



THE PACIFIC WAR • 1941-1945

UNSUNG

36 Pacific War Stories the History Books Left Out

WITH ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS & ORIGINAL MAPS

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Thirty-six stories

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why these stories

Ask most people what they know about the war in the Pacific and you'll get the same few names. Pearl Harbor. Midway. Guadalcanal, maybe. Iwo Jima and the flag. The bomb.

Those names are true, and they matter. But they are chapter headings. Read the history underneath them and you keep meeting people who were there when it counted and then quietly dropped out of the story. Two privates on a hilltop who saw the attack on Pearl Harbor coming fifty-three minutes early. A retired Solomon Islands police sergeant who was tied to a tree and bayoneted, and still wouldn't talk. Seventy-seven American military nurses who spent three years as prisoners of the Japanese and all came home. A Japanese general who had driven across America in his own Chevrolet, wrote home that it was the last country Japan should ever fight, and was then sent to hold Iwo Jima against it. A submarine crew fishing a young pilot named George Bush out of the sea. And a soldier from Taiwan who was found in the Indonesian jungle in 1974, the last holdout of the Imperial Japanese Army, and found that the country he had fought for no longer counted him as one of its own.

This book is about them.

HOW WE CHOSE

We make videos about this war on two YouTube channels, War Monger and 1941 Files, and our viewers have taught us something. The stories they remember, share and argue about in the comments are almost never the famous ones retold. They are the parts that got left out: the warning nobody acted on, the other side's view of a battle, the machine nobody thanked, the years after the surrender that nobody filmed.

So every story here had to pass one test: it has to change how you see something you thought you already knew. They are arranged in four parts. *The Ones Nobody Thanked* is about people. *What the Enemy Saw* turns the camera around. *The Machinery Nobody Saw* is about the inventions, repair crews and supply

lines behind the famous battles. *After the Last Shot* follows the war into the peace, which for some people took thirty years to arrive.

HOW WE CHECKED

Wherever we could, we went back to the sources the people involved left behind: action reports, war diaries, radio logs, court records, official histories and memoirs, alongside the best modern historians. Each story ends with a short list of where it comes from, so you can follow it further.

The war left a lot of uncertain numbers behind, and more than a few famous stories that didn't happen the way they're usually told. When a figure is an estimate, we say so. When a well-known story turns out to be wrong, it goes in a Myth vs. Fact box.

ABOUT THE PICTURES

The most common complaint we hear about history online is pictures that show the wrong ship, the wrong island, sometimes the wrong war. So every photograph in this book was checked against its archive record. It shows what the caption says it shows, and wherever an archive number exists, it's printed with the picture, so you can look it up yourself. The maps were drawn for this book.

HOW TO READ IT

Any way you like. Each story stands on its own and takes about fifteen minutes. Start at the beginning, or open the contents and pick the title you can't resist. At the back there is a bonus guide, *Find Your Veteran*, for anyone who has a grandfather, great-uncle or great-grandmother whose war is still a blank in the family.

Nobody in these pages asked to be remembered. Most of them would be surprised to find themselves in a book. That's exactly why they're here.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to read this book

Every story opens with a full-page photograph and a number. After that, the text runs the way a good documentary does: the people first, then what happened to them. Along the way you'll meet the same six features again and again.

BY THE NUMBERS

53

By the numbers. The story in figures, from the size of the fleet to the number of minutes that mattered. Handy for settling arguments.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM

What happened to them. Where the people in the story ended up: who came home, who didn't, and who spent the rest of their lives being asked about one day.

FROM THE FILE

From the file. A full page given to one original document from the story, such as a radar plot, a page from a torpedo manual or an FBI file.

MYTH VS. FACT

Myth vs. fact. What people usually believe about the event, and what the record actually shows. There are thirty-six of them, and all thirty-six are collected at the back of the book.

STAND WHERE IT HAPPENED

Stand where it happened. The places you can still visit: memorials, museums, wrecks and the ground itself.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

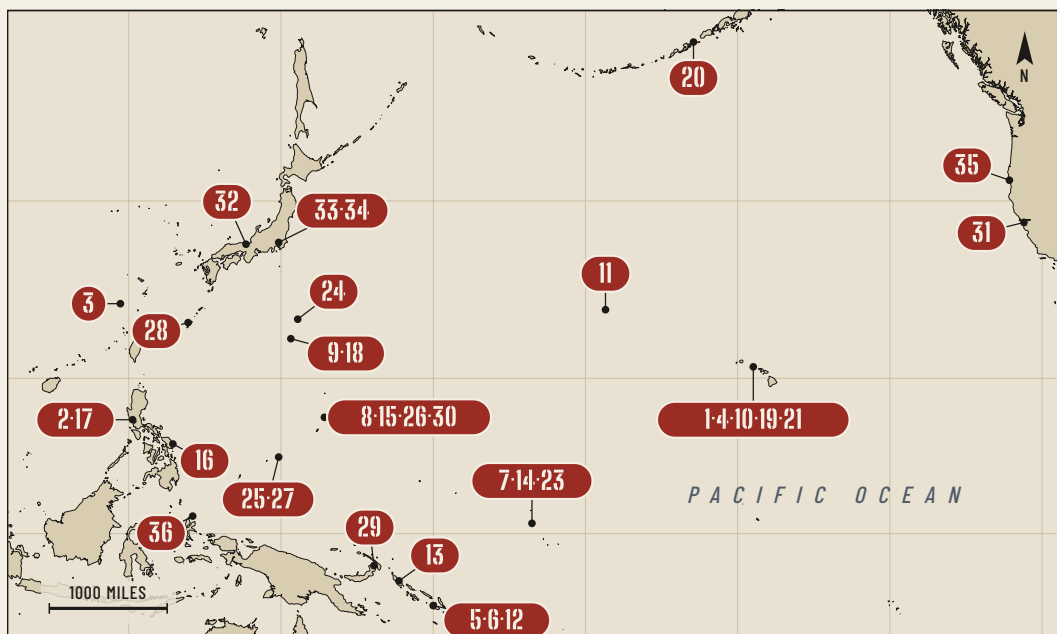
Where this comes from. The sources behind the story, so you can check our work and keep reading.

The maps and diagrams were all drawn for this book. On them, a red star marks the heart of the story, dashed lines are routes, and every map carries a scale bar in miles, because distance was half the war in the Pacific.

Japanese names appear in Western order, given name first, as in most English-language histories of the war. Dates are written day, month, year.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Where the stories happened



1 · 4 · 10 · 19 · 21 HAWAII The Blip at Opana Point · The Man in the Dungeon · The Clerk at the Consulate · The Fleet That Came Back · The Torpedoes That Wouldn't Explode

2 · 17 LUZON The Angels of Bataan · The Admiral Who Asked Them to Die

3 EASTERN CHINA The Villages That Hid the Raiders

5 · 6 · 12 GUADALCANAL The Scout Who Would Not Talk · "Did They Get Off?" · The Island They Named for Hunger

7 · 14 · 23 TARAWA The Man Who Knew the Tide · A Million Men, a Hundred Years · The Swamp Buggy That Crossed the Reef

8 · 15 · 26 · 30 SAIPAN & TINIAN The Pied Piper of Saipan · What They Were Told · The Runways of Tinian · The Fox of Saipan

9 · 18 IWO JIMA Eight Hundred Messages · The General Who Had Seen America

11 MIDWAY The Five Minutes That Never Were

13 BOUGAINVILLE The Death Tokyo Hid

16 OFF SAMAR The Turn

20 ALEUTIANS The Zero in the Bog

24 BONIN ISLANDS The Lifeguards

25 · 27 ULITHI The Secret Harbor in the Middle of Nowhere · Ten Gallons Every Seven Minutes

28 IE SHIMA The White Planes

29 NEW BRITAIN The Fortress Nobody Attacked

31 WEST COAST Magic Carpet

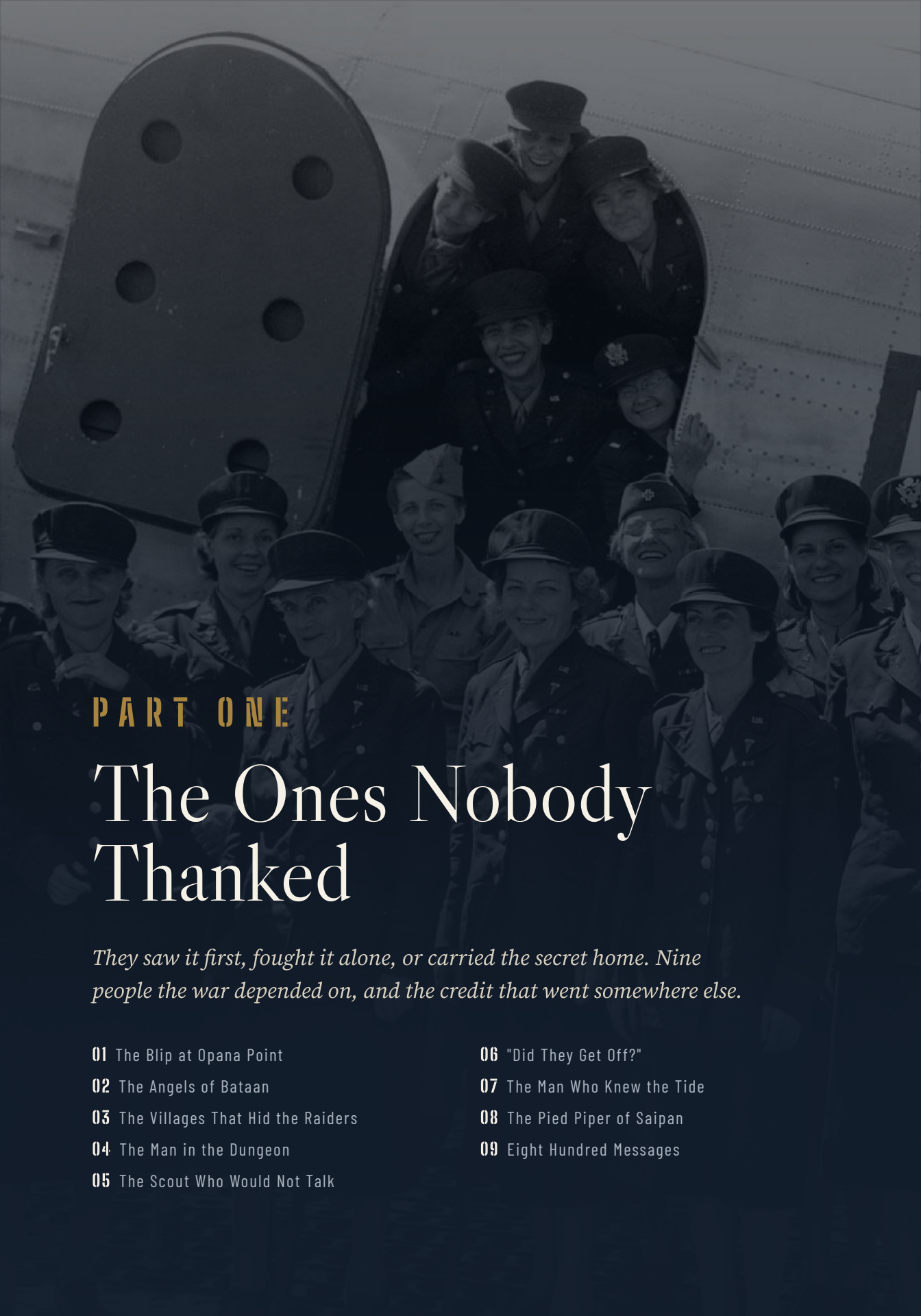
32 MAIZURU Six Million Stranded

33 · 34 TOKYO The Woman Who Wasn't Tokyo Rose · The Raider and the Flight Leader

35 OREGON The Sword in Brookings

36 MOROTAI The Last Soldier

22 EVERYWHERE The Shell That Knew Where the Plane Was



PART ONE

The Ones Nobody Thanked

They saw it first, fought it alone, or carried the secret home. Nine people the war depended on, and the credit that went somewhere else.

01 The Blip at Opana Point

02 The Angels of Bataan

03 The Villages That Hid the Raiders

04 The Man in the Dungeon

05 The Scout Who Would Not Talk

06 "Did They Get Off?"

07 The Man Who Knew the Tide

08 The Pied Piper of Saipan

09 Eight Hundred Messages



PART ONE · THE ONES NOBODY THANKED

01

OAHU, HAWAII / 7 DECEMBER 1941

The Blip at Opana Point

Fifty-three minutes before the first bomb fell, two privates on a hilltop saw the whole Japanese strike force coming. The man they called told them not to worry about it.

What the blip became. A Japanese airman photographed Ford Island and Battleship Row as the torpedo attack began; the white plume at center is a torpedo striking USS West Virginia. U.S. Navy / NHHC, NH 50930

THE TRUCK WAS LATE. THAT IS THE ONLY REASON ANY OF THIS HAPPENED.

Opana Point sits on the northern tip of Oahu, 532 feet up, looking out over nothing but ocean. In December 1941 the Army had parked a radar set there, an SCR-270, which in practice meant a generator, a trailer full of glowing tubes, and an antenna the size of a billboard that swept the sky out to about 150 miles. It was one of six mobile sets on the island. Nobody in Hawaii really trusted them yet.

On Sunday mornings the stations were ordered to run from four until seven. Two privates had the watch: Joseph Lockard, 19, from Williamsport, Pennsylvania, who knew the equipment, and George Elliott, 23, who had only just been transferred in and was still learning to read the scope. At seven o'clock their shift was over. The truck that was supposed to take them to breakfast hadn't shown up, so Elliott asked if they could leave the set running a little longer. He wanted the practice.

At 7:02, a shape appeared on the oscilloscope that neither man had seen before.

It wasn't a blip so much as a wall. Lockard's first thought was that the set had broken, because the echo was so large it looked like the main transmitter pulse. He checked the equipment. It was fine. Whatever was out there was real, about 132 miles away, bearing three degrees east of north, and coming straight at them.

"What's this?" Elliott asked.

— A PHONE CALL TO FORT SHAFTER

They did what they had been trained to do. Elliott plotted the contact on the map board and picked up the phone to the Aircraft Warning Service's Information Center at Fort Shafter, near Honolulu.

The Information Center was supposed to be the brain of the whole system, a big plotting table where operators pushed markers around and an officer decided what they meant. At 7:02 on a Sunday it was nearly empty. The plotters had gone off at seven. The man on the switchboard was Private Joseph McDonald, and the only officer in the building was First Lieutenant Kermit Tyler, a fighter pilot from the 78th Pursuit Squadron.

Tyler was not a radar officer. It was his second time ever on duty at the center. He had been sent there for training and had never been told what, ex-

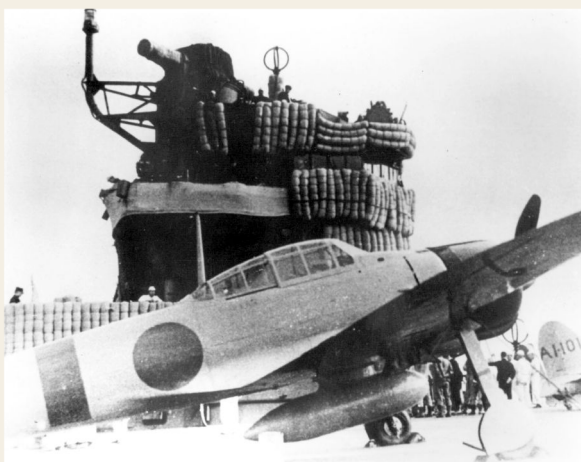
actly, he was supposed to do.

Elliott gave McDonald the report: a large number of planes coming in from the north, three points east. McDonald, who had the sense to know this was unusual, wrote it down and went looking for Tyler. Then he called Opana back, and this time Lockard got on the phone with the lieutenant himself.

Lockard told Tyler it was the biggest flight he had ever seen on the equipment.

Tyler thought for a moment. He had a piece of information the privates didn't. A bomber pilot friend had once told him that whenever the Honolulu radio station KGMB played Hawaiian music through the night, it meant B-17s were flying in from the mainland and using the broadcast to home in on the island. Tyler had heard KGMB playing on his drive in that morning. And there really was a flight of B-17s due from California.

"Don't worry about it," he said.



Part of the "unusually large flight." A Zero fighter on the deck of the carrier *Akagi* on the morning of 7 December 1941; the tail code AI-101 marks it as one of *Akagi's* own.

U.S. NAVY / NHHC

— THE DEAD ZONE

Lockard wanted to shut the set down. Elliott wanted to keep tracking. So they kept tracking, and for the next half hour Opana Point watched the Japanese first wave, 183 aircraft, cross the ocean toward Oahu as it happened. Elliott kept plotting, one pencil mark every few minutes, each one closer to the island than the last.

At 7:39 the contact vanished into the “permanent echo,” the clutter thrown back by Oahu’s own mountains, which blinded the SCR-270 to anything close in. The formation was only a few minutes’ flying time away. The privates switched off, and the truck finally came to take them to breakfast.

Sixteen minutes later, the first bombs hit Pearl Harbor.

The B-17s Tyler had been thinking about did arrive that morning. Twelve of them, flying in from California, tired and unarmed to save weight, straight into the middle of the attack. Some were shot up by Japanese fighters. Some were fired on by American gunners who by then assumed every plane was hostile. So Tyler’s guess wasn’t absurd. There were two flights in the sky that morning, and he picked the one he’d been expecting.



Opana's view of the morning. The radar's 150-mile reach, the point of first contact, and the approach of the first wave, based on Eliott's plot. The B-17s Tyler was expecting came in from a different direction, out of the north-east.

BY THE NUMBERS

53 minutes

warning from first contact at 7:02 to the first bombs at 7:55

132 miles

range when the formation first appeared on the scope

183

Japanese aircraft in the first wave

2

times Opana called the Information Center

12

B-17s arriving from California, the flight Tyler assumed it was

0

fighters scrambled because of the warning

— WHO TAKES THE BLAME FOR A WARNING NOBODY USED?

In the weeks after the attack, Washington went looking for someone to blame, and the men at Opana were an awkward fit. They were the only people on Oahu who had done everything right.

Lockard was the one the Army chose to recognize. On 10 February 1942 he was promoted and awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Army's highest award for meritorious service. He was sent to Officer Candidate School and spent the rest of the war as a radar officer in the Aleutians, on Adak and Amchitka.

Elliott got nothing. He had asked to keep the set running. He had plotted the contact and made the first call. But when the credit went out, it went out to one man, and it wasn't him. After he testified before the Army's Pearl Harbor Board, senators lobbied on his behalf, and in 1946 the Army offered him the Legion of Merit. Elliott turned it down. He said he would not take a lesser award than the one given to Lockard for the same morning's work.

Tyler, meanwhile, was investigated and cleared. The boards that looked at the Information Center found what McDonald could have told them: the officer on duty had no training, no staff, no supervision and no clear orders. The system existed on paper. It hadn't existed in the room.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: Nobody saw Pearl Harbor coming.

FACT: Radar saw it clearly, 53 minutes early, and the warning reached an officer on the phone. The failure wasn't the technology. It was the absence of anyone trained to believe it.

— WHY IT STILL MATTERS

It is easy, eighty-odd years later, to turn Kermit Tyler into the villain of this story. He spent the rest of his life being asked about one sentence. He stayed in uniform and retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel in 1961. But go back over what he knew that morning: a flight really was due from the mainland, the radio really was playing, and nobody had ever told him what a radar contact of that size looked like. Most officers in his chair would have said the same four words.

The better villain, if there has to be one, is the gap between having a machine and having a system. The Army had bought radar. It had not yet decided who was allowed to act on what radar said. On 7 December those two things were separated by one phone line, one untrained lieutenant and one radio station playing Hawaiian music.

The two privates on the hill closed that gap as far as two privates could. They did it on their own time, after their shift ended, because one of them wanted to learn.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM

JOSEPH LOCKARD went into electronics after the war and worked for Sylvania, GTE and AMP, collecting more than 35 patents. He died in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on 2 November 2012, aged 90.

GEORGE ELLIOTT spent 33 years with New Jersey Bell. He never accepted the medal. He died on 20 December 2003, aged 85.

JOSEPH McDONALD, the switchboard private who wrote the report down and called back, served across the Central Pacific. The Army awarded him the Army Commendation Medal in 2005, eleven years after his death.

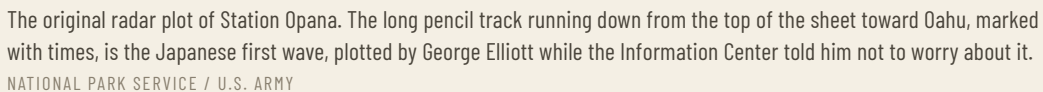
KERMIT TYLER died in 2010, aged 96.

✦ **STAND WHERE IT HAPPENED**

The radar site itself is closed to the public. A commemorative plaque stands on the grounds of the Turtle Bay Resort, at the foot of Opana Hill on Oahu's north shore. On a clear morning you can look north from there, the same direction the antenna was facing at 7:02.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Proceedings of the Army Pearl Harbor Board (1944), testimony of Pvt. George E. Elliott and Pvt. Joseph L. Lockard · Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack (1946) · Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept* (1981) · National WWII Museum, "Kermit Tyler: A Call That Would Live in Infamy" · U.S. Army Signal Corps history of the Aircraft Warning Service, Hawaii.



AT A GLANCE

Thirty-six myths

Each line in red is something people believe about the Pacific War. Each one is wrong, or at best only half the story. The number beside it takes you to the chapter.

01 Nobody saw Pearl Harbor coming.

Radar saw it clearly, 53 minutes early, and the warning reached an officer on the phone. The failure wasn't the technology. It was the absence of anyone trained to believe it.

02 American women served in the Pacific War only far behind the lines.

Army and Navy nurses worked under fire on Bataan and Corregidor, were captured with the garrison, and served nearly three years as prisoners. They were the largest group of American servicewomen ever held as POWs.

03 The Doolittle Raid cost almost nothing except the aircraft.

For the Americans, the raid cost 3 airmen killed, 8 captured and all 16 bombers. In China it set off a reprisal campaign that killed tens of thousands of people, and perhaps as many as a quarter of a million.

04 At Midway the Americans "broke the Japanese code" and read the whole battle plan.

HYPO never read more than fragments of most messages. What won Midway was Rochefort's reading of those fragments, and the nerve to stake three carriers on an interpretation that Washington did not share.

05 The Battle of the Tenaru was fought on the Tenaru River.

It wasn't. The Marines' maps were wrong. The battle was fought at the Ilu River, a few miles west of the real Tenaru, but the name on the map stuck and it has been the Battle of the Tenaru ever since.

06 The Coast Guard sat out the Second World War patrolling American harbors.

Coast Guardsmen crewed landing craft and transports in almost every major Pacific and European invasion. At Guadalcanal they drove many of the boats that put the Marines ashore, and one of them won the only Medal of Honor in the service's history.

07 Nobody warned the Marines about the tide at Tarawa.

Frank Holland warned them plainly, and David Shoup believed him enough to prepare the troops for a fifty-fifty chance of wading. The date could not be moved, and the tide behaved exactly as Holland had warned.

08 Japanese soldiers on Saipan never surrendered.

Most fought to the death, but when someone they could understand offered them a way out, hundreds of soldiers and thousands of civilians came in. Gabaldon alone brought in about 1,500.

UNSUNG

The war you know. The stories you don't.

Two privates on a hilltop saw the attack on Pearl Harbor coming fifty-three minutes early. A Solomon Islands scout was tied to a tree and bayoneted, and still crawled back to warn the Marines. Seventy-seven American military nurses spent three years as prisoners of the Japanese, and every one of them came home. A Japanese general who had driven across America in his own car was sent to hold Iwo Jima against it.

And in December 1974, soldiers searching an Indonesian island found the last holdout of the Imperial Japanese Army. He wasn't Japanese.

Thirty-six true stories from the Pacific War, told from both sides of the water, about the people and the machines the famous battles depended on, and the years after the surrender that nobody filmed.

36

TRUE STORIES

104

VERIFIED ARCHIVAL PHOTOS &
DOCUMENTS

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ORIGINAL MAPS & DIAGRAMS

36

MYTHS SET STRAIGHT

BONUS Find Your Veteran: a step-by-step guide to tracing the war of someone in your own family.

FROM THE MAKERS OF **WAR MONGER** & **1941 FILES**