

TITLE

The saga of the USS Indianapolis: A story of tragedy, heroism, deception and redemption.

PRESENTER

Jon Fiorella taught science for 43 years at both the high school and college levels. Along the way he earned five national awards related to his teaching.

In retirement he likes to research topics in both science and history and then enjoys presenting them to interested audiences.

SYNOPSIS

This is a tale over 70 years in the making and most historians consider it the worst disaster at sea in the history of the Navy. If you saw the movie "Jaws" you are somewhat familiar with the incredible story of the Indianapolis.

After delivering the components of the atomic bomb "Little Boy," that was later dropped on Hiroshima, the ship was sunk by a Japanese submarine in the waning days of WWII. About 900 men went into the water and five days later only 317 were still alive. Most of the men died of exposure, drowning and shark attacks. Due to confusion and deception on the part of the Navy 880 men died- approximately 300 men were killed in action and about 580 men were killed by inaction.

Someone had to take the blame and Captain Charles Butler McVay III became the scapegoat for the disaster. In a politically motivated series of events, he was the first captain in the history of the Navy to be court-martialed and convicted for losing his ship in war time. Information that would have exonerated him was withheld by the Navy.

The next chapter in the story deals with the survivors, now known as the "Survivors Organization," spending the next 40 years fighting to exonerate their captain. Surprisingly, their fight only gained steam when an 11 year old boy named Hunter Scott did a history project on the Indianapolis that garnered national attention. It helped in getting a joint resolution passed by Congress in 2000 that exonerated Captain McVay.

There is a movie coming out in May 2016 starring Nicholas Cage entitled "USS Indianapolis: Men of Courage." There is also a second movie in the planning by Robert Downey Jr. that focuses on Hunter Scott's role in the tale.