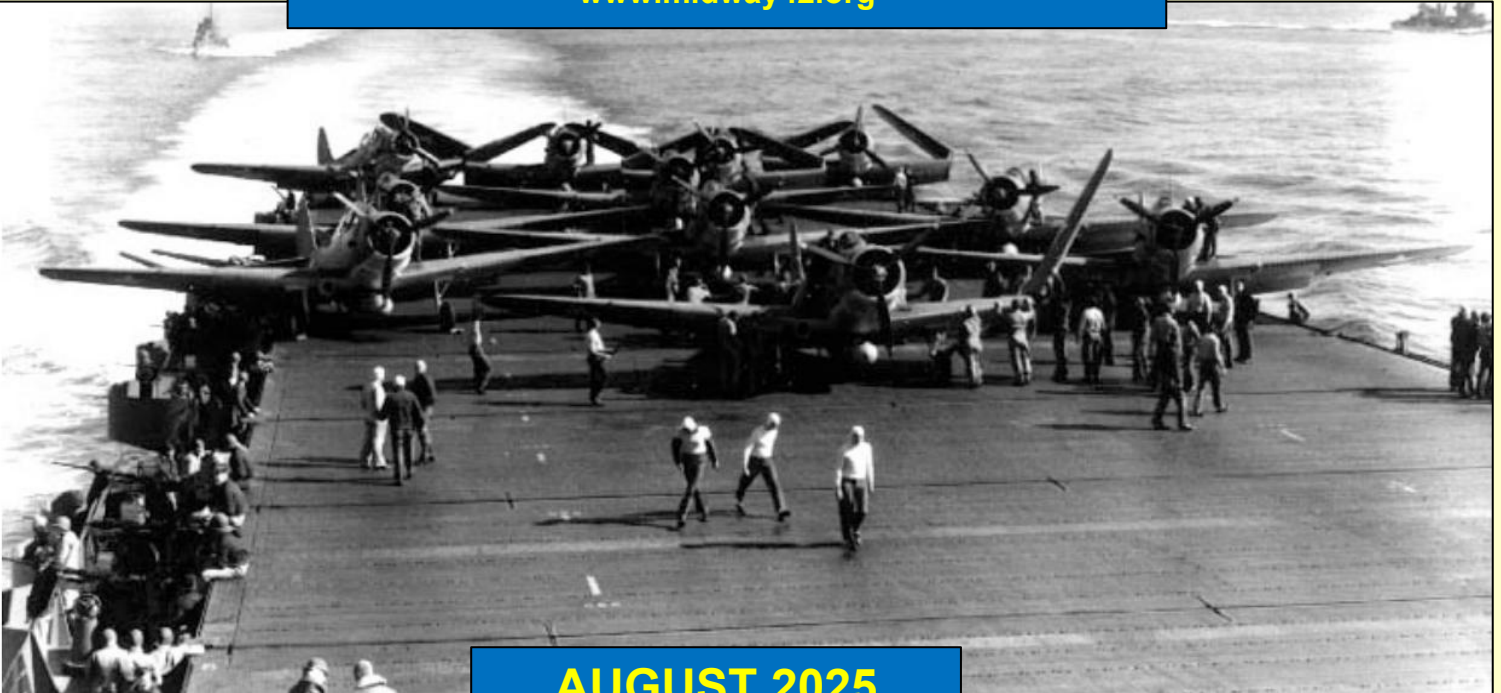


The Roundtable Forum

official newsletter of the
Battle of Midway Roundtable

www.midway42.org

OUR 467th
ONLINE NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 2025

~ INTRODUCTION ~

One of the Roundtable's principal values over the years has been our listings of ship and aircrew personnel who participated in the battle, a great aid to individuals, organizations, and families seeking to learn about or confirm someone as a BOM veteran. A big part of that is our complete muster of USS *Yorktown* survivors taken aboard USS *Fulton* for the return to Pearl Harbor—just about everyone who made it off CV-5.

But not all. Several survivors got back to Pearl on other ships, but beyond a scant few that we know well like VT-3 gunner Lloyd Childers, we didn't have data on who they were. Now we do, thanks to new member Thomas Moore in Georgia who sent us a collection of separate survivor lists from the cruiser *Portland* and various destroyers before the men were highlined to the *Fulton*.

Also this month we have an interesting observation by Jon Parshall about the VB-6 attack on the *Akagi*—once again, one of the BOM's definite assumptions is probably not as definite as you've read everywhere else.

But first we lead off with an inquiry into another assumption: Midway as the renowned "turning point" of the Pacific War. Was it really? You can decide.

—Ron Russell
26 July 2025

~ AROUND THE TABLE ~

READERS' TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1. Turning Point**
- 2. Whose bomb doomed the *Akagi*?**

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1. TURNING POINT

We can frequently count on Marine Major Tom Rychlik to probe into a BOM related topic long after it was presumed to be settled—witness his robust campaign to award the Medal of Honor to Midway's three torpedo squadron commanders. He also initiated our recent series about HYPO after Rochefort's removal. In this message, Tom revisits a familiar subject on the Roundtable, asking a question for which there is usually only one answer....but not always.

3 April 2025

**From: Major Tom Rychlik, USMC-Ret
Virginia**

Over the past several years there have been a number of BOMRT posts on whether or not Midway was the turning point of WWII—some historians consider the Guadalcanal campaign as the turning point. If we are talking about one particular battle, it is Midway hands down, as none of the individual battles in the Guadalcanal campaign were clearly as decisive. But my opinion on the importance of this battle means little when compared to others:

- June 060810Z 1942 message from Admiral Nimitz to his commanders: "I firmly believe (we) have changed the course of the war in the Pacific in our favor."**
- Remarks by James Schlessinger, 5 June 2003: "Since I wrote a piece a year ago in the Wall Street Journal on the 60th Anniversary of Midway, I have continued to be puzzled that the assertion that Midway played the crucial strategic role for the war in Europe--came as something of a revelation. So, the question before us is: Why is not Midway recognized as the crucial battle for the West of World War II--just as Stalingrad is recognized as a crucial battle for the Soviet Union? The comparative neglect of Midway is a great historic puzzle--and, in a sense, a great injustice. So, this evening, I shall talk**

about history and, in particular, in relation to what Churchill and others call Grand Strategy. Midway was far more than a decisive naval victory. It was far more than the turning of the tide in the Pacific war. In a strategic sense, Midway represents one of the turning points of world history--and in that role it remains under-appreciated..."

- In Elliot Carlson's *Joe Rochefort's War*, Appendix 3, Carlson brings up a point I hadn't seen anywhere else. "Japan's failure at Midway diminished that country's importance to its Axis partners....Much to Germany's disappointment, it all but eliminated the already slim possibility of a Japanese attack on the Soviet Union." At the end he quotes Nimitz: "Midway was the crucial battle of the Pacific War that made everything possible."

- Rochefort's Distinguished Service Medal Citation ends with: "....resulted in a Naval engagement with the Japanese fleet that is acknowledged as the turning point of the Pacific War."

- In *Shattered Sword*, Pashall & Tully dedicate an entire chapter to the battle's importance, thoroughly analyzing the material factors and strategic consequences of both the Japanese loss or a Japanese win. Although not specifically answering the turning point question, they do call Midway the most important battle of the Pacific and quote the Naval War College study of the battle that said: "Midway put an end to Japanese offensive action...and...restored the balance of naval power in the Pacific."

That sure sounds like "turning point" to me.

As Tom points out above, if you decide to cite a single battle on which the fortunes of war turned in the Pacific, that has to be the BOM. On the other hand, if you allow for other definitions of "turning point," Midway can become less definite. Despite their calamity at Midway, the Japanese still had more of everything in the Pacific than the U.S., and brutal ability to use it—witness Savo, Santa Cruz, and the other sea battles around the Solomons in 1942. But it was there, in the Solomons, that the IJN and IJA expended more of their warfighting assets than they could replace, assuredly turning their destiny from possible victory to inevitable defeat. Arguably then, the Solomons campaign was the real turning point—except that without the lopsided U.S. victory at Midway, it's unlikely that any Solomons campaign would follow. In the end, it's how you decide to define it. Midway is the dominant choice....but not always.

For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, I strongly recommend a Youtube video featuring Jon Parshall in a 2024 webinar from the National Museum of the Pacific War. The title is "Midway to Guadalcanal: two months that changed World War II." The presentation is wide-ranging but Jon devotes considerable attention

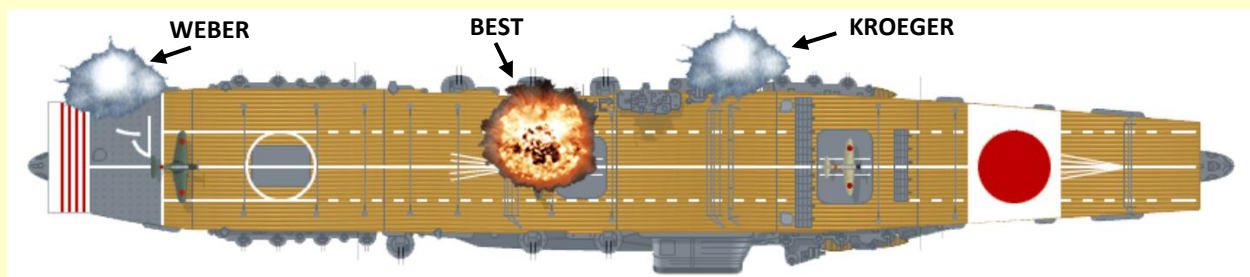
to Guadalcanal as the real turning point of the war, in this case applying the broader definition of “turning point.” The run time is about 45 minutes, but it moves along nicely with well-focused content, including Q&A at the end. You won’t get bored. [Click here](#) for the video.

Jon has an article on the same subject in the current issue of *Naval History* magazine. If you’re not a subscriber, you can read it online: [click here](#). There’s no cost, but see the related item below under “Now Hear This.”

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2. WHOSE BOMB DOOMED THE *AKAGI*?

Speaking of Jon Parshall, I had asked him for an opinion concerning Dick Best’s 3-plane attack on the *Akagi*. Best’s bullseye on the flight deck gets sole credit in virtually all Midway histories for causing the ship’s demise, but what about the other two bombs?



Ensign Kroeger’s bomb was a near miss but Ensign Weber’s caused minor damage to the ship’s stern that jammed the rudder into a hard starboard turn. Would that have kept *Akagi* from conducting flight operations or from attempting to steam out of the combat area? Would it then face destruction from TF-16 like the *Mikuma*? In the final analysis, could it be possible that Best’s spectacular hit, lauded in all BOM annals for removing Nagumo’s flagship from the war, wasn’t actually necessary? Here is Jon’s response.

15 June 2025
From: Jon Parshall
Minnesota
(co-author, *Shattered Sword*)

I think there’s a good argument to be made that you’re right. With the rudder jammed, it was going to be very difficult to tow her, and she was a

BIG ship. That said, we also can't know how much the fire and smoke were impeding efforts in her steering compartment to free the rudder; in other words, it's not impossible that absent those fires the Japanese would have been able to free it—nothing I've ever read indicated that it would have necessarily required a drydock. But I think you're right that given the tactical situation at hand, with two American carriers still operational nearby with a fairly large complement of dive-bombers, the odds of *Akagi* making it off the battlefield weren't good.

The likely answer, then, to the rhetorical question in the above headline is that *both bombs*, Best's and Weber's, probably would have produced the exact same outcome—and that's a very big departure from the conclusion you'll find in nearly all BOM accounts.

For exceptional detail re the *Akagi* from beginning to end, including many photos and images like the one above, check this website: [click here](#).

(Above *Akagi* image edited from the original in *Shattered Sword*, p. 253.)



Now hear this!

NEWS AND INFO IN THIS ISSUE:

- New BOM book: *Taking Midway*
- Website addition: new *Yorktown* survivor lists
- August issue, *Naval History* magazine
- Remembering Walt Grist, BOM Marine
- Editor's notes

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NEW BOM BOOK: *TAKING MIDWAY*

Another new book that purports to tell the whole story of the Battle of Midway has hit the bookstores. It's *Taking Midway*, by Martin Dugard, the author of several books in his "Taking" series. Here's the new one [on Amazon](#). You can also find it at Barnes & Noble and other outlets. I don't have the book yet so I'll reserve judgment for now and invite anyone who has read it to send us a review. Webmaster Thom Walla bought a copy and will have some comments for us in the next newsletter. For now, though, what does anyone else have to say?

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WEBSITE ADDITION: NEW YORKTOWN SURVIVOR LISTS

As mentioned in the Introduction above, we now have a collection of *Yorktown* survivor lists, taken aboard the cruiser *Portland* and a number of destroyers that initially pulled the men out of the water. Most of those names ultimately made it to the *Fulton* and are repeated on that muster list, but a few did not, giving readers and researchers some survivor data not previously available.

To access the files, [click here](#). You'll then see links for each ship. Or, on our home page, click "The Battle" on the top toolbar, followed by "USS *Yorktown* Muster Lists."

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AUGUST ISSUE, *NAVAL HISTORY* MAGAZINE

If you go online to the August issue of *Naval History* for Jon Parshall's article as suggested above, continue on to the next feature, "Halsey's Folly" by Barrett Tillman. If you've had reasons to think of the admiral as "Bull" like so many others, Barrett offers another one. (Note: avoid excessive clicks when accessing those free articles—you only get five per month if you're not a *Naval History* subscriber or USNI member.)

The print issue in August also has a great article on the recent exploration of the *Yorktown*, as extensively reported in our [June](#) newsletter, with additional text and photos. It's not available online for free unless you're a *Proceedings* subscriber at USNI—in that case, sign in and select *Naval History* on the home page.

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REMEMBERING WALT GRIST, BOM MARINE



In our [June special supplement](#), I credited Ed Fox for bringing Col. John Miniclier to the Roundtable back around 2003, but it's much more likely that the credit should go to Msgt. Walt Grist, USMC-Ret. Walt was probably our first BOM Marine vet, joining during Bill Price's era around 1999-2000, and bringing several more Marines to the roster with him, including both Ed and John. Walt was a key volunteer aboard the USS *Hornet* (CV-12) museum ship at Alameda and served as the veterans coordinator for the annual BOM observance in San Francisco. Here's a great photo of him from our [October 2022 newsletter](#) (scroll down), seen with VT-3 vet Lloyd Childers. Sadly, he passed away just a few months after that picture was taken. We'll miss him, and all the rest, for as much of eternity as we're permitted to know and share.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

- If the "Midway to Guadalcanal" webinar (cited in the "Turning Point" article above) stirred your interest, you may want to catch the next one from the PacWar museum, on Wednesday, September 3rd. The subject is the run-up to V-J Day, again presented by Jon Parshall. To register for the live event, [click here](#).
- Here's another gem brought to our attention by Barrett Tillman: John Ford's personal WW2 account, transcribed on the [NHHC website](#). Includes the BOM. The first-person narrative by Ford himself is quite interesting.
- One more gem: if you have *No Right to Win*, you may have noticed the image opposite the title page, showing an authentic BOM scene as depicted by our superb resident artist, John Greaves. The small greyscale replica in the book doesn't really do justice to John, so check out his original on the next page.

That's it for this month. As always, your messages or inquiries concerning this newsletter, our website, or anything related to the BOM are encouraged and very welcome, and anything you send will get a reply. Send to:

midwayroundtable@gmail.com

Near Midway, 4 June 1942: Fighter pilot Warrant Officer Tom Cheek (a future Roundtable member) scores his second kill of the day. The wounded Zero flashes past his F4F Wildcat as he spots another to his left, about to dive on VT-3's Devastators. Tom would also put that one out of commission. Below, Ensign Wesley Osmus bails out of his stricken TBD as it spirals toward the water.



John L. Greaves, a commercial artist in Alberta, Canada, was a major contributor to the Roundtable from its earliest years until his untimely passing in 2017. For more of his outstanding Midway paintings, click this URL or copy and paste it into your browser:

<https://athabaskanq07.wordpress.com/2017/01/20/in-memoriam-john-leonard-greaves/>