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Authority 968133  
By *AK* NARA Date 5/7/07

A023/A16-3/P15

U.S.S. NEOSHO DETAIL

10/ap

Sydney, Australia,  
U.S.S. WRIGHT,  
May 25, 1942.

DECLASSIFIED

From: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. NEOSHO.  
To : The Commander-in-Chief, United States Pacific Fleet.  
Via : (1) The Commander Squadron EIGHT, SERVICE FORCE,  
PACIFIC FLEET.  
(2) The Commander SERVICE FORCE, PACIFIC FLEET.  
(3) The Commander Task Force SEVENTEEN.

SUBJECT: Engagement of U.S.S. NEOSHO with Japanese Aircraft  
on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEOSHO;  
Search for Survivors.

Reference: (a) U. S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 712.  
(b) U. S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 841(3).  
(c) U. S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 874(1), (6).  
(d) U. S. Navy Regulations, 1920, Article 948.  
(e) ComDesDiv SEVEN Confidential Letter FB7/A16-3  
Serial (010) of May 20, 1942.  
(f) CG U.S.S. HENLEY (391) Confidential Letter  
DD391/A16-3, Serial (04) of May 19, 1942.  
(g) SOPA (Commander Task Force FORTY-TWO) Confiden-  
tial Letter B2/"P", Serial (08) of May 23, 1942,  
with enclosures. (References (e) and (f)).

Enclosure: (A) U.S.S. NEOSHO War Diary, May 7-11, 1942 [WD FILE]  
(B) Report of DICKEN, R. J., C.S.M.(AA), U. S. Navy.  
(C) Report of Executive Officer, U.S.S. NEOSHO.  
(D) Track Chart, U.S.S. NEOSHO, 0800-1201,  
May 7, 1942.  
(E) "Anti-Aircraft Action by Surface Ships" Report.  
(F) List of Survivors, Known Dead and Missing.  
(G) Reference (a).  
(H) Reference (f).  
(I) Reference (g).  
(J) Medical Officer, U.S.S. HENLEY (391) Letter  
of May 15, 1942.  
(K) Statements of Censured Officers.

Vertical stamp: *Checked Box # 1/21/42 # 1343 FILE A/B JACKET # 1/5*

1. On the evening of May 6, 1942, the NEOSHO, in accordance with instructions from Commander Task Force SEVENTEEN, proceeded on duty assigned with the U.S.S. SIMS as escort, to conform with Commander Task Force SEVENTEEN Operation Order No. 2-42. The NEOSHO was required to pass through a given geographical point, at one hour after sunrise the following morning, which she proceeded to do. At 0811, May 7, 1942, being in the vicinity of this assigned point and not

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 sighting any ships of the Task Force operating in that area, the  
 NEOSHO proceeded to carry out instructions.

2. At 0810, May 7, 1942, two planes were observed at a distance of approximately ten miles, bearing 020° T, but no positive identification could be made as they were too far away. It was believed at this time that they were planes from one of our carriers. At 0929, a bomb was seen to fall about one hundred yards on the starboard quarter of the SIMS, having been dropped from an enemy plane operating singly. The SIMS at that time was patrolling ahead of the NEOSHO, following a specified zig-zag plan. This plane disappeared heading in a northerly direction. General Quarters was immediately sounded. Battle stations were manned continuously until cessation of the engagement with the enemy at 1218. Speed was increased to eighteen knots. At 1005, sighted approximately fifteen enemy planes approaching from 025° T. These planes made no attempt to attack, but flew parallel to the course of this vessel on the port side at high altitude, well out of gun range and disappeared to the northeastward. The SIMS opened fire but no bursts were observed. At 1023, seven more enemy planes approaching from 010° T were sighted. These planes flew parallel to this vessel on the port side, crossed the bow, and disappeared to the northeastward, having made no attempt to attack either the SIMS or the NEOSHO. SIMS opened fire shortly after sighting. This vessel commenced firing three inch guns when these planes were within range. At 1033, a group of about ten planes approached from 140° T, of which three planes (twin-engine bombers) commenced a horizontal bombing attack on this vessel, others proceeding to the northeastward. At 1055, these three bombers dropped three bombs simultaneously; the direction of the fall of the bombs was observed closely and the ship was swung hard right to avoid being hit; all bombs fell to starboard and were near misses. These three planes were the only planes observed throughout the entire engagement which were other than single engine.

3. At 1201, observed approximately twenty-four enemy planes at high altitude, apparently taking position for dive-bombing attacks on this vessel and the SIMS. From 1201 to 1218, this vessel was subjected to continuous dive-bombing attacks from all directions. The 20 mm fire of the NEOSHO was very

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 effective. At no time during the engagement did the machine gunners falter at their jobs, notwithstanding the fact that two men were killed instantly right in the midst of the forward group, one of them being decapitated by flying fragments. However, despite any courageous tenacity on the part of the gun crews, it was quite obvious that if a pilot desired to carry his bomb home, he could not be stopped. The greatest majority of the planes diving on the NEOSHO were forced to deliver their attacks at a high altitude; only three or four dove to within a few hundred feet of the masts. Although the three inch fifty caliber anti-aircraft guns fired throughout the attacks it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness against the enemy.

4. The constant maneuvering of the ship so as to head crosswind, and the effective fire of the 20 mm guns, is considered responsible for the large number of near misses. Three enemy planes are definitely known to have been shot down by this ship, of which one made the suicidal run into Gun No. 4 enclosure. It is believed that at least four other planes received sufficient 20 mm hits to render their return to base questionable. Three planes were observed to swerve away without completing their attack, due to the effectiveness of the 20 mm gun fire.

5. Shortly after the last bomb dropped, the Commanding Officer ordered all hands to "Prepare to Abandon Ship but not to abandon until so ordered". A messenger sent by the Executive Officer from aft came to the Commanding Officer stating that he had been sent to find out what the orders were regarding abandoning ship. The Commanding Officer told him to tell the Executive Officer, "Make preparations for abandoning ship and stand-by". The Commanding Officer had no knowledge of the condition of the Executive Officer. At about 1230, the Commanding Officer ordered the two motor whale boats to be lowered to pick up personnel who had abandoned ship without orders, and to tow all life rafts back to the ship. All undamaged life rafts, seven in number, had been set adrift without orders from the bridge. The many attacks delivered by the dive-bombers were directed at the bridge, and at the after section of the ship containing the engineering installation. With the exception of the 3<sup>rd</sup> gun crews in No. 1 and No. 2 gun enclosures and the forward ammunition and repair parties, all of the ship's personnel were concentrated in

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these two sections. In the immediate vicinity of the bridge, three direct hits and a number of near misses occurred. In the after part of the ship, two direct hits, a suicidal dive of a plane, and the blowing up of at least two boilers, along with several near misses, occurred. It is believed that the destruction of the escort vessel with no other ships in sight, combined with the violent shocks from the several direct bomb hits and near misses, in many cases rendered personnel incapable of logical thought. It is known that many of the personnel aft, due to the flame resulting from the suicidal dive, smoke, and escaping steam, believing they were trapped with the ship sinking, jumped over the side. The number of men who were critically burned or injured in the after end of the ship, and who jumped over the side, is not known. The two motor whale boats placed men on the rafts and took as many in the boat as the boat officer in each case considered safe. They did not tow the life rafts back to the ship. When the boats returned to the ship, without life rafts, and loaded in excess of capacity with survivors, many of whom were badly injured and severely burned, it was too near sunset to send them back to attempt to locate, and return with, the drifting life rafts. The sea was rough and it was the Commanding Officer's opinion, as well as that of several officers, that the NEOSHO probably would not stay afloat throughout the night. The rafts were then out of sight. It was the Commanding Officer's conviction at that time that one of the Task Forces with which this vessel was operating would find the NEOSHO on the following day, if still afloat, and the rafts would then be located and occupants thereof rescued. A muster upon return of the boats showed that of 21 officers and 267 men, including passengers, on board at quarters that morning, 16 officers and 94 men were accounted for, 1 officer and 19 men were known dead, and 4 officers and 154 men were missing. In addition to the above there were 15 enlisted survivors of the SIMS. During the afternoon the wind had increased to force 5-6 and the sea was moderately rough. In the early afternoon it was difficult to see the life rafts from the bridge with the aid of binoculars, and the boats were seen only intermittently, prior to their return.

6. Shortly after giving the order to prepare to abandon ship, the Commanding Officer directed the Communication Officer to destroy all the classified material in his possession, and proceeded

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to destroy all classified material in his own possession. This was done to prevent any of this material falling into the hands of the enemy. Due to the above, all subsequent transmissions by radio, using the auxiliary generator, were sent in plain language.

7. Immediately the NEOSHO listed heavily, a close watch was kept on the inclinometer in order to detect signs of increased average list with consequent danger of capsizing. Valves to starboard wing tanks #5, #6, and #8 were opened to counteract list; valves to #3, #4, and #7, same side, inoperative due to damage. This vessel, due to the seven bomb hits it received, was listed at an angle of about 30° and without power, but remained afloat in a sinking condition until survivors were rescued by the U.S.S. HENLEY on May 11, 1942. The U.S.S. SIMS, as a result of hits sustained, broke in two and sank at approximately 1230, May 7, 1942.

8. The narrative of the period May 7-11, 1942, is contained in enclosure (A). When the U.S.S. HENLEY approached this vessel on May 11, 1942, the following message was sent to her: "HAVE YOU ANY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ME X SHIP IS A TOTAL LOSS SETTLING GRADUALLY X WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS". The reply received was "NO INSTRUCTIONS". When the HENLEY crossed the stern of the NEOSHO and commenced heaving to on the port side, this vessel was sending a message relative to the number of survivors on board, including injured men. The HENLEY broke in on this transmission, and sent "EXPEDITE TRANSFER OF SURVIVORS". This was followed shortly afterward by the flag hoist "EMERG. VICTOR". In view of the foregoing, personnel were transferred as quickly as possible and not permitted to leave the vicinity of the boats for the purpose of getting either government or personal equipment. Upon arrival alongside the HENLEY in the last boat the Commanding Officer found that the two NEOSHO motor whale boats used for transfer of first group of survivors, had already been scuttled by orders of the HENLEY, and he was informed that the Commanding Officer of the HENLEY's orders were that no baggage could be brought aboard, that the HENLEY had to get underway as soon as possible because of possibility of attack by the enemy which was concurred in by the Commanding Officer of the NEOSHO. All boats had material in them that had been loaded in anticipation of abandoning ship, and making a protracted voyage to Australia, including navigational and ordnance equipment.

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9. A continuous watch was maintained by the Commanding Officer and Gunnery Officer on the list and trim of the NEOSHO during the period May 7-11, 1942. Because of the serious damage sustained as the result of bomb hits in general, and in particular those in the cargo tanks in the vicinity of the bridge structure where the buckling of the main deck plating was daily increasing, the Commanding Officer was convinced that the NEOSHO was in danger of breaking in two. In addition, the engineroom, fireroom, and #2 and #3 cargo pump rooms were taking more water each day. It was felt that it would be but a short time before the NEOSHO would sink of her own accord or break in two. Having in mind the above conditions the Commanding Officer was convinced that the NEOSHO could not be salvaged. In view of the above conditions plus the knowledge that: (a) the NEOSHO was within range of shore based enemy aircraft; (b) enemy submarines were operating in the Coral Sea and (c) that an enemy carrier had been reported not far distant, the Commanding Officer felt fully justified in directing the sinking of the NEOSHO. In addition, it was felt that the HENLEY's remaining hoove-to in the vicinity to attempt a transfer of equipment from the NEOSHO would result in unnecessarily jeopardizing the HENLEY, as well as the lives of approximately 400 officers and men on board. The Commanding Officer of the NEOSHO therefore asked the HENLEY to sink the NEOSHO, and requested that she be hit at or below the water line aft, to expedite sinking. This request was not fulfilled until the latter part of the gun firing, when, after a few well placed hits in the after section, the NEOSHO quickly settled and sank, stern first, at 1522, May 11, 1942.

10. The search for survivors was conducted as outlined in references (e) and (f). No survivors were found, and at the conclusion of the search the NEOSHO detail was landed at Brisbane, Australia, and reported on board the U.S.S. GRIFFIN.

11. The U.S.S. HELM, which had continued the search after the departure of the HENLEY, arrived in Brisbane, Australia, on May 18, 1942. They had found four survivors on a life raft on May 16, 1942, one of whom died shortly after being taken aboard. A detailed report of the HELM search has not been received by the Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. NEOSHO. From statements of the three survivors it is known that: (a) they were part of a group of about 68 men who

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 were on four life rafts secured together; (b) that the balance of the men had succumbed as a result of lack of water and exhaustion. The men constituting this group, as far as can be remembered by the two survivors on board the WRIGHT at the present time, are indicated in enclosure (F). These survivors stated that they had seen four planes during the time they were drifting, consisting of (1) a plane thought to be a "PBV" on May 10, 1942, quite a distance away; (2) a "PBV" and an Australian "Hudson" on May 11, 1942, a little closer than (1), and (3) a "PBV" on May 12, 1942, fairly close, but they had not seen any ships prior to the arrival of the HELM.

12. During and subsequent to the engagement, except for isolated instances, the performance of duty of all personnel was of the highest order and in keeping with the traditions of the United States Navy.

13. Outstanding cases worthy of commendation and praise are submitted herewith:

FIRTH, Francis J., Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy - As Executive Officer of the U.S.S. NEOSHO, his battle station was in Battle II, located on the port side aft, just forward of Gun No. 4. When a Japanese plane made a suicidal dive into Gun No. 4 enclosure, this officer was knocked down and rendered unconscious by the concussion of the explosion which occurred, which was immediately followed by an intense fire. Although badly burned about the face, arms, and hands, and suffering excruciating pain, this officer's first thought upon regaining consciousness, when he found the after end of the ship afire, steam escaping in a dense cloud on the stack deck, and the ship listing badly, was the safety of the personnel in his vicinity. He despatched a messenger to the bridge to ascertain the Commanding Officer's wishes with regard to abandoning ship, and did everything within his power to disseminate the Commanding Officer's orders to the men in his vicinity. When his services were no longer required in the after part of the ship he made his way forward and sometime later, on first meeting with the Commanding Officer, reported for further duty and asked what assistance he could render. He did this despite the fact that he was critically burned about the face, hands, and left arm.

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At all times on May 7, 1942, and in subsequent days, he was an heroic example of unselfishness, insisting upon treatment of all other injured personnel first. Despite his badly burned condition, he continued to offer his services in the trying days subsequent to May 7, 1942. His conduct was considered extraordinarily courageous and outstanding, and in keeping with the highest ideals and traditions of the naval service. He is recommended for the highest commendation possible.

BROWN, Thomas M., Lieutenant Commander, U. S. Navy: As Gunnery Officer of the U.S.S. NEOSHO, this officer was stationed in the exposed fire control tower on the flying bridge. Throughout the engagement, and as long as an enemy plane was in sight, he maintained an effective fire against the enemy, as a result of which three enemy planes were definitely destroyed, and four others are not believed to have returned to their base. Upon receiving orders to prepare to abandon ship, he saw all personnel clear of the control tower and flying bridge before leaving himself. Although believing the ship would list over and sink immediately, he calmly assisted the Commanding Officer on the bridge in the disposition of boats, dissemination of orders, and destruction of classified material, with no thought for his own personal safety. In the days subsequent to the attack, he assumed and performed the duties of Executive Officer in a thorough and efficient manner, and was invaluable in making suggestions for the improvement of conditions on board, and in the final preparations for abandoning ship. His conspicuous courage and resourcefulness during the engagement with the enemy, and in time of dire peril and great responsibility is considered worthy of the highest commendation possible and he is so recommended. Attention is invited to the Commanding Officer's commendation of this officer's conduct during the engagement with the enemy on December 7, 1941.

VERBERGGE, Louis, Lieutenant, U. S. Navy: As Engineer Officer of the U.S.S. NEOSHO, this officer was stationed in the main engine room. The engine room was flooded with fuel oil as a result of a bomb explosion. He remained at his station endeavoring to continue operation of the main engines, with the engine room untenable due to smoke from the fire in the bunker fuel oil tank. When, as a result of a bomb explosion in the fireroom shortly afterward, all power was lost, he proceeded to make a thorough inspection of the



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engineering spaces as far as possible to determine the extent of the damage sustained, despite the fact that he knew the ship was in danger of capsizing. In the days subsequent to the attack he displayed outstanding leadership, courage, initiative, and ingenuity in overcoming obstacles in connection with the hoisting out of the port motor launch from its skids, and down the port side. The ship was without power and listing heavily to starboard. It was impossible to launch boats on the starboard side as the seas were breaking heavily and the deck was submerged. He was an inspiration to the personnel working with him on this difficult task. The proposed departure from the ship would have been impossible if this boat had not been available. I sincerely recommend him for a suitable award.

BRATT, Harold, 305 14 53, Machinists Mate First Class, U. S. Navy:  
Extensive damage was done by one of the bombs when it exploded in the fireroom, tearing open main and auxiliary steam lines, boiler casings and boiler tubes. BRATT was in charge of the Watch and Battle Station in the after engineroom which is located in the compartment underneath the fireroom, and from which there was no escape except up through the fireroom by way of vertical ladders and two small hatches in the fireroom deck. BRATT, assuming the fact that serious damage had occurred in the fireroom and that the space above the after engineroom was filled with steam, advised the four men with him of the probable conditions existing in the fireroom above, and that any attempt to escape would be futile for the time being. He attempted to restrain two of the men, who insisted on leaving the after engineroom at once, and who disregarded his instructions to remain on their stations. In a scuffle which ensued, BRATT was knocked down and into the bilges, receiving slight bodily injuries, and had the emergency hand lantern and gas mask he was carrying torn from his hands. By this time the compartment was in darkness and was slowly filling with sea water. With sound reasoning, BRATT kept the two remaining men with him in the after engineroom for approximately three-quarters of an hour, thus permitting adequate time to elapse for sufficient steam to escape from the fireroom above to make escape possible. He had the two men follow his example of wrapping wiping rags about their hands and arms, putting on gas masks, and then lead them up the after escape hatch into the

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fireroom and thence to the topside.

BRATT's correct assumption of existing conditions, leadership, quick thinking and action under most difficult circumstances resulted in saving the lives of the two men under his charge, as well as his own. The two men who disregarded his instructions and attempted an early escape, were overcome by hot steam and died in the fireroom.

He is recommended for the highest commendation possible, and advancement to Chief Machinists Mate.

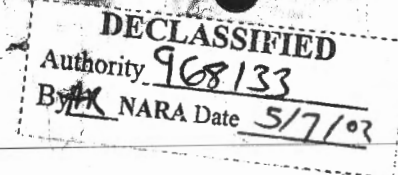
SIMMONS, Wayne, 368 41 71, Machinists Mate Second Class, U. S. Navy:

One of the bombs exploded adjacent to a large fuel oil tank located over the forward part of the engineroom. The explosion ruptured the bottom of the fuel oil tank directly over the two main feed pumps covering two men on watch with fuel oil so badly that they could no longer see. They staggered away from the pumps and were assisted out of the engineroom. Without orders, SIMMONS shifted from his battle station, which was the starboard main circulating pump and starboard main drain valve located on the same level as the main feed pumps, but clear of the fuel oil pouring down upon the feed pumps, and took over throttle operation of the operating feed pump in order that water supply to boilers would not be impaired. In spite of heavy black oil smoke filling the space, SIMMONS remained at the operating feed pump throttle station until a bomb explosion in the fireroom ruptured steam lines and cut off steam supply to all machinery.

SIMMONS's quick action, fearlessness, courage, and devotion to duty resulted in the maintenance of feed water supply to all of the ship's boilers then steaming under full power conditions right up to the moment when the bomb explosion in the fireroom totally disabled the boilers and main steam lines.

He is recommended for the highest commendation possible, and advancement to Machinists Mate First Class.

PETERSON, Oscar Vernon, 341 15 75, Chief Watertender (permanent appointment) U. S. Navy: • Extensive damage was done in the fireroom (deceased)



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 by one of the bombs which tore open main and auxiliary steam lines,  
 boiler casings and tubes.

PETERSON was in charge of the repair party stationed in the crew's mess compartment adjacent to the upper level of the fire-room, with the additional specific duty of closing the four main steam line bulkhead stop valves during the battle, should damage dictate the need for shutting down these valves.

When the bomb exploded in the fireroom the iron door leading from the fireroom to the mess compartment was torn open and the force of the explosion from the bomb, steam lines and boilers knocked PETERSON down and burned his face and hands. In spite of noises indicating further damage being done by bombs to other parts of the ship, personal injury and lack of assistance because of serious injury to other men in his repair party, PETERSON worked his way into the fireroom trunk over the forward end of the two forward boilers, when the escaping steam had dissipated sufficiently to permit him to reach the bulkhead stop valves, and closed these valves. By so doing, he received additional severe burns about his head, arms and legs, which resulted in his death on May 13, 1942.

The Commanding Officer considers PETERSON's conduct to have shown the highest qualities of devotion to duty, courage and outstanding superior qualities most desired in a leading Chief Petty Officer, and he is recommended for a posthumous award of the highest order.

HOAG, Robert W., 227 94 39, Chief Pharmacists Mate (permanent appointment, U. S. Navy: • In the absence of the Medical Officer, who is among those missing, HOAG, assisted by WARD, W. J., PhMlc, V-6, USNR., was unceasing in his administration of assistance to the injured. The lives of those now recovering were undoubtedly saved by HOAG's ability, energy and care. Particular attention is invited to enclosure (J), submitted to the Commanding Officer by the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. HENLEY. Similar statements have been made by the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. GRIFFIN, and the U. S. Army medical authorities in Brisbane, Australia, who took

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 charge of the injured personnel upon arrival. HOAG's performance of duty was particularly outstanding when it is considered that he was working in the open, on a listed ship, without adequate equipment, and surrounded by fuel oil and contamination. His skill, resourcefulness, untiring efforts, constant vigilance, and cheerful giving of himself without rest resulted in keeping the injured personnel alive and comfortable until they were turned over to the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. HENLEY for treatment. \*

He is recommended for the highest commendation and advancement to warrant rank.

WARD, William J., 407 47 54, Pharmacists Mate First Class, V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve: In the absence of the Medical Officer, who is among those missing, WARD, was unceasing in his administration of assistance to the injured. The lives of those now recovering were undoubtedly saved by WARD's ability, energy and care. Particular attention is invited to enclosure (J), submitted by the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. HENLEY. Similar statements have been made by the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. GRIFFIN, and the U. S. Army medical authorities in Brisbane, Australia, who took charge of the injured personnel upon arrival. WARD's performance of duty was particularly outstanding when it is considered that he was working in the open, on a listed ship, without adequate equipment, and surrounded by fuel oil and contamination. His skill, resourcefulness, untiring efforts, constant vigilance, and cheerful giving of himself without rest resulted in keeping the injured personnel alive and comfortable until they were turned over to the Medical Officer of the U.S.S. HENLEY for treatment. \*

He is recommended for the highest commendation and advancement to Chief Pharmacists Mate (acting appointment) V-6, U. S. Naval Reserve.

14. The following personnel are commended for their exemplary behavior, initiative, resourcefulness, and untiring obedience in the days subsequent to the attack, 7-11 May, 1942, and are recommended for advancement or promotion as indicated:

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S-E-C-R-E-T

SUBJECT: Engagement of U.S.S. NEOSHO with Japanese Aircraft on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEOSHO; Search for Survivors.

- .....
- Lieutenant (jg) Charles C. COOK, E-M, United States Naval Reserve.
  - Lieutenant (jg) Estel F. NESSMITH, E-M, United States Naval Reserve.
  - Ensign Leonard F. GEARIN, D-M, United States Naval Reserve - to Lieutenant, junior grade.
  - Ensign Kenneth S. TERRILL, D-M, United States Naval Reserve - to Lieutenant, junior grade.
  - Ensign Posey N. HOWELL, SC-V(G), United States Naval Reserve.
  - Chief Machinist Uriel E. LEACH, United States Navy.
  - Boatswain Vernon R. MANNERS, United States Navy.
  - BAGWELL, Harold C., 262 32 96, M. Smith Co., U. S. Navy, for advancement to Metalsmith First Class, U. S. Navy.
  - BOEHM, Robert T., 223 51 33, Shipfitter Second Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Shipfitter First Class, U. S. Navy.
  - BOYNTON, William D., 383 08 04, Seaman Second Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Seaman First Class, U. S. Navy.
  - DICKEN, R. J., Service Number Unknown, Chief Signalman (acting appointment), U. S. Navy, (SIMS), for advancement to Boatswain, U. S. Navy.
  - EBBERT, Meredith E., 393 49 16, Seaman First Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Coxswain, U. S. Navy.
  - HAGENWOOD, Charles A., 360 38 90, Seaman First Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Coxswain, U. S. Navy.
  - JACKSON, Patrick J., 268 10 53, Boatswain's Mate First Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Chief Boatswain's Mate (acting appointment), U. S. Navy.
  - LEDFORD, Robert, 372 14 57, Seaman First Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Coxswain, U. S. Navy.
  - MARCHESE, Nicholas G., 223 01 56, Ship's Cook Second Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Ship's Cook First Class, U. S. Navy.
  - MCPHERSON, Arthur R., 283 41 18, Seaman Second Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Seaman First Class, U. S. Navy.
  - O'GRADY, Gilbert M., 409 12 95, O-1, United States Naval Reserve, for advancement to Coxswain, O-1, United States Naval Reserve.
  - PALOMA, Leopoldo, 152 15 24, Officer's Steward First Class, Class E-4-D, United States Fleet Reserve.
  - PARKER, Thomas J., 243 10 04, Boatswain's Mate First Class, U. S. Navy, for advancement to Chief Boatswain's Mate (acting appointment), U. S. Navy.

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 By NARA Date 5/7/02

A023/A16-3/P15

U.S.S. NEOSHO DETAIL

10/ap

Sydney, Australia,  
 U.S.S. WRIGHT,  
 May 25, 1942.

S-E-C-R-E-T

SUBJECT: Engagement of U.S.S. NEOSHO with Japanese Aircraft  
 on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEOSHO;  
 Search for Survivors.

PARKER, William S., 287 01 41, Chief Radioman (acting appointment),  
 U. S. Navy, for advancement to Radio Electrician, U. S. Navy.  
 PEROWITZ, Walter J., 336 34 34, Chief Machinist's Mate (permanent  
 appointment), U. S. Navy, for advancement to Machinist, U. S.  
 Navy.  
 PUPKIN, Alex, 359 78 28, Yeoman First Class, U. S. Navy, for  
 advancement to Chief Yeoman (acting appointment), U. S. Navy.  
 ROMANOFFSKY, William, 207 23 13, Storekeeper Second Class, U. S.  
 Navy, for advancement to Storekeeper First Class, U. S. Navy.  
 SHEA, Francis J., 191 84 27, Chief Gunner's Mate (permanent  
 appointment), Class F-4-D, U. S. Fleet Reserve.  
 SMITH, Addison F., 382 19 51, Quartermaster Third Class, U. S.  
 Navy, for advancement to Quartermaster Second Class, U. S. Navy.  
 STOVALL, Wilbern L., 336 36 07, Chief Boatswain's Mate (permanent  
 appointment), U. S. Navy, for advancement to Boatswain, U. S.  
 Navy.  
 TYNER, Lorenzo, 272 07 36, Officer's Cook Second Class, U. S.  
 Navy, for advancement to Officer's Cook First Class, U. S. Navy.  
 WATCHER, James L., 250 49 86, Coxswain, U. S. Navy, for advance-  
 ment to Boatswain's Mate Second Class, U. S. Navy.  
 WEBER, James E., 360 04 30, Quartermaster Second Class, U. S. Navy,  
 for advancement to Quartermaster First Class, U. S. Navy.  
 WORRELL, Ernest W., 233 97 76, Chief Electrician's Mate (acting  
 appointment), U. S. Navy, for advancement to Electrician, U. S.  
 Navy.  
 WORTHAM, John H., Jr., 224 30 32, Mess Attendant Second Class,  
 U. S. Navy, for advancement to Mess Attendant First Class,  
 U. S. Navy.

15. The Commanding Officer is constrained to censure  
 the following officers whose performance of duty contributed to  
 unnecessary confusion, made the search for survivors uncertain,  
 and detracted from what was otherwise a glorious achievement in  
 the history of the United States Navy:

BRADFORD, Henry K., Lieutenant, D-M, U. S. Naval Reserve:  
 (1) This officer, at 1123 on May 7, 1942, in a lull in the en-  
 gagement, acting in his capacity as Navigator, plotted a fix of  
 the sun and Venus in an incorrect manner, and entered the result

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U.S.S. NEOSHO DETAIL

10/ay

Sydney, Australia,  
U.S.S. WRIGHT,  
May 25, 1942.S-E-C-R-E-T

**SUBJECT:** Engagement of U.S.S. NEOSHO with Japanese Aircraft on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEOSHO; Search for survivors.

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in his Navigation Work Book as Latitude 16°-25'S; Longitude 157°-31E. As a result of this error, the proper point of commencement of search for survivors was not used, and the error was not discovered until subsequent replotting by the Commanding Officer, which showed the correct position to be Latitude 16°-09'S; Longitude 158°-05'E. (See statement of this officer dated May 19, 1942).

(2) As Officer-of-the-Deck, this officer left the bridge without authority from the Commanding Officer, and, although he knew the order given was "Prepare to abandon ship", he dove over the side, thereby setting a bad example. (See statement of this officer dated May 22, 1942).

With reference to the statement of Lieutenant BRADFORD dated May 22, 1942, the Commanding Officer apologized to Lieutenant BRADFORD only for having criticized his actions after getting into the water; he in no way condoned Lieutenant BRADFORD's dereliction of duty as outlined above.

BRISCOLL, William G., Lieutenant (jg), D-M, U. S. Naval Reserve: -  
When contact with the enemy was made, the Commanding Officer directed this officer, as Communication Officer, to send out contact reports and to obtain correct positions for them from the Navigator. The contact reports, and subsequent reports of this vessel's position when sinking, were not despatched correctly, nor was the proper record kept of traffic cleared, during and after the engagement. His conduct under fire is questionable. He did not display the qualities of a leader, and did not inspire courage or confidence in those who came in contact with him. (See statement dated May 19, 1942).

The "verbal commendation" referred to by this officer in paragraph (1) of his statement consisted of a talk in the course of which he was informed by the Commanding Officer that

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U.S.S. NEOSHO DETAIL

10/sp

Sydney, Australia,  
U.S.S. WRIGHT,  
May 25, 1942.

S-E-C-R-E-T

SUBJECT: Engagement of U.S.S. NEOSHO with Japanese Aircraft on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEOSHO; Search for Survivors.

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he was stubborn and non-cooperative, and that he had to stop being a workling and leaning on an enlisted man, to wit: PARKER, W. S., C.R.M., U. S. Navy, and that he should at least make an attempt to appear courageous even though inwardly frightened.

MARGIS, Robert E., Ensign, Det. U. S. Naval Reserve: - This officer, acting as Assistant Gunnery Officer, was in telephonic communication with the 3" guns. He failed to pass the word "Prepare to Abandon Ship", as given by the Gunnery Officer. Although assigned to Life Raft No. 4, he failed to take charge of personnel at that station, and did not prevent them from throwing over the life raft, nor from jumping in the water. He manned No. 2 Motor Whale Boat instead and commenced lowering the boat. The Gunnery Officer stopped the boat at the upper deck level, and, acting upon direct orders from the Commanding Officer, ordered the boat lowered to the water to pick up survivors in the water, and to tow all life rafts back to the ship. He failed to tow any life rafts back to the ship, and did not do his utmost to rescue survivors. (See statement dated May 20, 1942).

Inasmuch as these three officers volunteered their services for active duty long before the entry of the United States in the present war, thereby showing a laudable intention, that they all conducted themselves in a creditable manner in the face of the enemy at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and that they, as well as all other personnel on board, were subjected to a terrific and continuous attack by dive-bombers, with concurrent shock and numbing of faculties, the Commanding Officer feels that the best interest of the Navy will be served by not recommending them for Courts-Martial. Appropriate comments will be made on the fitness reports of the three officers concerned.

14. The following recommendations are submitted:

(a) That all life rafts be painted yellow, and provided with a tarpaulin which can be quickly slipped off; tarpaulin to be painted the color of the surrounding structure. The NEOSHO life rafts were painted grey and were extremely difficult for the men in the water, and personnel on board ship, or for searching ships or aircraft, to locate in the water.



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U.S.S. NEGSHO DETAIL

10/ap

Sydney, Australia,  
U.S.S. WRIGHT,  
May 25, 1942.

S-E-C-R-E-T

SUBJECT: Engagement of U.S.S. NEGSHO with Japanese Aircraft  
on May 7, 1942; Subsequent Loss of U.S.S. NEGSHO;  
Search for Survivors.

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(b) That all life rafts be provided with a telescopic stick, similar to a fishing rod, of sufficient strength to permit a flag to be bent on the top, to assist men in the water, and searching boats, ships and aircraft, to locate the raft.

(c) That all ship's boats be fitted for sail, and that a mast, spars, canvas and running tackle be provided in the boat.

(d) That the words "ABANDON SHIP" be deleted from all preliminary orders given; that the preliminary order be "FALL IN AT (or MAN) BOAT AND RAFT STATIONS", and that the words "ABANDON SHIP" be used only when it is desired to accomplish just that, namely, for all personnel to leave the ship.

17. The NEGSHO detail left Brisbane, Australia, on May 23, 1942, in accordance with the orders of Commander Task Force FORTY-THREE, and reported aboard U.S.S. WRIGHT, at Sydney, Australia, on May 24, 1942.

*John S. Phillips*  
John S. PHILLIPS

Copy to: ComSqdRon EIGHT  
ComSerFor