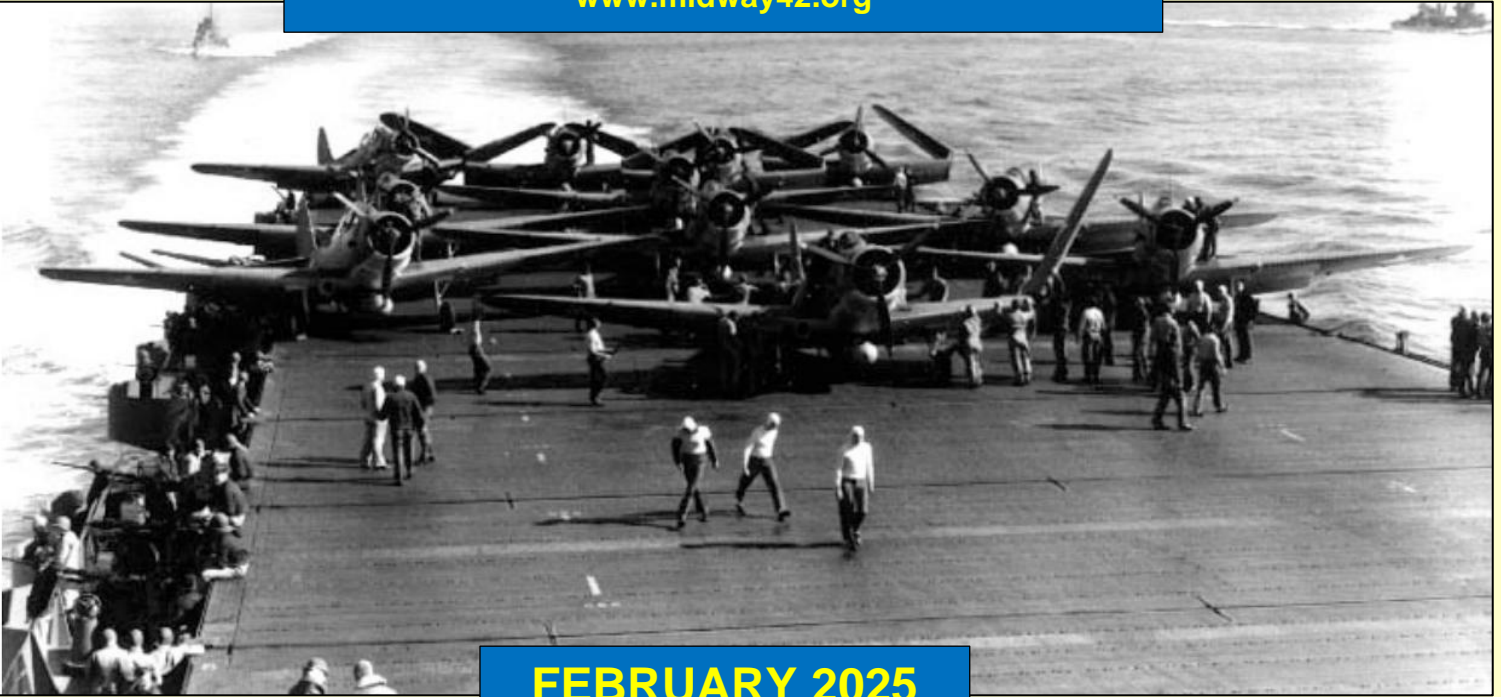


The Roundtable Forum

official newsletter of the
Battle of Midway Roundtable

www.midway42.org



FEBRUARY 2025

~ INTRODUCTION ~

War is a tragedy on many levels and for numerous reasons. High on that list is the loss of so many outstanding citizens in the prime of their youth, who otherwise might have gone on to magnificent achievement. VT-8 pilot William Evans was a perfect example; a young man with a talent for the written word that was truly remarkable—a talent prematurely lost at Midway when he was barely old enough to vote.

We have been pleased to feature some of Evans' personal letters on the Roundtable over the years, thanks in large measure to a family member who has generously shared them with us. Another such letter leads off this issue, and as you read it, picture yourself at the young pilot's side, knowing and experiencing all that was his world as preparation for war consumed his entire life.

—Ron Russell
1 February 2025

~ **AROUND THE TABLE** ~

MEMBERS' TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

1. The eloquence of Ensign Evans
2. New autobiography of a VT-8 TBF airman
3. VT-8 pilot Edward "Frenchie" Fayle

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1. THE ELOQUENCE OF ENSIGN EVANS

It's reported that when General McAuliffe of the 101st Airborne replied "Nuts" to a German surrender demand at the Battle of the Bulge, General Patton told his tank commanders rushing to the rescue to press on harder: "A man that eloquent must be saved!" If McAuliffe was a champion of eloquence for his brevity, VT-8 pilot William Evans was the opposite: articulate to an amazing degree in lengthy letters sent to his family, each one a work of well-crafted prose that belied his youth. Absent his loss at Midway, one can imagine Evans achieving lifelong greatness as a future author, poet, or journalist.

We frequently featured one of Evans' letters, his last before the BOM, on the Roundtable in our earliest online editions, 2004-2010 or so. That letter plus more of Evans' writings can be found today on Robert Mrazek's *A Dawn Like Thunder* website: [click here](#), then click the two links in the red frame.

Additional letters, retained by Evans family, were acquired by Mike Rogers from his father-in-law, Ensign Evans' younger brother. Mike shared one of those with us a couple years ago, in our [January 2022](#) newsletter, and offers another one in the following message, a letter not previously seen on the Internet as far as I know. In this one, the future TBD pilot tells his brother about the exhilaration of learning to fly, again with youthful eloquence at a rare level. —RR

6 January 2025
From: Mike Rogers
Michigan

Happy New Year Gentlemen -

Thom - glad to see the good report on your recovery. Sounds like you'll be about ready for outdoor tennis season soon.

As always, the newsletter had some interesting tidbits. I ordered the Velazquez book the other day. Really looking forward to that one.

Thought I would share this Bill Evans [letter] from Feb 1941, written to his brother Jack. Although Bill could write with feeling and passion about very

serious topics and ideas, I always have to remember that he was in his early 20s. And as this one shows, he could write with fun and joy.

All the best -

Mike Rogers

Feb. 20, 1941

Dear Jack,

Boy this is the life! Food is rotten, no sleep no time to do anything but study and fly but the last part of it makes up for all the rest. All this week I've been blowing all over God's heaven all by myself and it is wonderful. When I first started this I wasn't so sure I was going to like it at all, some of the motions were too violent, and there was an attendant feeling of insecurity. But after a few hours up that all leaves you. Now it's like being continually drunk, drunk with motion, it's like tearing into the dock with the Hacker Craft, sort of a swoop and swish. Baby when you taxi down the runway and the power plant begins to grab air and the runway begins to zing past, there can be nothing like it in the world. Then all of a sudden as smoothly and quietly as dropping whipped cream in feathers she just swoops up into the sky. Feed it the old juice and soon riding up about 3 or 4 thousand feet. The world spread out below like some far-away checkerboard with houses and fields for players, people are too small to even think about.



Ens. William Evans, from the John Ford VT-8 movie

My first two hours solo, I capered over the sky like a baby kitten, popping in and out of clouds swinging all over the horizon like some mad creature in an amusement park. I have never even dreamed of such complete freedom, as far as your eye can see the sky belongs to you and only a flip of the hand and a tick of the foot and you can have anything. As a matter of fact, you mustn't tell Mother because she would worry, but I get so frisky that I slipped off with a spin and even that was so much fun that I just rode it down about a thousand feet. Today I got up nerve enough to sneak in a few stunts, we are not supposed to do any but they can't see from twenty miles away so I experimented, and fell into a couple of spins trying to do some good snap rolls. But it is such fun I don't know how I'm going to wait until we are supposed to be doing that stuff – about three weeks. Next week is small field landing, about the size of our backyard which is plenty small when you're trying to hit it with a ship doing about sixty miles per. But that is the most wonderful part of the whole business, out off the juice and come swinging down out of the sky, just like you see the gulls sailing along up at the lake, quietly, effortlessly sweeping from side to side then quickly we straighten her out and place it on the runway, sometimes it's a

little rougher, but a good landing is softer than a dream kiss—baby it's the perfection of motion—nothing will ever beat a good landing for timing and grace.

By the great Lord hurry, if I should die tomorrow I've already had at least three times as much fun as most of the poor people in the world and I've seen things that few people have or will ever see. Most of these boys are taking this stuff as a business, serious and dangerous but it isn't that to me. It's the most exact, the most beautiful, the most entrancing game in the universe, this hide and seek between the sun and the earth.

Hope I haven't impressed you as having gone off the deep end. Just sort of carried away I guess. Better start making plans for coming down Spring vacation, let me know what they are.

Best ever,
Bill

P.S. Going to sneak off to see Ann Saturday

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2. NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A VT-8 TBF AIRMAN (see the [January newsletter](#))

2 January 2025
From: Don Velazquez
California
(Editor/publisher, *Heart Like a Mustang*)

Dear Thom and whomever else: I'm humbled and thrilled to receive all of this information and news. I appreciate having this placed in the newsletter.

—Don

You're welcome, Don, we're happy to feature or review any book or other media production that focuses on the BOM, in full or in part. Of course, we do it for all of those that we encounter, including the good stuff like [Pacific Payback](#), the inept flops like [The Eagle's Claw](#), and everything in between. I haven't read your book yet, but the excerpt we featured in January suggests it's a good one. —RR

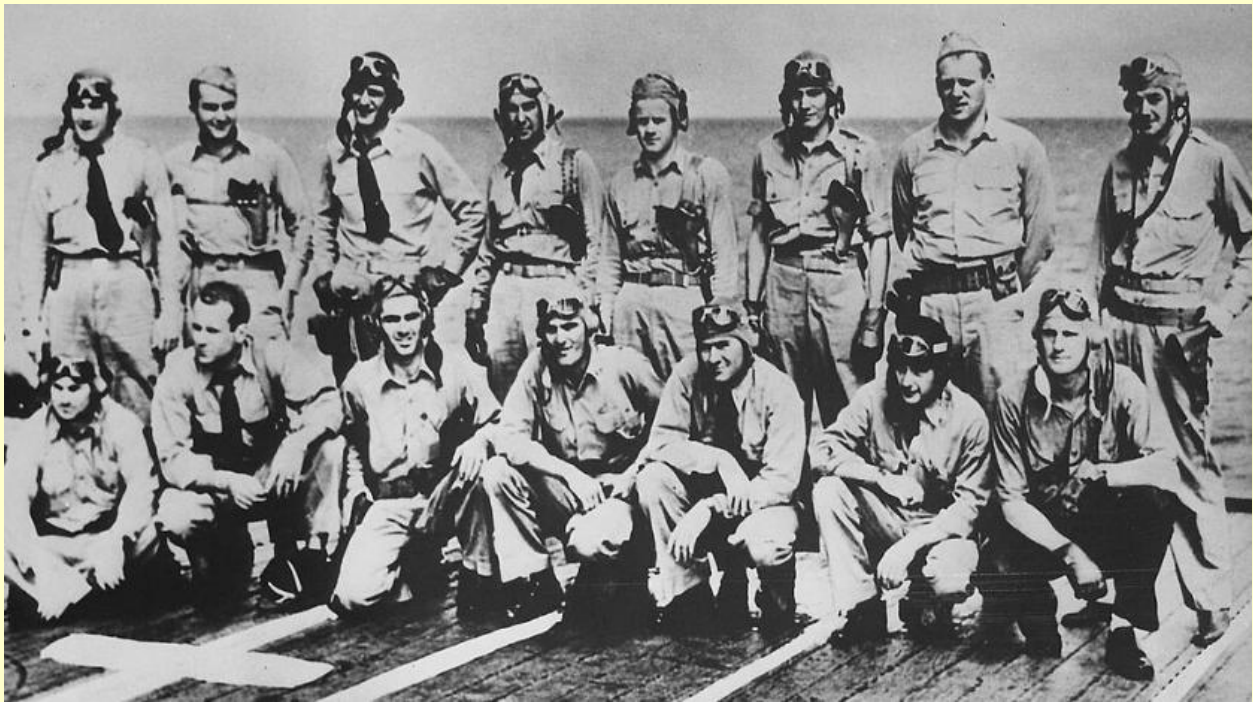
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3. VT-8 PILOT EDWARD “FRENCHIE” FAYLE

3 January 2025
From: Scott Kair
Illinois

When I put Mr. Velazquez' book on my wish list, I noticed that it had only one review so far. Noticed that the reviewer's last name was Fayle. Stated that his father had flown with Velazquez in VT-8 in the Solomons. Hmm. That would seem to be "Frenchie" Fayle, the mystery man of VT-8. Perhaps one of our people would be willing and able to reach out to Frenchie's son and see if he'd be willing to shed some light on his father.

Good catch, Scott. I had a vague recollection that Fayle was present in the VT-8 pilots' group photo from May 1942 (below) but didn't make the flight with Waldron due to a shipboard injury. There are some inferences on the Internet that the injury was self-inflicted in order to avoid a dangerous mission. In any case, he went on to earn a Navy Cross piloting a TBF during the Solomons campaign. I'm sure there's more to be learned; perhaps one of our historians can provide more info about this “almost” BOM pilot.



In this famous VT-8 photo, Edward “Frenchie” Fayle is standing, second from the left, next to Waldron.



Now hear this!

NEWS AND INFO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Surviving BOM veterans
- Another Midway anniversary—122 years
- Editor's Notes

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SURVIVING BOM VETERANS

We received an inquiry from Mark Taylor asking how many BOM vets are still with us. That's very hard to determine and we really don't try very much, for that would require the sort of probing that most veterans and their families would not welcome.

We have always relied on news freely given to us concerning any of our participating vets who make their final muster, and have repeatedly urged each vet to ensure that his family will let us know when the ultimate day arrives. (For a good example of that recurring effort, go to the *Archives* link on our [home page](#) and see newsletter issue [2008-20](#) — scroll down to “Memorial Day Message.”)

If we don't get such notification, the vet simply disappears from our conscience without receiving the Roundtable's honors. That's a shame because they all deserve the best that we can possibly manage, like our memorial for Midway Marine Ed Fox in the [November 2024](#) newsletter.

For those reasons, we are presently aware of just 3 BOM vets who have previously participated with us and, so far as we know, are still celebrating each sunrise: *Yorktown* vets John Hancock and Ewightson Harville, and Midway Marine [John Miniclier](#). That contrasts dramatically with the 50 to 70 of them we regularly heard from in past years, but such is the march of time.

In addition to those 3, there are a few others of whom we're aware via their family members that participate with us, such as Mark's dad, *Yorktown* vet Robert Taylor (see the [August-September 2024](#) newsletter). Beyond that, I'm afraid that Mark's question cannot be answered, and perhaps that's how it should be.

* * * * *

ANOTHER MIDWAY ANNIVERSARY—122 YEARS

20 January 1903: In response to U.S. Navy reports of the killing of massive numbers of seabirds at Midway and complaints about Japanese squatters and poachers, President Theodore Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 199A, placing Midway under control of the Navy. The president sent 21 U.S. Marines to stop the slaughter of seabirds for feathers and eggs and to secure Midway as a U.S. possession. (Thanks to Barrett Tillman for this historical note.)

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Like our webmaster Thom Walla (see the [January newsletter](#)), Scott Kair is a stroke survivor and has experienced the same sort of recuperation challenges. In an email exchange between the two in January, Thom gave this encouraging report: *"...everyone says I'm making remarkable progress, just not as fast as I want. I can walk fine now, just a little more careful than before. Arm is still...slow to come back on a few things. Hand and fingers work, which they say is opposite of what usually happens. Slowly getting back to typing but it's gonna be a while before I hit 80 words a minute again."*

Thom be sure to let me know as soon as you make *forty* words a minute, and I'll go back into retirement!! 😊

Finally, on the next page we have another colorized version of a well known BOM photo, to complement the TBD picture featured in the [December newsletter](#). Despite the imperfect colors, these doctored images bring a sense of realism that you don't experience with the black and white originals.

Thanks to everyone for your continued interest in and support of the BOMRT, and do keep your comments and questions coming. Our email address is:

midwayroundtable@gmail.com



In this colorized version of a familiar Midway photo, a VB-8 SBD is being attended by plane handlers on the *Hornet*. Note the WW1-type helmets worn by the men at the starboard wing, while all of those near the tail have the new “M1” helmets.

Again, like the TBD photo in the December newsletter, the colorizing process didn’t get the deck color right while just about everything else seems okay. Note especially the pilot and R/G in the cockpit: they look very real, almost like a live-action scene.

8-B-11 is the subject of other BOM photos, but I no longer have a lot of references after giving away most of my books last year when we moved to smaller quarters. If anyone can send in some detail about this Dauntless and its crew, we’ll have it in next month’s newsletter, and thank you in advance —RR