

# The Roundtable Forum

official newsletter of the  
**Battle of Midway Roundtable**

[www.midway42.org](http://www.midway42.org)

**OUR 28th YEAR  
ON THE INTERNET**



**JUNE 2025**

Eighty-three years ago in June, the course of world history was upended by the combined efforts of a few codebreakers in Hawaii and Australia, a lot of incredibly brave pilots and aircrew flying from Midway and nearby carriers, and a stalwart band of resolute Marines on that remote atoll. With the possible exception of the Battle of the Capes in 1781, no battle ever had a bigger impact on the fortunes of the United States and therefore the rest of the world.

As evidence of that, consider that here we are today, 83 years later, devoting much of our time and talent to continual analysis and review of what happened around that remote atoll so long ago, and we've been doing it nonstop for nearly three decades.

This anniversary issue of our newsletter features some stunning new photos and videos of a recent undersea exploration of the *Yorktown*, a continuing dialogue concerning Commander Joseph Rochefort and Admiral Nimitz, and important commentary about the annual commemoration of the battle and what it means today. Webmaster Thom Walla and I hope you enjoy our efforts this month and welcome hearing from you on what you see here or any BOM matter.

—Ron Russell  
24 May 2025

**~ AROUND THE TABLE ~**

**READERS' TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:**

1. New exploration of the *Yorktown* wreck
2. Admiral Fletcher's Coral Sea Report
3. *Yorktown* photo on "Victory at Sea" album cover?
4. VT-8 pilot "Frenchy" Faile—in his words
5. Rochefort and Nimitz
6. Lofton Henderson, CO of VMSB-241

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**1. NEW EXPLORATION OF THE *YORKTOWN* WRECK**

CV-5 was in the news during April, thanks to the efforts of a remarkable undersea research team that captured some great new images of the ship. One of the photos especially caused a stir: an automobile, apparently a 1940-41 Ford "Woody" station wagon, was found on the hangar deck. Why was a car like that aboard the patched-together *Yorktown* during the BOM? Here is some of the message traffic generated by that topic and others arising from the exploration.

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21 April 2025  
From: Russ Matthews  
California

Hello Thom—

Hopefully by now you've seen the news that a NOAA-backed team conducted new in-depth exploration at the USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) wreck site. I was very fortunate to participate remotely as one of the "scientists ashore," helping plan the research design and direct the investigation in the field. Over the course of two dives (April 19 & 20) we made a number of new discoveries/revelations, including a 1940-41 Ford "Woody" station wagon/staff car in the aft hangar deck, full documentation of the surprisingly well preserved mural on the starboard bulkhead of the #2 elevator shaft, and (perhaps most stunning of all) the wreckage of at least three Douglas SBD dive bombers in the #3 elevator shaft,

The video of the full dives can be found here [\[click\]](#) ...and here... [\[click\]](#). I know that the team will be grateful for any observations that you and the BoMR community make from this material over the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, I'd like to ask you to backstop me on some research I prepared early this morning (21 April), speculating on the

identity of one of the Dauntlesses in the aft elevator that I suspect is actually a refugee from Bombing Six (see email below). If you (or anyone else) knows of documentation that would confirm (or even disprove) the presence of 6-B-5 on board Yorktown, that would be greatly appreciated.

All the best,  
Russ

[*Ed. note:* the two videos linked above are interesting but lengthy and unedited, and you'll hear two audio tracks simultaneously. For a better video of the exploration, see the link provided by Barrett Tillman at the end of this topic.]

----- Russ Matthews continues -----

Subject: Dauntless ID in elevator #3

Team--

My mind is still spinning from last night's discovery of aircraft wreckage inside elevator #3 on the wreck of USS *Yorktown* (CV-5). We're going to be sorting through the video and stills for quite a while, but after some early morning research, I believe I can identify at least one of the planes we saw.

We already characterized these as the first known remains of a Midway combat veteran Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber. And one of them actually still displayed the large squadron code "B 5" in black on the side of its fuselage.

At the time we were unsure whether it was from Bombing Three (VB-3) or Scouting Five, temporarily redesignated Bombing Five (VB-5). Incredibly, I now believe it is not from either of those squadrons, but rather from Bombing Six (VB-6) off of USS *Enterprise* (CV-6)!

From the *Yorktown* After Action Report: [1300] "... two VSB [scout bombers], from the Enterprise Attack Group, which had been badly damaged in action landed and were struck below."



(Continued next page)

The Navy photo archive has a picture of one of these planes taken immediately after landing aboard *Yorktown*. [Ed. note: that's George Goldsmith's 6-B-15.] →



I now suspect that we imaged 6-B-5 (plane #5 of Bombing Squadron Six) from USS *Enterprise*. That would make it Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless BuNo 4581, which flew in Division One and was among the first to attack the *Kaga*. The crew is listed in the *Enterprise* after action report as pilot Lt (jg) W. E. Roberts, USNR and radioman/gunner AMM1c W. B. Steinman, USN. I've yet to find a specific reference to this plane being recovered aboard *Yorktown*, however the CO of Bombing Six states following the battle that "Personnel of 6-B-5 were rescued, but are not available for compilation of this report." I believe they were rescued by landing their damaged plane aboard *Yorktown*, which was then struck below and is still there.

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I replied to Russ concerning the two SBDs from the *Enterprise*:

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Russ, I can confirm your analysis re 6-B-5 and 6-B-15. The latter is the easiest, for it has long been a major star on the Battle of Midway Roundtable—most notably, the incredibly accurate flying scale model by Kent Walters:

<http://midway42.org/Backissues/2021/20211201.aapx> (scroll down)

...which also adorns the cover of my 2006 book, fooling many readers to assume it was an actual SBD:

<http://midway42.org/RoundTableBook/BookIndex.aspx>

...so we know the story of that one rather well. As for 6-B-5, that's less famous but your BuNo and aircrew data matches ours.

Bottom line: your findings re the two CV-6 planes winding up on CV-5 seem to be spot-on.

—RR

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Here's a very good image of rear of *Yorktown*'s car, found online in the Miami *Herald* by Thom Walla (next page):





**In the two pictures below, courtesy of Matt Robins, we see a great view of the car from the top front, and a closeup of the “Ship Service” license plate or placard on the front bumper (next page). The bottom of the plate apparently says “US Navy.”**





Finally, for comparison, here are a couple pictures of the same type of car as it looked when new in '41. Compare these to the first two photos above:



So why did *Yorktown* have a car onboard as it was rushed into a bitter sea battle? Actually, a vehicle like that is not unusual on any capital ship, especially when it's a task force or fleet commander's flagship. It's there as a staff car for the admiral's excursions ashore, or it may serve as a general utility vehicle for the ship or the flag staff. Carriers also had aircraft for the same purpose, like the J2F "Duck." Helicopters were added in later years.

Of course, one might suggest that it really didn't need to be there for the BOM, but it probably came aboard long before, prior to Coral Sea. In the mad rush to repair the ship for Midway, removing the car would not have been a priority if it wasn't in the way. That would seem to be the case.

Finally, here's an outstanding website with a superb video and an expanded photo collection about the *Yorktown* expedition, found for us by Barrett Tillman. Be sure to watch the short video that you can start on the first page: [click here](#).

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## 2. ADMIRAL FLETCHER'S CORAL SEA REPORT

The excitement over the above new discoveries on the *Yorktown* reminded John Lundstrom that there's still more to be discovered.

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21 April 2025

From: John Lundstrom

(Author, *The First Team, Black Shoe Carrier Admiral*)

Wisconsin

Fletcher's full Coral Sea Report and supporting documents are just sitting in the file cabinet in his locked flag office under the flight deck. They are the ones that Yeoman Frank Boo volunteered to go with the *Yorktown* salvage crew and retrieve. Nobody had time to help him break into the place before the *Yorktown* was torpedoed again.

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## 3. YORKTOWN PHOTO ON A "VICTORY AT SEA" ALBUM COVER?

(See this topic and accompanying album cover photo in the [May newsletter](#).)

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21 April 2025

From: Don Boyer

Hawaii

Thom:

The "Victory at Sea" cover is of USS *Bunker Hill*, taken May 11, 1945 after she had been hit by two kamikazes. Part of a film clip.

—Don

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21 April 2025  
From: Bill Longton  
Florida

The image of the carrier on the cover of the "Victory at Sea" album is the USS *Bunker Hill* (CV-17). The ship had been hit by 2 kamikaze suicide bombers on the morning of May 11, 1945 as she sailed off Okinawa as part of TF-58. The damage to the ship was so serious, she was knocked out of the war for the remainder of the conflict.

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22 April 2025  
From: Andries Visser  
Republic of South Africa

Good day,

Regarding the "Victory at Sea" cover, I am sure that the ship shown is USS *Bunker Hill*.

Regards,  
Andries Visser

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Thanks to Don, Bill, and Andries for identifying the carrier on the album cover. Here's a two-minute [Youtube video](#) showing various photos of the *Bunker Hill*, including the one on the "Victory at Sea" album.

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#### 4. VT-8 PILOT "FRENCHIE" FAYLE—IN HIS WORDS (See the [April](#) newsletter)

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21 April 2025  
From: Bill Longton  
Florida

On another note, referencing Frenchy Fayles' story regarding his leg injury, I listened to the entire audio clip, and was enthralled to hear the story from the man himself. In "A Dawn Like Thunder," Robert Mrazek left me with the impression that Fayle had stabbed himself in the leg, possibly to avoid being deployed with the unit, even though people admitted that no one could be certain. No one had actually seen what happened, and Frenchy came in later by himself after the incident.

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So with an "apparently self-inflicted" leg wound, no witnesses to the incident and a unit being deployed without him, what is a person left to conclude? I was happy to hear the interview and settle the incident.

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## 5. ROCHEFORT AND NIMITZ (See the [May newsletter](#).)

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21 April 2025  
From: Don Boyer  
Hawaii

I have always wondered why somebody like Layton or the personnel in HYPO apparently did not lay out the reasons for Rochefort's relief to Admiral Nimitz at the time. Had that happened, Nimitz had enough pull with King, despite their somewhat prickly relationship, to have put a stop to it, as it was obviously "office politics" by desk-warming, cocktail balancing careerists in Washington, not warfighting.

The Redman brothers and Micheal Wenger were shown to be wrong in their interpretation of the intel coming in regarding Midway, and wrong in front of Admiral King, who had reached down directly to Rochefort for his opinion on the Midway operation (something King almost never did, even going through the "chain of command"). OP-20-G had the knife out for Rochefort from that moment on. They were shown to be sloppy and inattentive to detail. Of course, the Redman brothers and Wenger went on to greater heights in the intelligence business post-war.

My own opinion over the past 60 years has been that while the loss of Rochefort to HYPO was a blow to the organization in terms of leadership and having someone who could "connect the dots" from among thousands of bits of intel, the overall effect was not the huge detriment to the unit during the rest of the war as has been made out by some. HYPO lost a great leader, but those left behind like Dyer and others were the actual code-breakers. They remained in place and they acquired others of great ability later. Plus, the operations of the unit were bolstered by other intelligence-gathering organizations as the war progressed, providing an enormous breadth of knowledge totally unavailable at the time of Midway.

In reading through Carlson's *Joe Rochefort's War*, Holmes' *Double-Edged Secrets*, Layton's *And I Was There*, plus *Combined Fleet Decoded*, *Islands of Destiny*, and *Storm Over Leyte* by John Prados, it is apparent that Station HYPO and its descendants FRUPAC and JICPOA didn't miss much during the rest of the war. There were misinterpretations and failures to

get information out in a timely fashion, but these were more the result of the Japanese changing their codes than a lack of leadership or quality of intelligence analysis.

Rochefort was tremendously effective as a leader during a time when it was vitally needed. After his departure, the system he put in place and the esprit de corps he established allowed the unit to function pretty much as if he was still there, which is a real measure of the man. So is his post-war refusal to play the martyr. He was truly one of the "greats" who rose up when needed most, and he performed brilliantly.

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The Roundtable's roster includes the one historian whose familiarity with all aspects of Rochefort's career is second to none: Elliot Carlson, author of *Joe Rochefort's War*. Next month's newsletter will include a major article by Elliot on the above topic—an in-depth analysis of Nimitz' actions and inactions relative to Rochefort, plus a critical evaluation of HYPO and its successor commands throughout the war after Rochefort's departure.

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## 6. LOFTON HENDERSON, CO OF VMSB-241

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25 April 2025  
From: Daniel Reed  
Ohio

Mr. Walla,

Robyn Adair suggested that I contact you regarding information on VMSB-241 and her mother's 1st husband, Major Lofton Henderson. My name is Dan Reed. I am from the same hometown as Major Henderson. I am currently working on research about him and his squadron at Midway. I have been on your site and have had some trouble at locating information on the major or VMSB-241. Any assistance you can give is appreciated especially on where I should look and what you may have available.

Thank you for your time.  
Dan Reed, MA History  
Teacher/Prof. History

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I responded to Mr. Reed that we can provide data on VMSB-241's aircraft and aircrews, and I included a link to the after-action report by the commander of Marine Air Group 22. Beyond that, I referred him to three books with good

information on his subject: *A Glorious Page In Our History, Marines at Midway*, and *History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II*. If anyone is aware of an additional source for the kind of information Mr. Reed is seeking, please let us know and I'll pass it to him. —RR

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***Now hear this!***

#### **NEWS AND INFO IN THIS ISSUE:**

- 83rd anniversary of the Battle of Midway
- Admiral Johnson's mandate—then and now
- Editor's notes

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#### **83rd ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY**

Readers may recall that in the May newsletter I urged everyone who might have some connection with any organization or location that has actively celebrated the BOM anniversary in the past to seek out their intentions for this year and pass the word so we can feature it in our newsletter. Separately, I sent direct inquiries to several locations that have feted such events in the past. The *Midway* was my first choice, as their “dining out” events, sponsored by ComNavAirFor in San Diego, were especially grand. I got a nice reply, stating that the Navy is no longer conducting anything aboard the ship for the BOM, although they do have an expansive static display that visitors can enjoy at any time. The Patriots Point (*Yorktown* CV-10) museum had a similar response. There were no other replies.

Thankfully, the Navy Department itself will continue its customary ceremony at the Naval Memorial in Washington, and you can watch it online: [click here](#) for instructions. The D.C. event has always been the centerpiece for them all, typically with a presentation by the current CNO and as much formal splendor as the Navy can muster at its national headquarters. Also, the BOM “dining out” at the Army & Navy Club in D.C. will continue as usual. The formal banquet there has always been one of the premier Midway anniversary events, with several of

our members attending. For anyone interested in going this year, [click here](#) for full information.



2015 BOM ceremony at the Naval Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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## ADMIRAL JOHNSON'S MANDATE—THEN AND NOW

In our [October 2024 newsletter](#), we showcased a 1999 directive by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, that mandated a formal annual celebration of the Battle of Midway by every Navy and Marine Corps command. The admiral recommended that the event take the form of a “dining in” (a banquet for the officers within a command, no guests), but it usually became a “dining out”—the same thing, but with guests, which facilitated attendance by BOM veterans and other interested personnel. Less formal observances were conducted by veteran organizations and military museums, often on a very grand scale. I’m most familiar with those that I participated in aboard USS *Midway* and in San Francisco during 2002-2010, and they were magnificent—exactly what Admiral Johnson expected.

That was then, this is now. Admiral Johnson is no longer CNO, few veterans of the battle are able to attend, and many of the officers and managers in charge of those venues where the anniversary was formally celebrated with grandeur are too young to have been influenced very much by something dating from 1999. Despite the efforts of a scant few persons and groups (like ours) for whom the BOM anniversary is of high importance, Navy-wide celebrations have faded with the passage of time. Regrettably, for most of those venues, it’s just another day.



So, sad to say, I fear we must face reality and accept that Admiral Johnson's decree from 26 years ago no longer commands the level of enthusiasm that it did in prior years. Even so, here on the Midway Roundtable, we will continue to promote and support the BOM anniversary to whatever degree this format will permit, as long as one or more of us still thinks that the admiral had a good idea.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

- Barrett Tillman found another website for us with still more great pictures from the *Yorktown* expedition. [Click here](#) and especially note the amazing mural.
- Sincere thanks to new Roundtable member Chris Brehany, who provided the information above on the two anniversary events in Washington. Without his timely message, prompted by an inquiry on our behalf from Tom Rychlik, there would have been little to report concerning BOM-83 celebrations.
- Email errors have plagued the Roundtable throughout its long history, and sadly, it's still true. Despite explaining the following issue several times along with its solution, our messages to some of you still don't make it to your inbox. In virtually every case, the problem is the defensive measures of your email app, as detailed in our [August-September 2024](#) newsletter (scroll down to "Not Receiving Email from the Roundtable?").

This problem is especially prevalent among those reading email on their phones or other miniature devices rather than a laptop or desktop computer. So, one more time, if you sent us a comment or question and didn't get a reply, you actually did: it landed in your spam or trash folder and you need to move it to your inbox. The permanent fix for that nuisance, in the above newsletter, will solve it for almost everyone.

- That it for the month of June and for the 83rd anniversary of the Battle of Midway. As always, sincere thanks to all for your interest in our subject and our efforts to promote it. Send your questions or comments to:

[midwayroundtable@gmail.com](mailto:midwayroundtable@gmail.com)

Best regards,  
—Ron Russell, newsletter editor (temporary)  
—Thom Walla, webmaster and chief editor

