

Originally Processed With FOIA(s):

FOIA Number:

S

# FOIA MARKER

**This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the George Bush Presidential Library Staff.**

---

**Record Group/Collection:** George H.W. Bush Presidential Records  
**Collection/Office of Origin:** Speechwriting, White House Office of  
**Series:** Snow, Tony, Files  
**Subseries:** Subject File, 1988-1993

---

**OA/ID Number:** 13892  
**Folder ID Number:** 13892-014

---

**Folder Title:**  
[George Bush and World War II]

---

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
<b>G</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>

---

the import of ivory to protect the elephant and rhinoceros from the human predators who exterminate them for profit. And we've begun to explore ways to work with other nations, with the major industrialized democracies, and in Poland and in Hungary, to make common cause for the sake of our environment. The environment belongs to all of us. In this new world of freedom, the world's citizens must enjoy this common trust for generations to come.

Global economic growth, the stewardship of our planet—both are critical issues. But as always, questions of war and peace must be paramount to the United Nations.

We must move forward to limit and eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Five years ago, at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, I presented a United States draft treaty outlawing chemical weapons. Since then, progress has been made; but time is running out. The threat is growing. More than 20 nations now possess chemical weapons or the capability to produce them. And these horrible weapons are now finding their way into regional conflicts. This is simply unacceptable. For the sake of mankind, we must halt and reverse this threat.

Today I want to announce steps that the United States is ready to take, steps to rid the world of these truly terrible weapons, towards a treaty that will ban—eliminate—all chemical weapons from the Earth 10 years from the day it is signed. This initiative contains three major elements.

First, in the first 8 years of a chemical weapons treaty, the U.S. is ready to destroy nearly all—98 percent—of our chemical weapons stockpile, provided the Soviet Union joins the ban. And I think they will. Second, we are ready to destroy all of our chemical weapons—100 percent—every one—within 10 years, once all nations capable of building chemical weapons sign that total ban treaty. And third, the United States is ready to begin now. We will eliminate more than 80 percent of our stockpile, even as we work to complete a treaty, if the Soviet Union joins us in cutting chemical weapons to an equal level and we agree on the conditions, including inspections, under which stockpiles are destroyed. We know that monitoring a total ban on chemical weapons will be a challenge. But the knowl-

edge we've gained from our recent arms control experience and our accelerating research in this area makes me believe that we can achieve the level of verification that gives us confidence to go forward with the ban.

The world has lived too long in the shadow of chemical warfare. So let us act together beginning today to rid the Earth of this scourge.

We are serious about achieving conventional arms reductions as well. And that's why we tabled new proposals just last Thursday at the Conventional Forces in Europe negotiations in Vienna, proposals that demonstrate our commitment to act rapidly to ease military tensions in Europe and move the nations of that continent one step closer to their common destiny—a Europe whole and free.

And the United States is convinced that open and innovative measures can move disarmament forward and also ease international tensions. And that's the idea behind the open skies proposal about which the Soviets have now expressed a positive attitude. It's the idea behind the open lands proposal permitting, for the first time ever, free travel for all Soviet and American diplomats throughout each other's countries. Openness is the enemy of mistrust. And every step towards a more open world is a step toward the new world we seek.

Let me make this comment on our meetings with the distinguished Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Mr. Shevardnadze, over the past few days. I am very pleased by the progress made. The Soviet Union removed a number of obstacles to progress on conventional and strategic arms reductions. We reached agreements in principle on issues from verification to nuclear testing. And, of course, we agreed to a summit in the spring or early summer of 1990. And I look forward to meeting Mr. Gorbachev there.

Each of these achievements is important in its own right. But they are more important still as signs of a new attitude that prevails between the United States and the U.S.S.R. Serious differences remain. We know that. But the willingness to deal constructively and candidly with those differ-

ences is news that we, and indeed the world, must welcome.

We have not entered into an era of perpetual peace. The threats to peace that we face may today be changing, but they've not vanished. In fact, in a number of regions around the world, a dangerous combination is now emerging: regions armed with old and unappeasable weapons and modern weapons of mass destruction. This development will raise the stakes whenever war breaks out. Regional conflicts may well threaten world peace as they have before. The challenge of preserving peace is a personal one for all of you right here in this hall. Mr. Secretary General, with your respect, you have made it your obligation. The United Nations can be a mediator, a peacemaker, where parties in conflict come in search of peaceful solutions. For the sake of the U.N. must redouble its support for the peace efforts now underway in regional conflicts all over the world. And I assure you the United States is determined to take an active role in settling regional conflicts. Sometimes our role in regional disputes is and will be highly public, sometimes, like many of you, we work quietly behind the scenes. But always, we are working for positive change and peace.

Our world faces other, less conventional threats no less dangerous to international peace and stability. Illegal drugs threaten social order and a source of human misery wherever they gain a foothold. The nations who suffer from drug addiction must join forces in the fight. And let me salute the commitment and extraordinary courage of one country in particular, Colombia, where we are working with the people and their President, Miroslav Ljubic Barco, to put the drug cartels out of business, bring the drug lords to justice.

And finally, we must join forces to combat the threat of terrorism. The United Nations and the United Nations must outlaw the world a clear ban on Hostage taking and the terror of violence are methods that cannot win the world's approval. Terrorism of any kind is repugnant to all values that the world holds in common. And make no mistake: Terrorism is a means that no matter how just that end, can sanctify

## *Shot Down over the Pacific*

My first interview with the Vice President was held in the late winter of 1982, in his office at the West Wing of the White House.

The Vice President's Press Secretary, Pete Teeley, had sat through hundreds of these interviews, so I thought it would be a good idea to get some advice from him. Why waste time rehashing stories already on the public record? Those I could find.

Teeley suggested that the great untold story of George Bush was his war record. When the Bush-for-President bandwagon was at full speed in 1980, his war record had received a prominent place in the official biography. But though it was often mentioned, the accounts never included many details.

It was a couple of years later, while updating the George Bush biography, that Pete Teeley had stumbled across the Navy's Citation of Bravery. Teeley was surprised when he learned the extent of the heroics of the young George Bush, but he was not surprised at how unassuming the Vice President had been about his World War II record.

The reluctance to boast of personal achievements is one of the more pronounced and famous characteristics of the complex George Bush personality. While it was endearing to find someone who had achieved so much while still remaining relatively unaffected by it all, friends and advisors found that there were times when this trait could be quite frustrating. Political consultants were especially antsy when the

Vice President refused to step forward and take credit for something that was clearly his.

The key, Teeley assured me, was to come prepared. So I armed myself with what little material already existed on the subject and a determination that I would obtain George Bush's firsthand account of the day he was shot down in the Pacific during World War II.

Actually, it turned out to be one of the best interviews I was to have with George Bush. The Vice President's Press Secretary, who had alerted me to the whole idea, had also been telling the Vice President that he needed to open up and get his story on the record. So perhaps the timing was right.

When the interview started, we were alone. But then at some midway point a staffer appeared at the door giving the customary prearranged signal, "I'm sorry, Mr. Vice President, but you have to go." This really meant, of course, that I had to go. But evidently this afternoon the Vice President's schedule had more flexibility. He waved away the interruption and our interview continued.

By the time we were finished, several staffers and secretaries had joined us, at first standing and then (at the Vice President's insistence) sitting on the various couches and chairs. For a short time business came to a stop.

With the fireplace popping and whistling, the Vice President gave one of the best accounts of his dangerous missions as America's youngest Navy pilot.

"The sun shone intermittently through a broken cloud cover as our aircraft carrier, the *San Jacinto*, steamed toward Chichi Jima, a little island south of Japan. It was September 2, 1944, and as I strapped myself into my aircraft (a torpedo bomber called an *Avenger*), I thought to myself that this would be a bad day to be shot down.

"We were supposed to knock out some radio stations on Chichi Jima. It was all part of a plan to interrupt Japanese communications in preparation for an invasion of the Palau Islands.

"We had tried to finish the job the day before, but hadn't been successful. The island was very well-defended. I think our squadron lost one plane.

"I was part of the VT51 squadron. We had 34 planes assigned to the carrier. We really had a very vulnerable ship, light and thin-skinned. It had been rushed into service. Of course that gave it an advantage, too; it was fast, and as a result we saw a lot of action.

"The *Avenger* would take a crew of three. I was the pilot up front; behind me was my rear gunner, Leo Nadeau; and underneath, with a machine gun, was the radioman, John Delaney. The rear gunner, Leo Nadeau, didn't go that morning. It saved his life.

"The three of us had seen a lot of action before September second. That spring my roommate had been shot down. The war in the Pacific was really reaching its peak; the enemy was up against the wall and they were tough. I remember making a forced landing in the middle of the ocean, with the three of us barely getting away before the plane exploded.

"There was an accident on board the *San Jacinto* in which a pilot's leg was thrown across the deck. It landed right in front of me, quivering. We were all stunned—here was this body cut in two—and then one of the officers came along and yelled, 'Get this mess cleaned up!' So everybody went back to work."

*Why did your crew suddenly change that morning?*

"Ted White came up to me and asked if he could go along as gunner. He was an old friend of the family, a Yale graduate. His parents had always wanted him to be a pilot.

"It was obvious that it was going to be a pretty dangerous raid. I told him we had picked up some pretty serious antiaircraft fire the day before, but if it was okay with the commander it was okay with me. Well, he was pretty excited. It was going to be his first raid."

*He was killed?*

"He never came back.

"We were the second plane in, so they were ready for us. It was called glide-bombing, which is different from a dive-bomber, which puts the flaps on and drops at about 60 degrees. We were coming in at about 30 degrees, but the feel in a torpedo bomber gave the sensation of going straight down."

*Do you remember the exact moment when you were hit?*

"I'll never forget it.

"There were black explosions all around us and then a flash of light. The plane was lifted forward and we were suddenly enveloped in flames.

"I remember looking out and seeing the flames running along the wing where the fuel tanks were and where the wings fold. I thought, '*This is really bad.*' The cockpit was filled with smoke, so it was difficult to read the instruments, but we were falling fast. I pulled out of the dive, finished the run, and then turned back out over the water."

*The official records say that in spite of damage to your own plane, you continued your dive and scored hits on the radio station. The report talks about complete disregard for your own safety and about courage to press the attack even after your own plane was engulfed in flames and smoke.*

"It was an instinct—there really wasn't much time to think about it. Everyone who went into combat was brave."

*But everyone didn't win the Distinguished Flying Cross medal.*

"To tell you the truth, I thought I was a goner. I looked

back and saw that my rear gunner was out. He had been machine-gunned to death right where he was.

"So then I turned back over the water and we bailed out."

*But Delaney was killed too, and you were the only survivor.*

"He was evidently cut to ribbons as he parachuted down. I was luckier. Trying to get out in a hurry, I ended up banging my head on the plane and my chute got caught on the tail and then broke free, but I got out. My rubber raft had broken free, so I swam over and climbed in."

*The story is that the Japanese were shooting from the shore, and they were coming after you in their own boats.*

"I'm told that some of the fellows circled back and strafed the enemy boats and that's what saved me.

"Chichi Jima was part of the Bonin Islands, and after the war I found out that the enemy soldiers on those islands were pretty fierce warriors. Among other things, a war crimes tribunal found them guilty of torturing and beheading downed airmen. There were even some pretty extraordinary stories of cannibalism. Of course if I had known that, I would have paddled all the way to Hawaii."

*So much time has passed since World War II. The horror seems to have gone out of it. There have even been television sitcoms on the subject.*

"There has been time for healing. The West Germans and Japanese are two of our most important allies, even though sometimes we are passionate economic rivals.

"But I can assure you that there is no such thing as a funny war. They are all terrible and tragic events, chewing

up hundreds of thousands of young people even before they have had a chance to live, and leaving behind broken-hearted families.

“I can tell you this: If I’m ever in the position to call the shots, I’m not going to rush to send somebody else’s kids into a war. I know what it was like to be a 21-year-old kid out there in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, disoriented, nauseous, agonizing over the deaths of my closest friends, and terrorized by the thought of imminent capture.

“To some people war may appear glamorous and romantic in the history books, and it is tragic that each generation usually experiences several wars until it has had its fill of them.

“I suppose that’s why I feel so strongly about maintaining a powerful defense—so that this country never has to go to war again.”

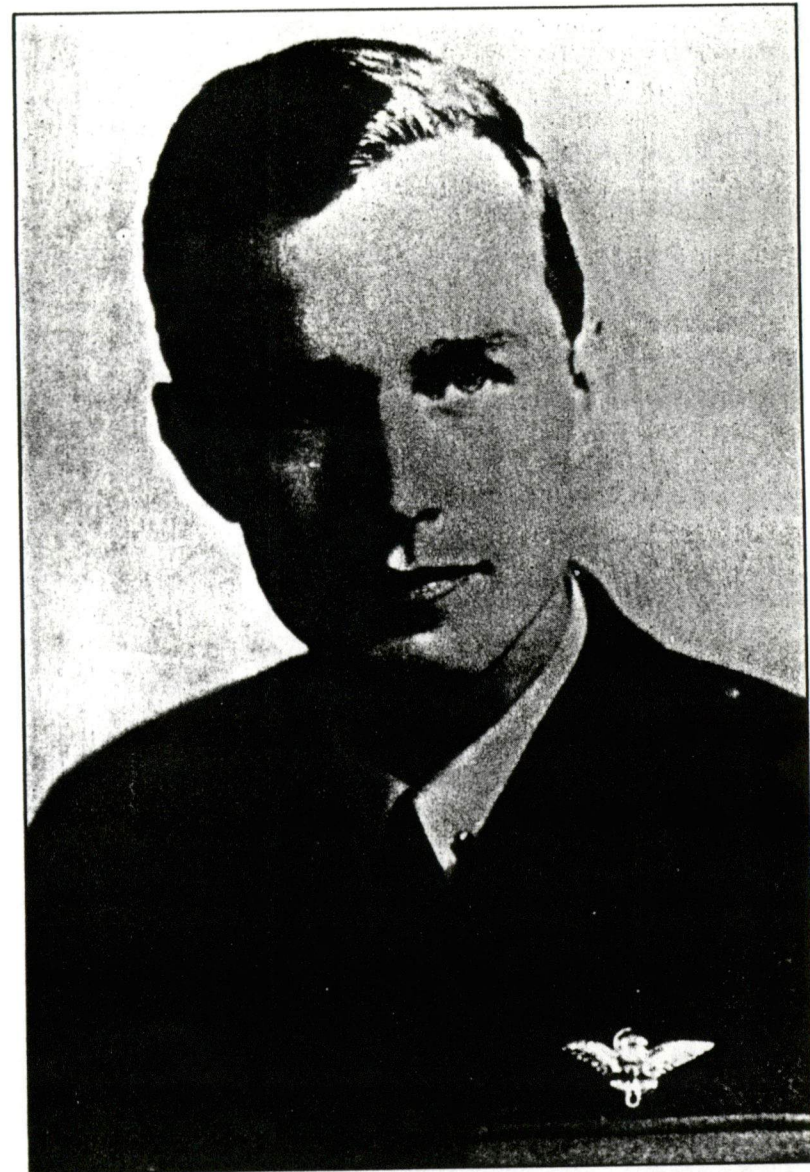
*So you were shot down in the middle of the Pacific Ocean . . .*

“I had injured myself trying to get out of that plane before it crashed. It really wasn’t a serious injury, but just a strawberry—the kind you get from sliding into home plate. But some of the pilots circling overhead saw the blood all over my face and thought the worst.

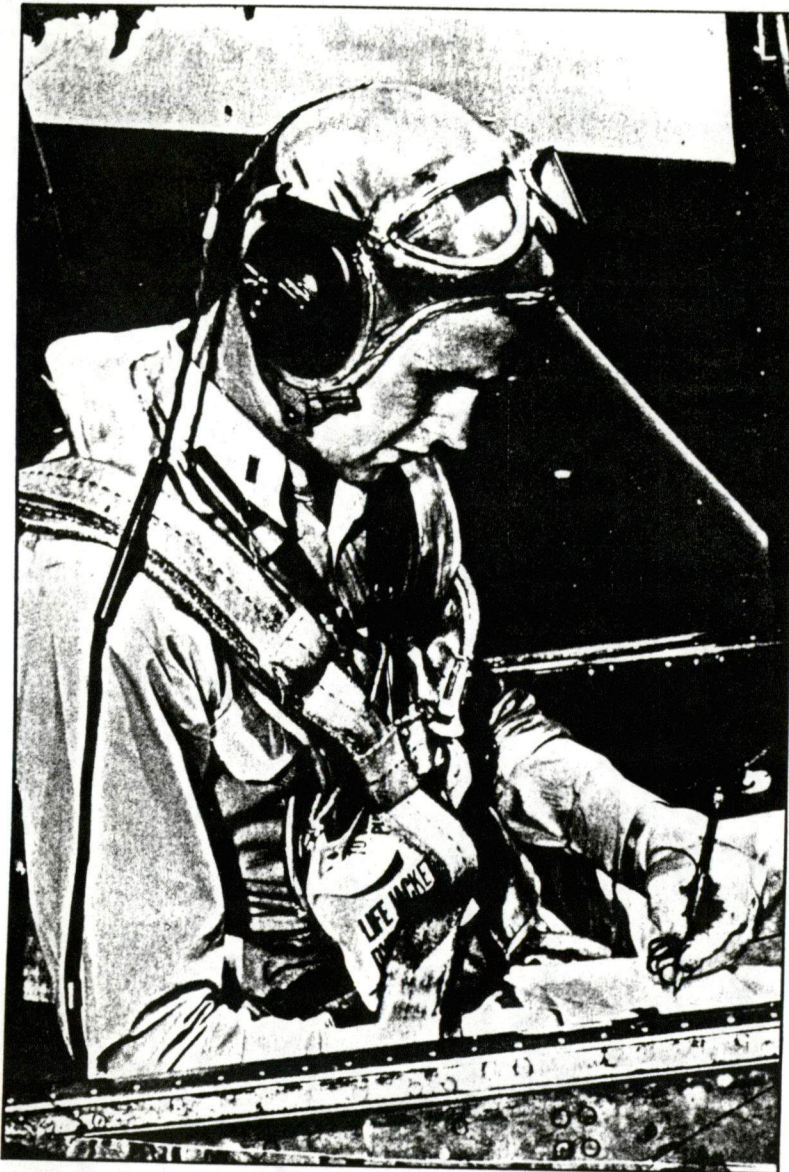
“They dropped some medicine from the air and I paddled over and picked it up. I checked myself out to see if I was okay. There wasn’t much time. The frustrating thing was that the wind was blowing me back toward the beach, so I had to keep paddling to stay out.

“I remember the drone of our planes disappearing and wondering what was going to happen to me. Of course, I prayed. I thought ‘This is it—it’s all over.’

“I was out there paddling for a couple of hours, with the wind blowing me back toward shore, when this submarine rose up out of the waters. It was like an apparition. At first I thought, ‘Maybe I’m delirious,’ and then, when I concluded that it was a submarine all right, I feared that it



George Bush graduates from Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, in June 1942. On June 12, his 18th birthday, he enlists in the U.S. Navy Reserve as a Seaman Second Class.



Receiving his wings and commission while still 18, George Bush becomes the youngest pilot in the U.S. Navy.

might be Japanese. It just seemed to me too lucky and too farfetched that it would be an American submarine. But then I saw the American sailors running back and forth across the deck and I knew I was going to make it—that for some reason I was going to live through this thing.”

*How long were you on board the submarine?*

“As it turned out, they had just begun a pretty dangerous mission in enemy waters. There wasn’t anything they could do with me but take me along. So I spent the next 30 days on a U.S. submarine.”

“I can tell you that there were some times when I wasn’t so sure whether I had been rescued or not. It was a frightening experience, and the longer it lasted the more I grew to respect those men.

“We used to argue over which career was the most dangerous. They would say that they never wanted to be a pilot because you were too vulnerable as a pilot, and if you got hit, it was all over. Yet here I was, living proof that you could fall out of the sky and live to talk about it.

“I would tell them that this was going to be the last submarine duty I ever did. Sometimes there were depth charges exploding all around us. If there had been just a hairline crack in the skin of that submarine, it would have been all over. Where are you going to go when you’re already under the surface of the ocean?

“Of course, with my being on board that long, they gave me something to do. In those close quarters everybody pitched in. It was an experience I will never forget—firing torpedoes at the enemy and then hiding right under their noses for days on end. Our skipper was eventually given the Silver Star for the amount of tonnage he sank. When the patrol was over, I was given a brief rest at Pearl Harbor and then sent back out to the fleet again. I’m still waiting for my bonus check from the U.S. Navy for submarine service!”

*You must have had some sense of destiny about all of this. Your co-pilot and gunner were dead, and you were very lucky to have gotten out of it alive.*

“Oh, yes, there was all of that. People talk about a kind of foxhole Christianity, where you’re in trouble and think you’re going to die, and so you want to make everything right with God and everybody else right there in the last minute.

“But this was just the opposite of that. I had already faced death, and God had spared me. I had this very deep and profound gratitude and a sense of wonder. Sometimes when there is disaster people will pray, ‘Why me?’ In an opposite way I had the same question: Why had I been spared and what did God have for me?

“At night when we would surface, I used to enjoy my time on the watch. It was absolutely dark in the middle of the Pacific; the nights were so clear and the stars so brilliant. It was wonderful and energizing, a time to talk to God.

“One of the things I realized out there all alone was how much family meant to me. Having faced death and been given another chance to live, I could see just how important those values and principles were that my parents had instilled in me, and of course how much I loved Barbara, the girl I knew I would marry. Her name had been painted on my plane.”

*Were you a dreamer as a young man? Did you have goals to do great things?*

“I suppose, like all young men, I was a dreamer. But I never did set up a grand design for my life. I’ve always believed that you must do well in whatever it is that you do, and in that sense I set objectives along the way and then tried to attain them. For example, I had wanted to go right

into the Navy when the war broke out. But my parents and relatives were upset; they felt that the thing for me to do was go on to college. Yet I was shaken by what had happened at Pearl Harbor, and I was patriotic and wanted to do something about it. So I dug in my heels and pulled it off. I won my wings and commission at the age of 18, at the time the youngest pilot in the United States Navy. I was determined to see combat and then after the war get into college, and so I did. I’ve always been one to concentrate on what’s at hand.”

*There is no unique George Bush philosophy of success?*

“If there is, it’s not systematic. I just say, Do your best, stand for something, accomplish something, be a doer and not a critic. If you don’t like things, get in and try to change them. If you’ve been lucky enough to take something out of the system, put something back into it.

“My family instilled some concepts in me at a very early age. They believed very strongly in Christian ethics, kindness and helping others, and I’ve embraced that for myself.

“In 1980, when I started running for the Presidency, some of the most knowledgeable and talented people warned me, ‘You’re just going to get hurt.’

“In a sense they may have been right. Perhaps there was no chance in 1980, but we worked hard, raised money, and paid all our bills. We had an incredible experience with hundreds of thousands of people supporting us. If I had waited around for somebody else to tell me to do this, I wouldn’t be sitting here talking to you now.

“Give life everything you’ve got: Don’t hold back and don’t look for the easy way out; just go ahead and do what you should do.”

*You were still in the Navy when you married Barbara?*

"Yes, I was in some pretty heavy action over the Philippines when I got Christmas leave. It was an unforgettably happy time for me during Christmas of 1944.

"But the war was still on. If you had said that it would all be over within six months, no one would have believed you. It's true that the Germans were falling back on the eastern front, but the Battle of the Bulge had been launched, and all these American boys were getting chewed up. And in the Pacific theater it looked like we were only at the half-way mark, with a long war of costly island-hopping ahead of us.

"Yet with all that tragedy as a backdrop, here I was back in Connecticut again with family and friends, and at Christmas on top of that. So Barbara and I were married, and for me it's been one of the world's greatest love stories ever since."

*Do you remember where you were when the war ended?*

"I'll never forget it. We were in Virginia Beach, Virginia, anticipating reassignment back to combat at any moment. The war in the Pacific still seemed like it was going to stretch on forever. Ten of the 14 original pilots in our squad had already been killed. I had to live with the prospect that if I were to get shot down this time, it might mean leaving behind a beautiful young widow.

"And then Truman dropped the bombs. A few days later the war was over and there was an unbelievable celebration. On the base, pilots were running out into the streets and hugging each other. People everywhere were crying and laughing.

"Barbara and I slipped away to a little chapel. I remember thinking about all my buddies who had died, and I remember squeezing Barbara's hand and thanking God one more time for letting me live to see this day of peace."

- 2 -

## *Prosperity with a Purpose*

In the spring of 1986 some days were better than others for Vice President George Bush. So I was pretty happy when I caught up with him on a good day. For starters, his two favorite baseball teams, the Houston Astros and the New York Mets, were leading in their respective divisions of the National League. For an even more important piece of good news, a new *Washington Post*-ABC poll showed him trouncing his prospective rivals as the favorite for the Republican nomination in '88.

Early that morning I shared a taxi to Andrews Air Force Base with Ron Kaufman, a longtime Bush political strategist and a good friend of mine. When the Vice President had decided to start up a political action committee, he had tapped Ron to get things going. Kaufman and I listened to our taxi driver's cogent analysis of what Congress was up to and what it would eventually settle on. I couldn't help wondering why none of the television networks had ever brought on a couchful of Washington cabbies to give their views and liven up those Sunday afternoon news talk shows!

We cleared security at the distinguished visitors' lounge before walking out the back gate toward Air Force Two. The two 727's which constituted the equipment then available for the Vice President stood side by side about a hundred yards away. On the long march out across the tarmac we had a chance to take them both in. They were big white birds, with blue and gold stripes running across their sides and the stars and stripes displayed on their

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, there wasn't any doubt which branch of the service I'd join. My thoughts immediately turned to naval aviation. College was coming up the following fall, but that would have to wait. The sooner I could enlist, the better.

Six months later I got my diploma from Phillips Academy Andover. Secretary of War Henry Stimson came from Washington to deliver the commencement address. He told members of our graduating class the war would be a long one, and even though America needed fighting men, we'd serve our country better by getting more education before getting into uniform.

After the ceremony, in a crowded hallway outside the auditorium, my father had one last question about my future plans. Dad was an imposing presence, six feet four, with deep-set blue-gray eyes and a resonant voice.

"George," he said, "did the Secretary say anything to change your mind?"

"No, sir," I replied. "I'm going in."

Dad nodded and shook my hand.

On my eighteenth birthday, I went to Boston and was sworn into the Navy as a Seaman Second Class. Not long thereafter, I was on a railway coach headed south for Navy preflight training in North Carolina.

I'd joined up to fly, and like the piano student who didn't see why he couldn't begin his lessons playing *Rhapsody in Blue*, I was gung ho to strap on the leather helmet and goggles the day I arrived at Chapel Hill. Because of the pilot shortage, the Navy had trimmed its aviator training course to ten months, but there weren't any shortcuts. It would be months before I'd finally climb into a Stearman N-2S trainer—the Navy's "Yellow Peril," a two-cockpit, open-air special. Even then I got the impression that my instructor thought I was still too fuzz-faced to trust with an expensive piece of Navy equipment.

Looking through old scrapbooks at photos taken at the time, I can't say I blame him. I was younger than the other

trainees—the youngest aviator in the Navy when I got my wings. To make matters worse, I looked younger than I actually was—enough to make me self-conscious. When Barbara came to visit—she was on her way to school in South Carolina—I even asked her to stretch the calendar, add a few months to her age, and tell anybody who asked that she was eighteen, not seventeen.

We'd met six months before, at a Christmas dance. I'm not much at recalling what people wear, but that particular occasion stands out in my memory. The band was playing Glenn Miller tunes when I approached a friend from Rye, New York, Jack Wozencraft, to ask if he knew a girl across the dance floor, the one wearing the green-and-red holiday dress. He said she was Barbara Pierce, that she lived in Rye and went to school in South Carolina. Would I like an introduction? I told him that was the general idea, and he introduced us, just about the time the bandleader decided to change tempos, from fox trot to waltz. Since I didn't waltz, we sat the dance out. And several more after that, talking and getting to know each other.

It was a storybook meeting, though most couples that got serious about each other in those days could say the same about the first time they met. Young people in the late 1930s and early '40s were living with what modern psychologists call heightened awareness, on the edge. It was a time of uncertainty, when every evening brought dramatic radio newscasts—Edward R. Murrow from London, William L. Shirer from Berlin—reporting a war we knew was headed our way.

In the eight months that passed from that first meeting until her visit to Chapel Hill, Barbara and I had progressed from simply being "serious," to meeting and spending time with each other's families—a fairly important step for teenagers in those days. After I got my wings and went into advanced flight training, we took the next important step. In August of 1943, she joined the Bush summer convocation in Maine where, between boating and fishing excursions, we were secretly engaged. Secret, to the extent that the German and Japanese high commands weren't aware of it. That December we went public with our engagement, though we

knew that marriage was years away. My training days were drawing to a close at the Naval Air Station in Charlestown, Rhode Island. In the fall of 1943 I was assigned to VT-51, a torpedo squadron being readied for active duty in the Pacific.

Eight months after V-J Day, *Life* magazine ran a story, "Home to Chichi Jima," telling of the war-crimes trial of two Japanese officers charged with executing American fliers shot down over the Bonin Islands and "even more revolting, of practicing cannibalism on them."

I read the piece as a Yale freshman, not long out of the Navy. It brought back memories of the worst hours I spent during the war.

The date was September 2, 1944. It was the second day of concentrated air strikes on the Bonins by our squadron, VT-51, operating off the *San Jacinto*, one of eight fast carriers in Vice Admiral Marc Mitscher's Task Force 58. My aviator's log book for that day reads: *Crash Landing in Sea—Near Bonin Is.—Enemy action.*

Under the column for *Passengers* were the names *Delaney* and *Lt. (jg) White*. Jack Delaney was the young radioman/tail gunner on my Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber. William G. (Ted) White was the squadron's gunnery officer, filling in that day for Leo Nadeau, our regular turret gunner.

VT-51 had an air complement of twenty-six F6F Hellcats and nine TBM Avengers. The quick, mobile Hellcat fighter kept the skies clear of enemy aircraft. The Avenger had earned a reputation as the biggest, best single-engine bomber around, used for torpedo runs, glide bombing, antisub patrols, and providing air cover during amphibious landings. The TBM carried a three-man crew—aviator, turret gunner, and radioman/tail gunner, or "stinger," along with a 2,000-pound bomb payload.

The target for that day was a radio communications center on Chichi Jima, one of three islands in the Bonin chain. The others were Haha Jima and the best-remembered

Pacific island of World War Two, Iwo Jima. The day before, Delaney, Nadeau, and I had flown a mission targeting gun emplacements on Chichi. We knocked some out, but not enough. The Japanese who were dug in on the island still had a potent anti-aircraft reserve.

Delaney, Nadeau, and I had been together since VT-51 was first attached to the *San Jacinto*, back in the States.

We'd flown missions over Wake Island, Palau, Guam, and Saipan, and survived a fair number of close calls, including a ditching operation when our plane sprang a leak while still carrying four depth charges intended for enemy subs. How do you put a TBM Avenger into the water with four 500-pound bombs in its belly? Very carefully, with adrenaline running, a prayer on your lips, and your fingers crossed.

In flight training at Corpus Christi and along the East Coast, we were taught to gauge wind velocity and the height of waves. Given winds at about fifteen knots and a fair chop on the sea, I trimmed the nose of the plane as high as possible without risking a stall. We landed tailfirst and were able to scramble onto the wing, inflate our safety raft, and start paddling, just as the plane went down.

We felt lucky. Within seconds we felt even luckier, when the plane's torpedoes detonated after their safety devices gave way to undersea pressure. Then, about thirty minutes later, came a happy ending: the destroyer U.S.S. *Bronson* sighted our raft and picked us up.

Like most TBM Avenger pilots, I liked the teamwork and camaraderie that went with being part of a three-man crew. I became attached to my plane, nicknaming it "Barbara."

The TBM Avenger wasn't fast—the unofficial Navy line described it as "low and slow." As Leo Nadeau once put it, the TBM "could fall faster than it could fly." Cruising speed was about 140 knots, brought down to less than 95 knots for a carrier landing. But it was sturdy and stable. Sturdy and stable enough to allow for pilot error on even a

bad landing. From the start, back during flight training, I liked the challenge the TBM offered, the sensation of diving, getting close down to the water, going full bore.

There's nothing quite like putting a plane down on a carrier. While it was intimidating at first, you quickly got used to it. The *San Jacinto* was a new-model light carrier, with a very narrow flight deck on a converted cruiser hull. It took total concentration to make the tight turn coming into the ship's stern, then follow through on your pattern, watching the signal officer as he waved his paddles to let you know whether you were too high or too low. Screw up the plane's "attitude" and you crashed into the sea or the deck—like the Hellcat pilot I once saw miss the arresting wires on a return flight from Guam.

Our squadron was coming in after a strike, the Avengers first, then the fighter planes. I'd already landed and was standing on deck, watching as the pilot jammed his throttles forward trying to get airborne again, but lost air speed. His plane spun in, ending up by a gun mount. The gun crew was wiped out. Just a few yards away was a crewman's leg, severed and quivering. The shoe was still on. More than forty years later I can still see it.

Two other members of the squadron were alongside me when the accident happened. We were all familiar with combat risks and at one time or another had lost close friends: my first roommate, Jim Wykes, flew out on a routine antisub patrol one day and just disappeared. But none of us had ever seen death come that close, that suddenly. Four seamen who'd been with us seconds before were dead because of a random accident, for no logical reason.

Then, breaking the tension, the chief petty officer in charge of the deck crew moved in, shouting orders. "All right, you bastards," he yelled. "Let's get to work. We still have planes up there and they can't land in this goddamn mess." War, it seemed, has a perverse logic all its own.

A little after 6 A.M., the morning of September 2, I was in the ready room getting briefed for our second day of air strikes against Chichi Jima. Word came that Task Force 58

was heading south to become Task Force 38, under Admiral "Bull" Halsey. The move was scheduled to take place immediately after the Chichi Jima raid. That meant if we were going to knock out the enemy airstrips and communications on the Bonins, today would be the day.

Nobody had to remind us that the going would be rough. The day before, we'd run into strong enemy anti-aircraft fire and lost a plane. The Bonins were six hundred miles from Tokyo, a key supply and communications center, and the Japanese had dug in for a protracted fight. We were learning that the closer we got to the enemy's homeland, the fiercer the resistance.

Ted White knew this when he approached me to ask if he could fill in as turret gunner during the raid. Ted was a personal friend. Our families knew each other back home. As gunnery officer, he wanted to check the equipment out under actual combat conditions.

We were due to take off at 0715. "You'll have to hurry it," I told him, looking at my watch. "But if it's okay with the skipper, and Nadeau doesn't mind, it's okay with me."

The skipper in this case was Lieutenant Commander D. J. Melvin, who had headed VT-51 since it was formed. In his early thirties, Don Melvin was a seasoned flier who knew everything there was to know about naval aircraft—a cool, collected leader who inspired confidence in younger members of his squadron. Before the war was over, he'd earned the Navy Cross not once, but twice. That morning, September 2, he cleared Ted White for the Chichi Jima mission. Leo Nadeau also signed off on the request.

We took off on schedule, first the TBMs, then the fighters, some catapulted, others making a full-deck takeoff. After I was harnessed in, my plane was hooked onto the catapult. I ran it up full-throttle, gave the catapult officer my arm-across-the-chest signal, and was launched skyward.

The sky was clear, broken only by a few clouds, not enough to provide cover for an incoming flight. Though it was still early morning, the weather was like every other day in that part of the Pacific, warm and humid. It took us about

an hour to reach the island; climbing along the way to our attack height of 12,000 feet.

Our squadron attack plan called for three groups of three torpedo bombers apiece, flying first in V formations, then shifting to echelons as we prepared to dive. We were joined by planes from other carriers as we closed in.

The flak was the heaviest I'd ever flown into. The Japanese were ready and waiting; their anti-aircraft guns were set up to nail us as we pushed into our dives. By the time VT-51 was ready to go in, the sky was thick with angry black clouds of exploding anti-aircraft fire.

Don Melvin led the way, scoring direct hits on a radio tower. I followed, going into a thirty-five-degree dive, an angle of attack that sounds shallow but in an Avenger felt as if you were headed straight down. The target map was strapped to my knee, and as I started into my dive, I'd already spotted the target area. Coming in, I was aware of black splotches of gunfire all around.

Suddenly there was a jolt, as if a massive fist had crunched into the belly of the plane. Smoke poured into the cockpit, and I could see flames rippling across the crease of the wing, edging toward the fuel tanks. I stayed with the dive, homed in on the target, unloaded our four 500-pound bombs, and pulled away, heading for the sea. Once over water, I leveled off and told Delaney and White to bail out, turning the plane starboard to take the slipstream off the door near Delaney's station.

Up to that point, except for the sting of dense smoke blurring my vision, I was in fair shape. But when I went to make my jump, trouble came in pairs.

According to the book, you dive onto the wing; then the wind pulls you away from the plane. But something went wrong. The wind was playing tricks, or more likely, I pulled the rip cord too soon. First my head, then my parachute canopy collided with the tail of the plane. It was a close one. A fraction of an inch closer, and I'd have been snagged on the tail assembly. As it was, the only damage that came out of the collision was a gashed forehead and a partially torn canopy.

I came down fast—because of the torn canopy, faster than I wanted. That was when all those tedious hours of emergency training paid off. Rule No. 1 in bailing out at sea: Don't get tangled up in your parachute after landing. Still dazed, I instinctively started unbuckling on the way down and easily slipped out of my harness when I hit the water.

I looked around for Delaney and White, but the only thing in sight was my parachute drifting away. My seatback rubber raft was somewhere in the area, but if it hadn't been for Don Melvin swooping down, then up, to signal its location, I'd never have seen, much less swum to it. And while I didn't know it at the time, if it hadn't been for Doug West in his Avenger and a few of our Hellcat escorts, the raft wouldn't have done much good even when I reached it. A couple of Japanese boats had left the island, headed out to pick me up. Doug and the fighter planes drove them back while I swam toward the raft, hoping that it hadn't been damaged by the fall and would inflate. Good news, it did. I scrambled aboard. Bad news, the fall had broken the emergency container and I had no fresh water. Doug didn't know that, but coming in low he'd seen that my head was bleeding and dropped a medical kit. I retrieved it and hand-swabbed my forehead with Mercurochrome.

Then I checked out my regulation .38-caliber pistol to see if it was in working order. It was, for all the good it would do me; I would have traded it and fifty more like it for one small paddle. The wind was playing tricks again. Alone in my raft, my squadron headed back to the carrier, I was slowly drifting toward Chichi Jima.

Where were Delaney and White? There was no sign of other yellow rafts on the horizon. Just cloudless blue sky and choppy green water rolling toward the shoreline. I was hand-paddling furiously just to stay put.

My head still ached. My arm was burning from the sting of an angry Portuguese man-of-war. And to compli-

cate matters, I'd swallowed a few pints of brackish water along the way, which meant I'd occasionally have to stop paddling to lean over the side.

Still, I was alive and had a chance. The question was whether my crew members had survived. Neither had responded after the order to bail out. Struggling against the tide, I remembered something else: Task Force 58 was pulling out of the area to rendezvous with Halsey's fleet after the raid on Chichi Jima. Don Melvin had probably radioed my position to friendly ships in the area; but realistically, if nothing showed up that day, my luck might have run out.

A half hour passed. An hour. An hour and a half. There was no sign of activity from the island, no Japanese headed my way. But nothing else was headed my way either. As it turned out, when my prayers were answered, it didn't come in the form of a large ship's outline on the horizon, but what appeared to be a small black dot, only one hundred yards away. The dot grew larger. First a periscope, then the conning tower, then the hull of a submarine emerged from the depths.

Was it an enemy sub or one of ours? It didn't take long to find out. A large bearded figure was standing on the bridge of the conning tower, holding a black metal object in his hand. As the sub drew closer, the object took form as a small motion-picture camera.

My rescue ship was the U.S.S. *Finback*. The camera buff turned out to be Ensign Bill Edwards. He stood there, filming away, while the sub continued to surface and half a dozen seamen came scurrying out to the forward deck. "Welcome aboard!" said one, who hauled me out of my bobbing craft. "Let's get below. The skipper wants to get the hell out of here." On shaky legs I climbed down the conning tower into the hold of the *Finback*. The hatches slammed shut, the horns sounded, and the sub's skipper gave the order to "Take her down."

In the sub's cramped wardroom, I was given a second welcome aboard by three other Navy airmen, rescued by the *Finback* a short while before. Silently I thanked God for having saved my life and said a silent prayer for the safety of

my fellow crew members. Later I learned that neither Jack Delaney nor Ted White had survived. One went down with the plane; the other was seen jumping, but his parachute failed to open.

As a member of VT-51, I thrived on the feeling of freedom that came with flying an airplane. I was part of a team, yet on my own. But living with the officers and crew of the *Finback*, I learned about a different kind of teamwork, as well as danger.

Whatever the aviators on board might have thought originally, the *Finback* wasn't a rescue vessel but a combat ship on patrol. Much as we wanted to get back to our squadrons, we'd have to bide our time until the sub put in at Midway at the end of its war patrol.

Among other things, biding time on a submarine meant looking at the war inside out, being on the receiving rather than the delivery end of an air bombing. People talk about the risk of combat flying, but in a plane you can fire back and maneuver; on a sub you breathe stale air and sweat in the belly of a metal tube under fire.

The *Finback* sank enough enemy tonnage on that patrol to earn its skipper, Commander R. R. Williams, the Silver Star. He and his crew deserved it. Running on the surface, we were attacked by a Japanese Nell bomber. Below the surface, we were depth-charged: the sub would shudder, and the visiting airmen would give anxious looks at members of the crew. They'd reassure us, "Not even close."

It was close enough. The Navy awarded me a Distinguished Flying Cross for completing the mission on Chichi Jima, but what happened at the island was over in a hurry. Taking depth charges in a sub—even for ten minutes—could seem like an eternity.

But my month aboard the *Finback* had its better moments. There was the human element: I made friendships that have lasted a lifetime. I had a chance to reflect on the greater loss suffered at Chichi Jima. Six days after my res-

cue, I wrote a letter, later mailed to my parents, that described my feelings at the time:

"I try to think about it as little as possible," I said, "yet I cannot get the thought of those two out of my mind. Oh, I'm O.K.—I want to fly again and I won't be scared of it, but I know I won't be able to shake the memory of this incident and I don't believe I want to completely."

Then there were the better moments spent standing watch on the tower during the midnight to four A.M. shift, when the *Finback* ran on the surface to recharge its batteries. The sub moved like a porpoise, water lapping over its bow, the sea changing colors, first jet black, then sparkling white. It reminded me of home and our family vacations in Maine. The nights were clear and the stars so bright you felt you could touch them. It was hypnotic. There was peace, calm, beauty—God's therapy.

I still don't understand the "logic" of war—why some survive and others are lost in their prime. But that month on the *Finback* gave me time to reflect, to go deep inside myself and search for answers. As you grow older and try to retrace the steps that made you the person you are, the signposts to look for are those special times of insight, even awakening. I remember my days and nights aboard the U.S.S. *Finback* as one of those times—maybe the most important of them all.

I rejoined the *San Jacinto* and VT-51 exactly eight weeks after being shot down, in time to take part in strikes against enemy positions and shipping in the Philippines. In October 1944 American troops had landed at Leyte; in November our squadron was in action at Manila Bay and in the Luzon area. We also got news that over one hundred B-29s, taking off from Saipan, had bombed Tokyo. Three years after it had begun, the war in the Pacific was coming full circle, a noose tightening around the Japanese home islands.

In December VT-51 was replaced by a new squadron, and after flying fifty-eight combat missions I was ordered home. No reunion could have been scripted more perfectly.

I arrived Christmas Eve. There were tears, laughs, hugs, joy, the love and warmth of family in a holiday setting.

Barbara and I were married two weeks later, January 6, 1945, at the First Presbyterian Church in her hometown, Rye, New York, with a close friend from VT-51, Milt Moore, as a member of the wedding party.

A few months later I was reassigned to VT-153, a Navy torpedo bomber group being readied for the invasion of Japan. Everything I'd experienced in my year and a half of combat in the Pacific told me it was going to be the bloodiest, most prolonged battle of the war. Japan's war leaders were unfazed by massive raids on Tokyo. They seemed bent on national suicide, regardless of the cost in human life.

Now, years later, whenever I hear anyone criticize President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I wonder whether the critic remembers those days and has really considered the alternative: millions of fighting men killed on both sides, possibly tens of millions of Japanese civilians. Harry Truman's decision wasn't just courageous, it was far-sighted. He spared the world and the Japanese people an unimaginable holocaust.

I was stationed at Oceana Naval Air Station, Virginia, on the mid-August day when the President announced that the Japanese had sued for peace. Barbara and I were living in Virginia Beach. The announcement came at seven P.M. Within minutes our neighborhood streets were filled with sailors, aviators, their wives and families celebrating late into the night. We joined in the celebration, then, before going home, went to a nearby church filled with others giving thanks and remembering those lost in the war. After four years it was finally over.

We were still young, life lay ahead of us, and the world was at peace. It was the best of times.

#### YALE'S HITTING BIG FACTOR IN TEAM'S DIAMOND SUCCESS

*The ability of the Yale Baseball team to back up some mighty impressive pitching on the part of*