Forum

official newsletter of the
Battle of Midway Roundtable

www.midway42.org

OUR 468th
ONLINE NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER 2025

~ INTRODUCTION ~

It's Tuesday, 26 May 1942. You're standing on the shoreline at Pearl Harbor and witness the *Hornet* arriving from the South Pacific. Then, on Wednesday you watch the *Yorktown's* return from the Coral Sea as it heads for its pre-Midway repairs. A TF-17 cruiser and a couple destroyers follow closely behind, and they all slowly pass in front of you at about 4 to 5 knots.

Isn't that an interesting vision? Wouldn't it have been great to actually see all that as it happened? Now you can. New Roundtable member Thomas Moore sent us a link for a motion picture record of the *Hornet* and *Yorktown* entering Pearl in advance of the BOM. We've seen many still photos and movie mock-ups of both carriers, but watching them actually underway at a key moment in history is an entirely new experience on the Roundtable.

Also in this issue, webmaster Thom Walla has a review of the new BOM book mentioned last month, *Taking Midway*. Plus, there's a lot more here to grab your interest, so read on, enjoy, and we'll look forward to your comments.

—Ron Russell
23 August 2025

~ AROUND THE TABLE ~

READERS' TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

1. Turning Point
2. 83rd BOM anniversary at Virginia Beach

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1. TURNING POINT (See the [August newsletter](#))

27 July 2025
From: Chuck Wohlrab
Virginia

I read the article “Midway the Turning Point...was it really?” with great interest. I’ve read a number of articles over the last few years insisting it was not, but every author seems to miss one point. Midway was the last time the Japanese had the strategic initiative. From that time on the Japanese Navy’s operations were in response to U.S. Navy actions. At no time after June 1942 was the U.S. Navy conducting major operations in response to Japanese actions. To me, THAT is a turning point.

27 July 2025
From: Martin Bunch
California

Growing up when I was a kid, my neighbor was on the *Hornet*, and he was on it when it sank. He said everybody says the Battle of Midway was the turning point, it wasn’t Guadalcanal. I’ll never forget that.

28 July 2025
From: Don Boyer
Hawaii

I always enjoy the articles from “Major Tom” and his post in the August newsletter is particularly interesting in coming down firmly on the side of the Battle of Midway being THE turning point of the Pacific War. Others have disagreed, but often overlook that without Midway the Guadalcanal campaign would not have been possible at the time those events occurred.

Certainly, the war would have dragged on a lot longer and probably would have had to await the advent of the fast carrier task forces and the major amphibious forces before any real inroads on the Japanese conquered territories could be successfully made.

I've been a "Pacific War" buff since the age of 13 when I got interested in US Navy history due to my proximity to Pearl Harbor for many years. I have the books from Walter Lord to Parshall and Tully, and I think that a lot of "analysis" given to the battle in the past misses some of the major points that support Midway being the critical turning point.

Three things stand out to me. First, the battle crippled the Japanese navy's most potent weapon, the *Kido Butai*. With all six ships available, no naval force could do battle with them with any real hope of success during the early stage of the war. This becomes clear when you consider that *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, despite the support of inferior aircraft carriers made from merchant or auxiliary conversions, could not stop the Guadalcanal campaign in its tracks. They simply lacked the power to win decisively, despite the battering they gave the U.S. in the process. Much of this can be attributed to the inept handling of the IJN by the senior command, but the real factor was that the flight decks in battle could not get the job done because there were not enough real "fast carriers" to do so.

Second, the loss of those four carriers was an enormous loss of face to the IJN, and "face" is a critical element in the Japanese handling of their war in the Pacific that is almost completely overlooked by American historians in particular. Look at the amount of time the Imperial Navy spent trying to cover up the outcome of the battle not only from the public but from the entire military hierarchy, particularly the hated Imperial Army. They even tried to lessen the effects when reporting to the emperor. This hugely negative psychological impact, unique to the Japanese, had a major effect on future operations in the Pacific. They became almost frantic in their efforts to create "the decisive battle" in order to recoup the loss of face, and failed miserably every time because decisive battle was not what could have won the war. "Face" crippled Japanese thinking throughout the war for both the Japanese army and navy, and Midway was a major contributor to that situation.

Reinforcing the importance of "face" to the Pacific War is the reaction of the Imperial Army to the loss of the Ichiki Detachment at the beginning of the Guadalcanal campaign. The death of Col. Ichiki and the burning of the regimental colors was a huge loss of face to the army that reverberated all the way to Imperial General Headquarters. As a result, every plan of the army to recoup the situation was based on "recapturing" Henderson Field, which was based as much on saving face as on winning the battle. Not once during the entire campaign did it ever occur to the army that they didn't have to recapture the field in order to win the campaign—all they had to do was ensure the field remained inoperable. No airfield, no Marines, and the army might have been able to regain the field without the bloodshed that actually ensued.

The third factor is that Midway was the crucial turning point in the US navy's efforts to crack the Japanese JN-25 code. It made the importance of reading that code apparent to the entire cryptologic community, particularly in Washington where they had been fumbling the ball all along. While not 100% readable, enough was made before, during and after the battle to allow our intelligence community to stay on top of the code and its many changes, with few gaps. More importantly, the structure of the code became clearer, making it easier to keep up with changes and provide immediately usable intelligence with major effects on the battles to come.

Kudos to Major Rychlik for another prescient look at the Battle of Midway.

3 August 2025
From: Scott Kair
Illinois

Major Rychlik's post on whether the BOM was a turning point (and if so, of what) is a worthy reminder of the Roundtable's contributions to the historiography of the battle.

I won't quibble over whether the battle was a turning point in mankind's worst self-inflicted calamity. Absent our overwhelming triumph there, at the very least, the war would have dragged on much longer, with unpredictable ill consequences for civilization, such as it is.

Instead, I'll borrow a term from the law and science: Midway was determinative of both the course and outcome of the war. Everything afterwards, for better and worse, was determined by its outcome.

Evidence to support that can be found in the official chronical of the U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, for late June 1942—specifically, the documents pertaining to the Second Washington Conference. It was a conference among the American and British general staffs and political leadership and had been scheduled before the BOM and took place after its impact had been discerned.

So FDR, King, and Marshall were able to report that the immediate threat to Hawaii and our west coast no longer existed, while Churchill and staff had to beg for yet more help to bail them out of yet another calamity in North Africa. The records do not indicate at what angle FDR held his cigarette nor the degree of twinkle there was in his eyes, but absent the threat to our homeland, he promised to send Churchill's forces in North Africa the assets that had been hoarded to defend California against invasion, plus future war production, plus an invasion force to land in western Africa, all of which he carried out. None of that would have been remotely feasible absent a stunning victory at Midway.

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2. 83rd BOM ANNIVERSARY EVENT AT VIRGINIA BEACH

7 June 2025

From: Major Thomas Rychlik, USMC-Ret
Virginia

On June 6th I attended the COMNAVAIRLANT sponsored BOM anniversary event at the park dedicated to naval aviation at the waterfront in Virginia Beach, Virginia. It was dedicated in 2004 and it is simply magnificent. The project to build it was led by the local chapter of the Association of Naval Aviation (ANA). I sat with the commander of the local ANA Chapter, who I also sat with at the Washington, D.C. event [at the Army & Navy Club].

Last month [May] I gave my presentation on my torpedo squadron commanding officer Medal of Honor project to their monthly meeting and got immediate support from ANA. The Director of the Virginia Beach Military Aviation Museum gave a great summary of the battle. When he got to Torpedo Squadron Eight's story he broke off his prepared remarks to say there were attendees in the first row who were working on a project to get the Medal of Honor for the torpedo plane pilots. Not exactly what I am doing but close.

Ed. note: for a great photo collection of the Virginia Beach naval aviation park and memorial, [click here](#). Very impressive!



Now hear this!

NEWS AND INFO IN THIS ISSUE:

- On film: Midway carriers arriving at Pearl Harbor
- Book review: *Taking Midway*
- Our BOM book recommendations
- The BOM in *Naval Aviation News*
- Editor's notes

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ON FILM: MIDWAY CARRIERS ARRIVING AT PEARL HARBOR

Thanks again to Thomas Moore for finding a very interesting film clip for us in the National Archives, as described in the Introduction. Click the link below, scroll down to the video on the page that opens and start it in your browser. Change to the full screen view (tool at the bottom of the video).

The film opens with a great closeup view of the *Hornet* arriving at Pearl Harbor on 26 May 1942, then a lengthy sequence of *Yorktown*, cruiser *Astoria*, fleet tug *Vireo*, and some destroyers coming in on the 27th.

The film is apparently from an unedited reel in an 8mm camera and includes a couple segments of what appears to be Decoration Day or other memorial proceedings on Oahu. The video runs eight and a half minutes. Here are the sequence times:

0:00 – *Hornet* arriving. Note sailors on deck in dungarees.
1:05 – memorial proceedings
2:09 – *Yorktown* arriving. Sailors on deck in whites.
5:23 – cruiser USS *Astoria* (CA-34)
5:46 – *Yorktown* passes *Hornet* at the pier.
6:44 – destroyers arriving
7:09 – fleet tug USS *Vireo* (AT-144)
7:40 – memorial proceedings

Ignore the descriptive text on the National Archives web page containing the video as there are numerous errors.

Here's the link for the film, and I've added three still photos from the NHHHC that apparently were taken at the same time. Note that you can download high resolution copies of each photo for a much better view.

[Film clip: *Hornet* and TF-17 entering Pearl Harbor](#)

[*Hornet* \(NHHHC\)](#)

[*Yorktown* \(NHHHC\)](#)

[*Astoria* \(NHHHC\)](#)

The three NHHHC photos above are also found in *A Glorious Page in Our History*, pages 37-38.

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BOOK REVIEW: *TAKING MIDWAY*

Reviewed by Thom Walla

Taking Midway is the fourth of the “Taking” series by Martin Dugard which includes *Taking London*, *Taking Paris*, and *Taking Berlin*. He also is the co-author of the Bill O’Reilly “Killing” series. So he has written or co-written a significant number of best sellers.

With any new Midway book, I research the author first before buying the book. Given how many books he has written and how *Taking Midway* approaches the battle in a new way, I decided it was worth a read.

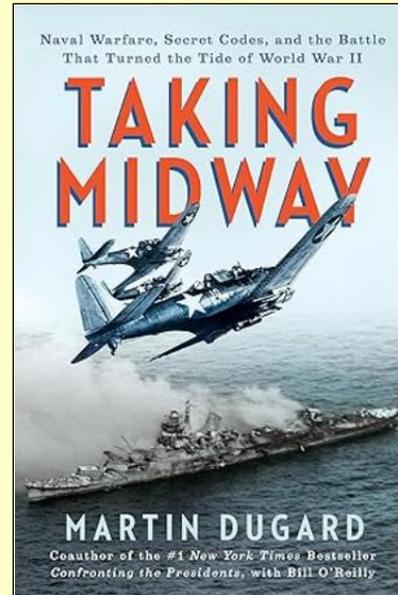
Dugard acknowledges that he had to write a different kind of Midway book rather than simply duplicate the works of others. The first chapter takes place aboard HMS *Prince of Wales* on December 8th in the South China Sea while hunting for the Japanese invasion fleet. From there we travel back in time, picking up where *Taking London* ended with the *Prince of Wales* transporting Churchill to a meeting with FDR in August 1941. Dugard also goes into the battle between *Prince of Wales* and the *Bismarck* in Denmark Strait, before the Churchill voyage.

The book then proceeds with the entire history of Midway, starting with its discovery in 1859 by N. C. Brooks who claimed it in his name while searching for guano. The U.S. then annexed it in 1867, retaining Brooks’ names for the two islands, Sand and Eastern. We then read of the military occupation and buildup prior to WWII.

There was a lot about Midway’s history that was new to me. Shortly after it was discovered, several ships were wrecked in the lagoon and the sailors spent months before they were rescued. One of the castaways erected a building on Eastern Island that was found later by more shipwrecked sailors. Some other examples: the undersea telegraph cable going through Midway, the Navy’s eviction in 1903 of Japanese poachers that had slaughtered the birds for their feathers, the Pan American Clipper service, and Amelia Earhart’s plan for a refueling stop at Midway on her around the world flight.

The book continues with the attack on Pearl Harbor and the shelling of Midway on December 8th. It then returns to HMS *Prince of Wales* and its sinking by Japanese bombers. From there Dugard relates the first six months of the war pertaining to Midway, like the codebreaking efforts, reinforcements sent to the atoll, and *Yorktown*’s Coral Sea plight and emergency repairs before the BOM.

Finally, we get to the battle and this is where the book starts to break down. Most of it is related from the perspective of the atoll and John Ford’s personal



memoirs, perpetuating the popular account of his actions that were largely debunked by our own Col. John Miniclier who told us how he was assigned to guard Ford during the battle. (Sidebar: John wrote that up for the 2019 *Midway* movie so that what Ford did or didn't do on screen would be accurate. Sadly, the producer went for the popular account over reality.)

There is an account of the battle between the two opposing carrier groups, as would be expected, but it doesn't go into much detail. I did enjoy the first part of the book but was put off by the last few chapters covering the battle where Dugard makes a lot of errors or outright blunders. For instance, he calls the Avengers "dive-bombers" and says that *Yorktown* was found by the cruiser *Chikuma* instead of a float plane—something he easily could have gotten right if he'd bothered to re-read whatever book he copied the info from. Perhaps the most egregious error was when he describes the attack on the *Hiryu* as the "the flat steel curls like a tin can being opened, revealing the hulks of burning Vals and Bettys and Zeros on the hangar deck beneath." There are more errors, but you get the picture.

My final thoughts on the book are mixed. The first half was quite enjoyable as I learned a few things about Midway that I didn't know previously. Unfortunately, when I got to the more familiar second half, the constant errors ruined the book and made me consider whether the first half wasn't also rife with errors.

I think Dugard could have used a qualified editor or a historian familiar with the battle to proofread the manuscript and offer corrections, but it appears that wasn't done and the result appears sloppy. I have not read any of his other books, and based on this one I'm unlikely to read any more.

Even if the target audience is just the casual reader, that shouldn't preclude getting the facts as right as possible. Rating: 2 stars out of 5 primarily because the description of the atoll's prewar history was at least interesting.

—TW

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OUR BOM BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

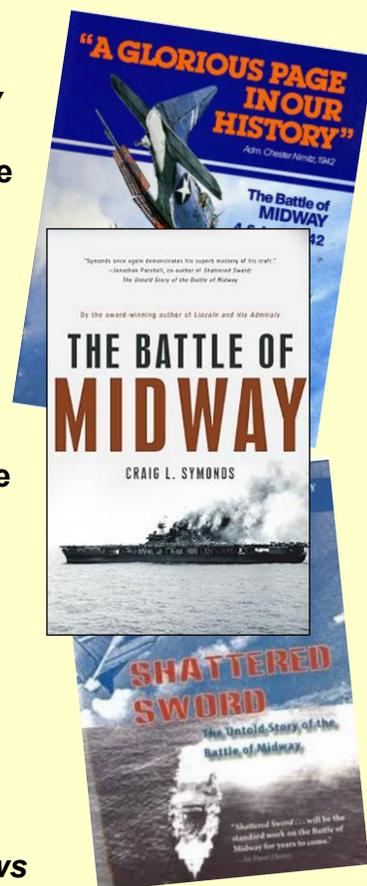
Thom's review of *Taking Midway* seems to suggest that, like one or two others we've seen in recent years, it was mainly written to sell books rather than accurately inform the reader about its subject. You can bet that the many 4 and 5 star reader reviews it gets on Amazon are either from those who know little else about the BOM, or who were captivated by the somewhat interesting half of the book that doesn't have anything to do with the battle.

So, for the sort of Midway books that really do cover the BOM thoroughly and with the most up to date scholarship, what are your best choices?

Since our focus here is more on Midway's signature battle rather than its hundred years of unrelated backstory, we have long recommended Robert Cressman's *A Glorious Page in Our History* as the best single volume overview of the entire BOM, and it has held that crown for over 30 years. (And if you do want to know the atoll's backstory, *Glorious Page* has it in Chapter One.)

Bonus: used copies of *Glorious Page* are widely available at under \$10.00.

But for a much more detailed and up to date accounting of the Battle of Midway from both sides, we prefer a two volume set: Craig Symonds' *The Battle of Midway*, and *Shattered Sword* by Jon Parshall and Tony Tully. As I said in our [original review](#) of the Symonds book back in 2011, read those two in sequence and you can then count yourself among the very best informed among everyone with an interest in the BOM at any level.



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THE BOM IN NAVAL AVIATION NEWS

Barret Tillman sent us a link for an old copy of *Naval Aviation News* magazine from 1992, featuring rather good write-ups on both Coral Sea and Midway. The latter is particularly interesting as it was penned by Robert Cressman, early Roundtable member and lead author of *A Glorious Page in Our History* as mentioned above. Cressman's magazine article might be considered *Glorious Page-Light* as it covers the BOM thoroughly in just a few pages. To open or download the article, [click here](#) and scroll down. The Coral Sea piece starts on page 24, and Cressman's follows on page 28.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

- Happy birthday to *Yorktown* vet Robert Taylor in Florida who celebrates number 101 on August 31st. Robert was featured on his 100th birthday last year in our [August-September 2024](#) newsletter, which includes a link for a really good newspaper photo spread that's still online and definitely worth a look if you didn't catch it then, or even another look now. Many thanks to Robert's son Mark for facilitating his dad's connection to the BOMRT.
- If you wonder why USS *Enterprise* doesn't appear in Thomas Moore's film clip above, so do I. It seems the camera operator's main interest was TF-17 arriving on the 27th. *Enterprise* should have been there on the 26th along with *Hornet* but didn't make it into the viewfinder—possibly just a matter of timing.

- Also, if you wonder how Thom Walla, recovering from a stroke that restricted the use of his left hand, was able to type his lengthy book review above, the answer is *a lot of perseverance*. He says he's getting quite good at one-hand typing, and the left hand will come around eventually. He continues to make slow but steady progress toward full recovery, but it's a long haul.
- More from Virginia Beach: Howard Ady III sent us this video and high-definition photo set of a Zero restored to pristine flying condition at VB's Military Aviation Museum. Impressive! Turn up your audio and [click here](#).
- Ensign George Goldsmith's SBD (6-B-15) has been a major star on the BOMRT for nearly 20 years, from Kent Walters' amazing flying scale model to the discovery of the original aircraft on the *Yorktown* in the recent undersea exploration. You've probably seen a familiar picture of 6-B-15 just after it landed on *Yorktown* during the battle, but I recently found a companion photo that's less familiar—check it out below and on the next page.

That's the *Roundtable Forum* for September. In October we will mark the 28th anniversary of the first Internet appearance of the BOMRT on Chris Hawkinson's remarkable Midway website, and we'll have some special features in the newsletter for the occasion. Until then, sincere thanks to all for your interest in what we do here; past, present, and future.

—Ron Russell, *Roundtable Forum* editor
—Thom Walla, BOMRT webmaster

USS ENTERPRISE SBD DAUNTLESS, 6-B-15

In the first photo on the next page, from our [August 2022 issue](#), we see 6-B-15 on the *Enterprise* sometime prior to the BOM. The second photo on the right is quite familiar on the Internet and in published works, taken by Navy photographer's mate and future Roundtable member Bill Roy just after the badly shot-up SBD made an emergency landing on *Yorktown*. The third photo is new to us and would have been snapped by Roy a few seconds later. ARM3c James Patterson is standing in the rear cockpit and Ensign Goldsmith is looking back at the flight deck crew who are preparing to move 6-B-15 to the hangar deck....where it will be found by the NOAA expedition 83 years later.



As for Kent Walters' superb flying scale model of 6-B-15, [click here](#) for an especially good photo collection from our December 2021 newsletter.

It's likely that all of our readers know this, but the cover of [No Right to Win](#) also has a great action photo of Kent's amazing model, with some Photoshop enhancements by John Greaves.