

The Round Tower

*Cleveland County Historical Society
Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum*

*Save the Date: Dec. 12th 6-9 PM
Victorian Christmas at The Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum. Carriage Rides From 7-9 PM.*



There is nothing warmer and more inviting than spending an evening at the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum. On December 12th, the adventure begins on Main Street at the 2nd Friday Art Walk. While enjoying the hospitality of many downtown merchants, a horse drawn carriage waits to pick up passengers to transport them to the Historical House at 508 N. Peters. On entering the Historical House, the aroma of clove scented oranges, hot wessail, and ginger bread cookies greet visitors.

Each room in the Moore-Lindsay House is decorated with full-size trees adorned with original and replicas of Victorian era ornaments. Guests are free to tour the Historical House, listen to the flute Trio, "Music of the Night", and enjoy Christmas breads, cakes, cookies, hot Wessail and frosty punch. The Christmas opening at the Historical House on December 12th is from 6-9, free carriage rides are offered from 7-9 PM. The carriage will travel back and forth from downtown to the Historical House during that time period.

This issue of the Round Tower is in remembrance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7th 1941, and the role Norman Oklahoma played in helping to win World War II .

A Naval Base on the Prairie: Norman Oklahoma and WWII.



The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941 placed the United States on course toward another World War. The First World War taught a generation of Americans how to be industrious, frugal, and prepared; the next generation picked up the preparedness torch. In a matter of months after Pearl Harbor, idle factories started producing war related materials, which helped high unemployment, and moved the American economy out of the doledrums of the economic depression of the 1930s. American involvement in the Second World War also created training and careers for over 9 million men and women, who joined the armed forces by 1944. Norman, was one of several Oklahoma communities that played an important role in training young men and women to help win the war in Europe and the Pacific.

The establishment of naval bases in Norman, a city far from any ocean, resulted from a fortuitous encounter between Savoie Lottinville, director of the University of Oklahoma Press, and K.B. Salisbury, Captain in the U.S. Navy. In 1941, Lottinville, eastbound on the Santa Fe, met Salisbury, who was returning to the Bureau of Aeronautics at the Department of Navy in Washington D.C. As Lottinville and Salisbury were getting acquainted, the Navy captain asked Lottinville if there was an interest at the University of Oklahoma in flying. Lottinville proudly told the captain about the University's new airfield north of town that was named after WWI pilot, Max Westheimer. Salisbury then asked, "Would you be willing to lend it [the air field] to the Navy for the duration of the war?" Lottinville discussed the possibilities with university president, Joseph Brandt, who gave Lottinville the green light to pursue the matter. Brandt and University Regents were excited about the prospects of a naval training station in Norman.



NAS North Base

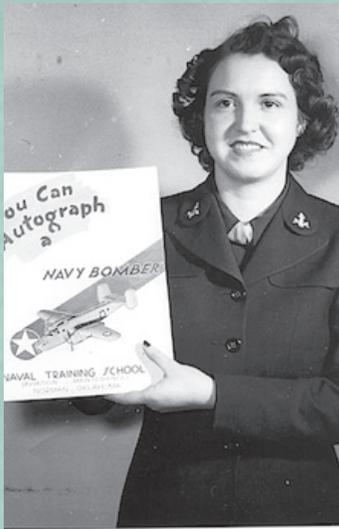


Stearman Bi-Plane



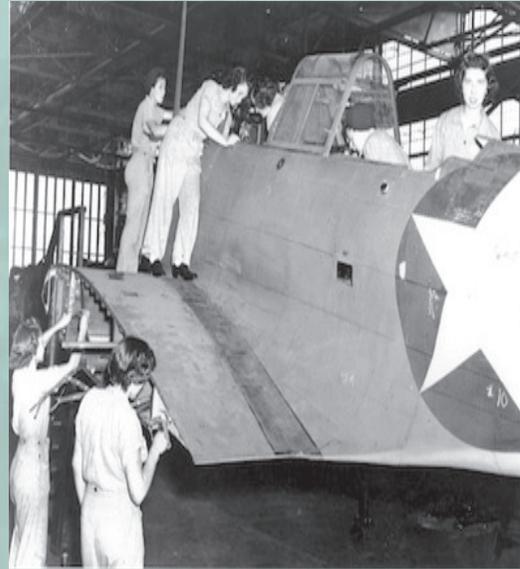
Damage from 1949
tornado.
*(Courtesy of
Bob Rice Photo
Archive)*

In all, the Navy purchased 62,000 acres in Oklahoma. In March 1942, the Navy acquired 2,537 acres in Norman to build a Naval Air Station (NAS), a Naval Air Technical Training Station (NATTC), and a Naval Hospital. NAS was located north of the town at the university owned at Max Westheimer Airfield (North Base), and trained young men as Navy pilots. NATTC, military barracks, and hospital were constructed southeast of the University (South Base). At South Base, the navy trained young men and women in skills that helped maintain naval aircraft and ground equipment. The acquisition of properties, and the increased number of military personnel in Norman was a well-needed economic boost to central Oklahoma.



*Courtesy of Bob Rice
Photo Archive*

Women played an important role in helping the Navy during WWII. In 1942-43, 27,000 women joined the Navy. Every three weeks at the Norman Depot in 1942, WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) arrived at NATTC for training. Women were excited about the opportunity to join the WAVES. They understood that learning to be a machinist mate or an aviation mechanic freed sailors from that duty so they could join the fight outside the continental United States.



Young women also believed that joining the military was as an adventure they probably would not have had otherwise. The cultural expectation for women in the early 1940s dictated women's role as wife and mother. The war altered that expectation and gave young women many other opportunities. After the war, a former WAVE from Michigan wrote of her time in the Navy and remarked how fortunate she was that her father signed the consent form allowing her to join the Navy. She was eighteen years old, fresh out of high school, and anxious to do her part for the war effort. She wrote of enduring the going away party, and all the well-meaning gifts she received. On the day she was to leave for the train in Detroit, she ignored her mother's tears, and her friends doubts as she excitedly stepped aboard the passenger car with other young women headed to boot camp in Iowa. From "boot" the new recruits were sent to different locations for training, many came to Norman.



www.hometownnorman.com

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For Norman**



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The first detachment of WAVES arrived from Cedar Falls, Iowa January 29, 1943 for training. The men stationed at the bases in Norman did not exactly see this influx of women as “true” Navy, perhaps expecting that women would not be required to perform the same duties as men. But, women did adhere to the same Navy regulations as men. WAVES had to stand watches and engage in the other duties of all enlisted personnel. They also had the same punishments for not keeping regulations. A woman recruit mentioned she had to “swab the deck” or clean latrines for minor infractions of the regulations. And like the men, WAVES had liberty, which could also be taken away as punishment. As for the men and women getting “involved” there were strict Navy regulations on how close men and women could associate. For example, WAVES could not let sailors put their arms around them when in a movie. In fact, WAVES were advised to sit in a reserved section.





Base Swimming Pool

Both Navy Bases in Norman provided an all-inclusive town-like environment, which included a recreation hall, swimming pools, dance hall, motion picture theater and such amenities as a commissary, and hair salon. Variety Shows were on the top of the list for keeping the troops entertained. The variety of entertainment ran from the amateur to the professional. One show featured a University of Oklahoma sorority choir, another featured the national organization of The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of the Barbershop Quartet Singers of American. The local group of this esteem organization was the Boresome Foursome composed of Oklahoma City Businessmen. There were also “class” acts in the variety shows. Entertainers, who joined the armed forces after Pearl Harbor, used their talents to keep up the morale of the enlisted men. Tex Beneke, a featured tenor sax player with the Glenn Miller Band, often entertained at the Norman base. The base also had their own band called the Gremlins.



Aerial View of Norman-1948. North Base in distance .
(Courtesy of Bob Rice Photo Archive)

In the early 1940s, Norman had around 11,000 citizens with a small town footprint. The urban area of the town was bordered on the north by Robinson, on the West by Nevada, which later became Berry Road, on the south by Lindsay and on the east by Highway 77 or Porter. The Naval Air Station at Max Westheimer airfield was north of Robinson, at the intersection of Robinson and Nevada; the base was surrounded by farmland. NATTC was SE of the University of Oklahoma extending from Jenkins to Porter. This area was also surrounded with fields. South Base was within walking distance to central Norman, but North Base was quite a distance.



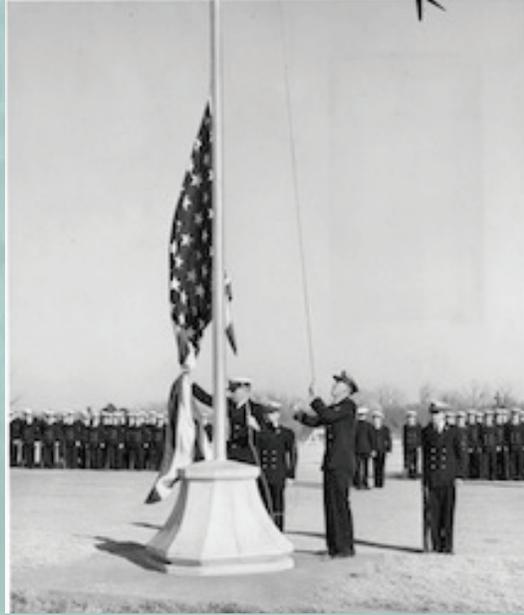
Interurban
on Main, west
of Santa Fe
tracks.

Navy personnel had to rely on public transportation, especially the interurban and some local buses. There was a regular complaint by the Navy that there were too few interurban cars and too few buses to transport the service men and women to OKC or Norman.



USO Front
Street, South
of Main

In February 1943, the two-story Norman Armory, east of the Santa Fe tracks near the Court-house, was remodeled as a United Service Organization (USO) facility. What might be lacking in recreational facilities North and South Base were certainly incorporated into the USO club. The lower floor, or deck as it was called, had a combination gym and dance floor, where each week orchestra dances were planned. Service men and women, and their guests, played badminton, volleyball, and basketball in the gym. The first deck also had a snack bar and soda fountain. In the game room there was a pool tables, a ping-pong table, and a photo shop with a darkroom. On the upper deck there was a room for lectures, a room for studying, and a room for crafts and hobbies. There was also a shower room, a ladies powder room, and a recording studio for service men or women to record a greeting to send home.



World War II ended in August of 1945, when Japan surrendered to the allied forces. In all, 74,322 men and women graduated from the Naval Air Technical Training Center on South Base. At the Naval Air Station 6,284 men finished pilot training.

Once the war was over, the question was what to do with the Naval facilities. The retreat of the military from Norman was a concern to many, the economy and lively hood of many depended on the naval facilities. Citizens wanted the military to keep the training facilities in Norman, but that was not in the militaries plan until the start of the Korean War. In 1952, NATTC was reactivated to train aviation personnel, and NAS continued to train pilots. By the end of 1955, 46,000 men received training at both NAS and NATTC. In 1959, the bases were no longer needed; the peacetime military declared the land and facilities of both bases in excess to the needs of the Navy.



The last sailors to leave stationed the mops to silently watch over the empty bases.

Community Events Calendar Fall 2014

NOVEMBER-

- WWII display at Historical House of Norman during the war.
- Preserving Family Heirlooms Workshop: Sam Noble Museum
- Moore Lindsay Family genalogy tree display

DECEMBER-

- 12th ,Moore-Lindsay Historical House: Christmas Open House , www.normanmuseum.org
- Display: Victorian Toys
-

Sept 21- Jan 6: The Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, Dancers and Deities:Kachinas from the James T. Bialac Native American Art Collection
www.snomnh.ou.edu/exhibits

Membership Renewal

Help maintain the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum with your membership in the Cleveland and County Historical Society. The Historical Society, established in 1967, oversees the operation of the City owned Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum established in 1973 at 508 N. Peters. Your financial support through membership in the Society goes toward operation of the museum and helps to fund historical displays and educational exhibits.

There are three Levels of Membership, all members receive the quarterly newsletter, The Round Tower and access to our photo and paper archives and Sanborn Maps.

1. Standard: \$15.00
Includes online quarterly newsletter
2. Heritage: \$30.00
Includes quarterly online newsletter & copy of *Norman 1889-1949* (Arcadia Press 2012)
3. Premium : \$50.00
Includes online quarterly newsletter, limited edition museum replica Christmas ornament and copy of *Norman 1889-1949* (Arcadia Press 2012)

Mail your membership to Cleveland County Historical Society, 508 N. Peters, Norman Oklahoma 73069 **OR: Visit <http://www.normanmuseum.org/membership.html> and use credit card or paypal.**

We appreciate your financial support.

The Unluckiest Sailor:

Captain Howard D. Bode of the ill fated USS *Oklahoma* and USS *Chicago*.

By Vernon R. Maddux

Howard Douglas "Ping" Bode was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1889. He attended Cincinnati's Woodward High School, and studied at Walnut Hill College-Prep before obtaining an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy; he graduated in the class of 1911. Four years later in December, 1915, when still an ensign stationed in Pearl Harbor, he met and married Helen Spaulding in Honolulu. She was a granddaughter of Ephriam and Margaret Spaulding, Protestant Missionaries who arrived in Hawaii near mid-19th century and built Spaulding House in Honolulu. The Spauldings were famous in the American West, members of the missionary effort to the Nez Perce and witnessed the massacre at Walla Walla, Washington.

Bode's 41 year marriage was apparently successful to the end of his life, although he spent long periods away at sea and alone on foreign shores. He served in a wide selection of jobs in his 32 years of active service before receiving his first command. He was stationed on destroyers, cruisers and battleships and spent time in Europe as a naval attaché. His last position before taking the command of the *Oklahoma* was in Washington D.C. in the Naval Headquarters. He was an intelligence analyst expert handling "Magic" the most secret of all code breaking and read the translations of the highest Imperial Japanese naval code.

Near the end of 1941, he was ordered to Pearl Harbor and there at age 53, was the most senior captain. He had worked hard to earn the two stars of a Rear Admiral. The emaciated, Depression-Era navy finally rewarded him for his years of fateful service on November 1st, when Admiral Husband Kimmel, from CincPacHQ (Commander-in-Chief Pacific) ordered him to take command of one of its most prestigious, if not very modern ships. A combat line officer, he gladly took over the outdated WWI battleship, BB 37, the 25 year-old USS *Oklahoma*, of the *Nevada* Class. He replaced Captain Edward J. Foy who had been relieved of command after a year on the ship. Foy was fired for colliding with a towed barge. This should have been an evil omen to Bode.

Bode's long career was designed to prepare him for tactical command. In some ways it did well. He was a strict disciplinarian, which is often necessary in such a lonely position. In most prominent ways, the long years of peace had denied him critical skills. He seemed to lack faith in his subordinates and knew nothing about Radar or night fighting and exhibited little tactical insight, which he desperately needed to defeat the looming shadow rising in the west.

It was a normal humid if pleasant morning in Pearl Harbor when Captain Bode stepped off his captain's barge onto the officer's landing on Club Drive past the dry docks along the Southeast Loch. The landing was situated directly across the frontal road from the Officer's club. Between him and the *Oklahoma*, there were 16 great warships docked and seven sitting in dry dock. All around him the Pearl Harbor Naval Base stirred to mild activity on that Sunday morning. Among the anchored and tied up larger ships, musicians were tuning in preparing to raise the flag.

Bode was scheduled to meet with several other battleship captains for a working breakfast at the O'Club (Officer's Club). Afterward, he would attend church with his wife, Helen. A punctual and precise man, Bode smoothed his immaculate dress whites and looked down at his watch. It was 0755, December 7, 1941.

Instead of hurrying to the building a hundred yards away across a two-lane roadway, Bode paused and took in the sweet air on this beautiful morning. Familiar sounds echoed from the harbor; the muted hooting of horns, the muffled roar of several small boat engines; the call of bos'ns (senior crewman responsible for components of the ships hull) shouting orders as they tied up. In the background came the clank and bangs of sheets and thick hawsers slapping against heavy armor. A tugboat sounded its deep steam whistle and from the submarine base to his right, the sound of flag sheets rattled as the sailors prepared to raise the flag. Bode smiled, feeling wonderful. He did not know it but his life had peaked. At this moment, he was living in paradise, the captain of a great American warship, certain of higher rank. He smiled more broadly, perhaps at peace for the last time in his life.

About to step onto the road, he hesitated and frowned as he detected a distant deep and growing thunderous noise from behind the O'Club. The sound quickly grew in intensity rattling windows in the Club. The noise grew to a loud throbbing engine noise of several powerful low flying military aircraft. A warplane appeared suddenly in front of him and banked hard over the top of the Officer's Club and rolled out directly toward him. Bode looked up in anger at such a violation of the Sabbath. He saw the pilot with leather helmet and goggles hunched down, earnestly flying the plane while peering through a bombsite. Behind the pilot was a senior officer, who he learned later, was Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, the officer leading the attack on his precious ship and all the other ships in the harbor.

The torpedo bomber leveled its wings and flattened out easing down toward the water, heading directly away from Bode. Before Bode could move, another torpedo plane swept low over him, its engines roaring very loud as it fell in directly behind the leader. Bode's heart, so filled with joy and elation a few seconds earlier, now sank into despair as he watched the line of planes heading straight toward the line of helpless and anchored battleships. The first two aircraft dropped their torpedoes in turn followed by a third as the warplanes skimmed low over the still water. Bode realized the aircraft had large red circles on their wings. With a start, he recognized them as Japanese BN52 torpedo-bombers, a type he had long researched and studied as an intelligence officer. The aerial torpedoes slung beneath their fuselages fell free and splashed into the water of the loch a few hundred yards away from him. In horror, he watched the torpedoes start their motors as in the water directly behind the heavy cruiser USS *St Louis* docked between the USS *New Orleans* and USS *San Francisco*. The deadly "fish" angled up and their bubbles made a visible wake as they headed directly toward the broad side of the biggest battleships of the US Navy. His own ship, the great *Oklahoma*, was especially vulnerable, due to his direct orders. He had steamed the ship into the harbor the previous Friday afternoon after a week of sea maneuvering with the fleet. For various reasons, the *Oklahoma* had been required, for the only time in its long life, to moor on the outside of the *Maryland* at the very exposed #5 mooring in the middle of Battleship Row. As fate would have it, due to tradition, he had ordered all hatches to be locked open and the water-tight doors to be tied back out of the way for his inspection on Monday. He suddenly realized his orders had certainly doomed the *Oklahoma*.

His dismay was made deeper because as high-ranking member of Naval Intelligence, he read dozens of intercepted messages from Japanese Imperial headquarters. One was the famous "Bomb Plot" message, which threatened the fleet everywhere in the Pacific. In that case, he had asked permission to warn the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, Vice Admiral Husband E. Kimmel here at Pearl Harbor, but, because it was extremely sensitive source, he was denied and even rebuked by his boss, Admiral Richard Kelly Turner.

Now in stunned disbelief, he stared at the spreading torpedo wakes as they ran straight and true, at least two headed directly toward his ship. The first torpedo exploded raising a giant vertical plume of water. In the following few minutes, one after another of the 700 pound TNT charges slammed against

the armored blisters of his doomed ship and exploded, the blasts sending towers of water, like tombstones, high into the air. With now dozens of low flying aircraft streaming by him, Bode jumped in fright as a large bomb exploded inside the big hangar on Ford Island. In seconds, a series of huge fireballs popped and blasted, heavy shock waves slapping against him, as the bombers struck along and behind the moored ships. Bode watched in awe as a second line of aircraft flew over him and dropped their metal projectiles into the water. Just like the first, the following torpedoes shed large wooden fins upon entry into the water, which kept them from diving into the mud. All headed directly toward the line of tied-up and helpless battleships.

Torpedo planes and dive-bombers continued to attack the big ships for the next 10 to 12 minutes, more than 50 aircraft in all. Bode realized the torpedo planes and dive bombers were in a carefully coordinated attack, far enough apart not to interfere with each other but close enough together to wreck havoc on the battleships.

Running back toward his barge, Bode saw attacking aircraft soaring everywhere over and around Ford Island and diving on the rows of ships. Several of the last waves of torpedo planes zoomed directly over him none yet bothered by anti-aircraft cannon fire. His heart throbbing, he knew that few ships would be ready to react to the attack. He had made his own ship completely helpless. The crew of the *Oklahoma* had been ordered to remove all gun breaches and polish its brass for his inspection Monday morning. All ammunition was removed and carefully locked away by his orders.

Gasping for breath and wide eyed from the overwhelming emotions as he watched his ship blasted and sinking, he shook himself to life and began running toward the landing, he saw a series of torpedoes and bombs strike the *California*, *Tennessee* and then more hit the *Oklahoma* and the *West Virginia*. The explosions raised a continuous line of enormous water plumes high into the sky.

Bode screamed at the stunned cox'n (coxswain sits in either the bow or stern of the boat and verbally controls the boats steering) and young sailors standing around his barge, which was a fancy motor vessel reserved for his personal use. The sailor's mouths were agape watching the attacking planes. He had to shout at them directly into their faces before he could get any of them to move. He pointed at the reeling *Oklahoma* under plumes of spray and smoke. He ordered his cox'n to head back to the ship as soon as possible. He checked his watch as the gig left the dock. It was only 0759, but it had seemed like three hours instead of three minutes since he saw the first torpedo plane. As the barge headed down the loch, torpedo planes and bombers continued dropping right over them. More desperate, from the *St Louis* and *New Orleans* and other ships, bursts of machine gun fire began spraying the loch as the gunners aimed at the passing aircraft. It obviously was too dangerous to continue down the loch. Several of *St Louis's* gunners were now firing long bursts of .50 caliber bullets low across the loch at the enemy aircraft. The cox'n turned the craft and headed to the fleet landing behind the line of cruisers.

His stomach churning, Bode gripped the rail as he watched the final moments of his big ship. It was obviously filling with water and heeling to port. Already at 0759, it was too late--the *Oklahoma* was doomed. By the time he stepped ashore at the fleet landing, the *Oklahoma* had been continually pounded by at least seven torpedoes.

A Japanese torpedo flight leader off the carrier *Hiryu*, LT Heita Matsumura (his bombardier, middle seat, took a photograph of battleship row being hit by several torpedoes just as Bode reached fleet landing). After the last plane dropped its torpedo, Heita had counted 12 torpedo strikes just on the *Oklahoma*. A moment later, at 0800, the ship heeled over until it was obviously capsizing.

Watching his ship die, Bode was aware of the radio sparking to life and an authoritative voice called for him. Using USN convention, where the CO is the same name as his ship, the command duty officer for Admiral Kimmel called "*Oklahoma, Oklahoma, this is CominchPac, Over.*" Bode stepped to the radio and answered. "*Oklahoma, go ahead.*" The OOD spoke almost breathlessly. "Sir, you are ordered to abort what you are doing and report ASAP to HQ."

He stared into the mic. "Aye, Aye Sir." Bode replied, then hung up the microphone. He felt like he was dying. Looking up, he saw a flight of level bombers approaching the battleships and they began dropping their heavy armor piercing bombs on the helpless vessels. He winced as a giant flash lit his face and a ball of fire exploded up from the *Arizona* two moorings behind the *Oklahoma*.

Later that afternoon at HQ, Kimmel ordered Bode to take command of the fleet armory in West Loch. The last thing he saw of his ship, on which he had commanded less than a month, was it lying belly-up after it rolled over port and sank into the mud of the harbor. Its smooth steel belly was obscenely exposed to the world, its propellers hanging bare. Bode's career sank a bit with his ship. Little did he know that this was the first of three cruel events that would end his career and eventually cost him his life. Three days later, the count of the dead on *Oklahoma* reached 429 as the last of 34 men were pulled alive from the belly of the ship.

Exactly a difficult month after the cruel events of that awful day, on January 7, 1942, a renewed Bode took command of CL 29, USS *Chicago*. The ship was an 11 year-old heavy cruiser of the Northampton class and nearly as good a command as the *Oklahoma*. Still shaken by the loss of his first command, he tried to make up for his malfeasance in ordering the open inspection, by pushing his officers and men as hard as he could. Everyone in the U.S. Navy knew the fighting ships in the Pacific were in for very hard fighting and many would not survive. This caused fear that stalked the fleet. During the twenty years of peace, life was routine and quite safe on the big ships. Now they were in for all out combat on the high seas of the Pacific Ocean.

One tactic that Naval Officers are taught to use to shake up the crew and minimize fear is to make them hate him more than they feared the enemy. Soon, he was disliked by his officers and scorned by his enlisted men. This tended to bond the crew together, which was good. However, Bode's rules and regulations were so strict and his manner so brusque, that most officers believed he was out to end their careers. The enlisted crewmembers were worked very hard and constantly rendered uncomfortable. Morale suffered, which would contribute to Bode's future disasters.

From the first day aboard the *Chicago*, Bode rarely associated with his subordinates. All discussions with his officers were official, even to his executive officer, Commander Acres. He chose not to eat meals in the wardroom, but had mess men deliver food to his cabin where he ate alone.

During the first months of WWII, the entire US Navy recoiled in great confusion and turmoil. In just one surprise attack, the Imperial Japanese Navy had, as their Fleet commander, Admiral Isoruko Yamamoto had hoped, knocked out the main battle fleet in the Pacific, completely destroying two battleships and knocking five others out of the war for several months. Ninety ships were damaged or destroyed.

Not only did Yamamoto's plan eliminate a great portion of the naval power of the United States, but also he forced the American Navy to discard all of its carefully drawn-out battle plans based on the battleship's power. The naval staff had to frantically draw up new strategies, now based around aircraft carriers, of which the navy had too few. Ironically, the Japanese attack firmly ended a decades-old American argument about which was the most important; battleships or aircraft carriers? As the war progressed, it became hard for even the Japanese to find much use for their battleships, upon which

both navies had based all their previous plans. The United State's battleships, even when repaired and modernized, were found to be outdated and too slow for use against the Japanese perimeter combat airfields. The *Oklahoma* at top speed could make only about 17 knots while the fleet carriers cruised to at least 30 knots to launch aircraft. All of the old battleships used fuel oil excessively and were woefully inefficient, uncomfortable, under armed and as proven by Pearl Harbor, poorly armored. Many, the *Oklahoma* especially, had been scheduled for retirement and decommissioning by mid 1942.

When taking command, Captain Bode walked up the *Chicago's* ramp, stopped, faced the stern saluted the colors, then faced ahead and returned the salute of the OOD (Officer of the Day). He stepped forward under the awning while the shrill notes of the bos'n's whistle piped him aboard. After reading his orders out loud to the assembled crew, he officially took command of the heavy cruiser. This was exactly what Bode wanted, --a fast ship going in harm's way in a great naval war. Thirteen days later the ship joined the USS *Yorktown* carrier group and became a part of TF 11. Nerves were tight. All the sailors knew they were headed for immediate action in the South Pacific. Sailing to various islands and atolls in the Hawaiian chain, TF hit various Japanese isolated bases and was on its way to rescue Wake Island when on January 23, reports came that the task force's oiler, the USS *Neches* had been sunk 135 miles west of Oahu. Losing their extra fuel ended the mission to recover the marines captured on Wake Island the month before. By the end of January, Admiral King in Washington D.C. ordered Admiral Nimitz to be prepared to detach two new destroyers and a heavy cruiser (*Chicago*) for duty with ANZAC in the protection of Australia and New Zealand.

On February 2, *Chicago* left Pearl Harbor and headed for rendezvous with the *Lexington* carrier group, which then boasted four heavy cruisers and nine destroyers under Vice Admiral Brown. Task Force 11 was one of three carrier based strike forces organized out of Pearl Harbor for continuous duty. The other two were Admiral Bill Halsey's TF 8 built around the carrier USS *Enterprise*, CL Chester another CL and four destroyers. On February 1, TF 8 struck targets in the northern islands of the Marshall Island group: Kwajalein, Wotje, and Taroa. Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher's TF 17 with the carrier USS *Yorktown* attacked Jaluit and Mille in the southern Marshalls and struck Makin Island in the Gilbert group. TF 11 and *Chicago* stayed behind temporarily in the Hawaiian area to protect the fleet base. By March, Naval Intelligence discovered the Japanese were interested in capturing a previously barely known sea town called Port Moresby, New Guinea.

Admiral Brown followed Nimitz's order and detached the *Chicago* and two destroyers the *Jarvis* and the *Patterson* from TF 11 and let them join Allied Fleet called ANZAC (Australia, New Zealand, Army Corps).

On 2 February 1942, *Chicago* and the two DDs departed Pearl Harbor for Suva Bay where she joined the newly formed ANZAC Squadron, later re-designated Task Force 44. During March and April, the cruiser operated off the Louisiade Archipelago, covering surface attacks on Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea. Maneuvering to stay in position to intercept enemy surface units, which might attack Port Moresby, *Chicago* provided cover for the arrival of American troops who landed on New Caledonia.¹

On February 16, Admiral Brown radioed his superiors that he intended to attack Rabaul on February 21 with TF-11 supported by B-17s out of Australia. Japanese patrol planes spotted TF 11 almost immediately. The IJN commander at Rabaul received the report and immediately ordered his entire air force of 17 bombers to attack the *Lexington*.

Warned by radar, *Lexington's* F4F fighters shot down 13 of the 17 bombers and forced two others to ditch in the sea. No damage was sustained to the ships but two navy fighters were shot down. Brown then turned TF 11 around and headed away from Rabaul fearing more attacks. Brown did not realize

that his stubby little fighters had completely wiped out the Japanese strike bomber fleet threat in Rabaul, at least for the moment.

On 1 May, *Chicago* was ordered from the port at Nouméa to join Commander, Southwest Pacific, and on 4 May, the ship supported Yorktown in her strike against the Japanese garrison on Tulagi, Solomon Islands. The cruiser helped protect the carrier during the Battle of the Coral Sea. On 7 May, *Chicago* proceeded, with the Support Group, to intercept and attack the Japanese Port Moresby invasion group. The following day, the group underwent several Japanese air attacks, during which *Chicago* suffered several casualties from strafing, but drove off the planes and proceeded ahead until it was clear that the Japanese force had been turned back. Toward the end of the month the fleet headed for the safe port of Sydney Harbor, Australia.

On May 31 the *Chicago* was anchored in Sydney Harbor seemingly safe from the Japanese onslaught. That night, although no leave was permitted for the officers and crew, Captain Bode dined ashore with the Australian senior admiral, Admiral Gerald Muirhead-Gould.

At 2252 hours (8:52 pm), a searchlight operator on the *Chicago*, while making routine sweeps around the ship, detected what he thought was a submarine conning tower several hundred yards beyond the ship's bow. Calling his contact to the officers on the bridge, the whole ship quickly came awake with the loud clanging and intercom calling to "Battle Stations." From below decks, gunners ran to man their three eight inch gun turrets forward and aft, and all over the ship, sailors manned smaller guns. Observing an enemy submarine headed toward the ship from his station, the gunnery officer ordered "A" turret to power-up and commence firing on the sub, which was now less than 300 yards off the starboard bow. The small submarine was highlighted by the searchlight, and was observed to be a mini-sub similar to the one found on an Oahu beach after the attack on Pearl Harbor. "A" turret aimed as low as it could and fired one volley of three rounds at the sub. However, the sub was so close to the cruiser the big shells passed harmlessly over the top of the sub's conning tower. These shells skipped off the calm water and flew into a residential district in the city where they exploded and caused casualties. The Executive Officer, who was in charge of the ship while Captain Bode was ashore, ordered all boilers lit and sent word to the accompanying DD Vixen to start a search for the submarine.

The XO sent Captain Bode an urgent message informing him of the action. By 2330 hours, Captain Bode, who had been drinking with the admiral when he got the message, managed to arrive back on the bridge of the *Chicago* a bit disheveled. He cursed the officers as he climbed up the gangway. Both he and the admiral were later described as being "drunk" by their various crews when they returned to their respective commands.

Captain Bode was livid on the bridge of the *Chicago*. He had not gotten along with his officers since taking command. His first instinct when he received the report of the cruiser's 8-inch guns firing into the harbor and causing unintended harm to Australian civilians was that his officers had lost their minds and were at least trying to sabotage his relationship with the Aussies. He even accused his XO of being drunk. Storming the bridge, he yelled obscenities at several of his staff. After a few moments, Bode calmed down and soon apologized when his XO, Commander Smith was able to point out the submarine was still visible in the harbor.

An hour after Bode returned to his ship, the M-24 midget submarine returned, surfaced and fired both its Type 93, 21 centimeter, "Long Lance" torpedoes directly at the *Chicago*. Both missed, apparently passing below the ship without harm. One continued across the harbor went under several ships and blew up against a concrete dock. Unfortunately, the Australian Navy barracks ship, Kittabul, a converted

ferry was tied to the dock and the explosion broke the ship's back. It sank rapidly, killing 39 and injuring 18. HMAS Kittabul is today the name of the headquarters of the Australian Navy at Sydney in honor of those who died that night. The other torpedo was later discovered lying on the beach on Garden Island, several miles away.

The next morning, June 1, the Japanese landed an unopposed force at Tulagi, the Australian regional capitol of the Solomon Islands and the *Chicago* hurriedly left Sydney Harbor with several other heavy cruisers headed for some remote area in the Solomon Islands where the Japanese had landed and were building a new landing strip. The island was called Guadalcanal.

By August 8, after several skirmishes and sweeps of the surrounding area, Royal Naval Admiral Victor Alexander Charles Crutchley commanded a mixed force of Australian and American ships. He had six 8-inch heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, fifteen destroyers and five minesweeping destroyers. Crutchley divided this Guadalcanal naval protection force into three parts, Southern; Northern and Slot forces.

Crutchley's flagship and the leader of the Southern Force was a heavy cruiser, HMAS *Australia*; commanded by Captain H. B. Farncomb RAN. *Australia* and six destroyers of Southern Force directly protected the freighters off-loading supplies to the First Marine Division which had landed unopposed on the beach the morning of August 7.

The Northern Force included heavy cruiser and sister to *Australia*, HMAS *Canberra*, Captain F. E. Getting, RAN. The second in command to Crutchley by seniority, was Captain Bode. Attached to escort *Chicago*, were two destroyers, USS *Patterson* and USS *Bagley* under the respective command of Cdr. Frank R. Walker and LtCdr George A. Sinclair. Ahead in the northwestern side of the slot, about 30,000 yards north of the Southern Force were the picket destroyers USS *Blue* Commanded by Cdr. Harold M. Williams to the west and the USS *Ralph M. Talbot* commanded by Joseph W. Callahan to the east. Both were radar equipped, their only limitation being training and familiarity with the new sets. The *Australia* had radar but no own trained how to operate the set. South and East of Savo Island were a box formation of four heavy cruisers of the Northern Force: USS *Vincennes*, USS *Astoria*, USS *Quincy* and the Australian *Canberra*.

The four heavy cruisers were concentrated west of Savo Island protecting the Marines ashore and their supply ships still unloading. With two destroyers, the big ships patrolled to the east side of Savo Island, while the destroyers DD 387 USS *Blue* and DD 390 *Ralph M. Talbot* guarded the west side of the island as radar picket ships. The cruisers sailed north and south executing in-place turns at the end of their patrol tracks. The two destroyers ran in opposition east and west across the sound a bit north of Savo, both turning at the same time at the end of their tracks. The allied fleet was not well trained for night fighting and even though it had radar, the operators were new and the senior officers, at least, were ignorant of its capabilities. All of the men were exhausted. The ships had been at battle stations for nearly two full days and nights. This critical night the entire fleet went to half on watch to rest the crew.

From Rabaul, Admiral Mikawa led a strike force of seven cruisers and one destroyer into the slot headed for the east side of Savo Island. Mikawa was well experienced and very capable. He had been in charge of the battleship screen for the carriers that attacked Pearl Harbor. His crews were so well trained for night fighting that they were able to attack the Allied force at high speed in the complete darkness. At 25 knots, they were not seen by either picket destroyer or any of the cruisers and they launched 20 Long Lance torpedoes from several miles away in the direction of the Allied force. Just before Mikawa opened fire on the ANZAC force, several moments after his ships had launched torpedoes, did the two picket destroyers realize the enemy had passed them. The captain of the USS *Patterson* a destroyer with the

cruisers called out on TBS (Talk between Ships): "STRANGE SHIPS ENTERING HARBOR." The *Chicago* never heard the warning, having no TBS. For the Japanese the resulting battle was textbook and classic, for the Americans, British and Australians, it was a bloody disaster.

For fifteen minutes, the Japanese cruisers pounded the ANZAC force with deadly effect, smashing and blowing to pieces the four heavy cruisers, hitting with the very first salvo and following hundreds of high energy shells. Every one of the Northern Force cruisers was struck hard and each took mortal wounds from the continual firing of heavy cannon shells. All four of the big ships were quickly immobilized and eventually sunk.

Bode as the senior officer in the cruiser formation, was technically in charge of all the Allied combatants. Asleep behind the bridge, Captain Bode woke up to a lookout's call of "torpedo tracks to Starboard." On the bridge, Bode rubbed sleep from his eyes as more calls came in from the lookouts. Peering out to Port, he saw the wakes of torpedoes coming in from the left and turned hard into the wakes to try to avoid being hit. One torpedo struck the *Chicago* on the bow, blowing spray and debris over the bridge. A hundred feet blown from the bow but the crew managed to save the ship. The fact that Bode kept his ship in the rear of the battle formation then fled west at high speed at the beginning of the fight did not please his superiors. Bode always claimed that he was never informed of Crutchley's retirement away from Savo Island to the landing area. In this, Bode was himself, unlucky. Ironically, both *Oklahoma* and *Chicago* actually survived the horrific attacks under Bode just to be sunk later.¹

By the time the damaged *Chicago* reached Numea, New Caledonia, on August 31, there were orders waiting for Captain Bode to turn over the ship to Captain Ralph O. Davis, his replacement and report to Naval Air Station in San Francisco, California. Bode caught a ride on an oiler headed east and reported to HQ by the end of September. At headquarters, he was handed a set of orders that puzzled him. He thought of himself as a combat sailor and his orders seemed to be to a shore station. He had to get a copy of Bupers directory to find out where the 15th Naval District was located. His heart sank. It was Panama.

In the Canal Zone, Panama, Bode reported to the commanding officer and confirmed that he had been tasked to take over the 15th Naval District, the naval defense structure of the US zone surrounding the Panama Canal. For Bode, it was quite a letdown. For the first time since Pearl Harbor and that awful night below Savo Island, a flood of doubts overwhelmed him. Did Nimitz and the senior naval commanders hold him responsible for the disaster?

There are several naval sayings that came to his mind. "One aw shit wipes out a thousand atta-boys." Another that fits is "Victories have many fathers, but defeat is an orphan." Bode secretly had doubted his abilities for a long time. He was overweight and had to rigorously argue down his last doctor who after his physical, tried to label him obese. He knew that time had passed him by. Bode, like most of his peers from the academy, did not understand even the concept of radar, for example. The new communications suites lately introduced, seemed overwhelmingly difficult and complex. The new short-range TBS (talk between ships) and wireless voice comm systems worried him. He missed the old system of visual signals and flags. He had learned those well as an ensign. Now he had served 32 years in the navy and felt that he was seemingly nowhere, beached, --in purgatory. He had to find out where he stood with the navy. He picked up the phone and began dialing. After a time, a voice on the other end paused for a moment and said.

"Hello Ping, this is Admiral Hepburn, what can I do for you?"

Bode relaxed a bit, reassured at the use of his Academy nickname.

"Admiral, please explain to me what you wrote about my actions at Savo Island in the report to Admiral Nimitz and King."

Admiral Hepburn. "Your actions at Savo Island were examined in detail from interviews with members of your crew, including your executive officer, and your actions were found to be unhelpful in the fight against the Japanese."

Hepburn. "We understand that communications were not perfect that night and the admiral above you in command did not properly warn you of his absence, but headquarters feel that you should have taken the initiative to seek out the command and prepare the cruisers better for defense."

Hepburn. "I am sorry Ping, but you have been censored and you should not expect another sea command."

Bode listened with sinking heart. He knew his career was over as a fighting sailor.

On April 19, 1943 Bode arose and ate breakfast as usual. Taking his navy issued S&W .38, he picked up the newspaper and retired to the toilet. His servants heard a gunshot and found the man slumped naked on the toilet, his head bleeding from a gunshot wound. He botched the attempt and it took him a day to die.

While Bode was preoccupied with self-destruction, the 429 sailors who died on the *Oklahoma* were forced wait 80 years for a memorial because there was no one to lead the effort. This author suggests that Captain Bode, if he had not been so self-centered, could have used his considerable talents to take care of his heroic *Oklahoma* men better than the effort he used to selfishly kill himself. We must also remember his loyal wife Helen, who must have been dispirited at the news of her husband's suicide. At perhaps her greatest need, he abandoned her.

Of Special Note

The Western History Collection of the University of Oklahoma has begun a crowdsourcing transcription project to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the US Civil War. The goal of the Transcribing the Past: Civil War Manuscripts project is to make Civil War documents more accessible, by making the documents easier to find and read online. Anyone aged 18 and older is welcome to participate, and online registration is required.

The diary and letters featured on Transcribing the Past: Civil War Manuscripts are held by the Western History Collections on the University of Oklahoma's Norman campus. As a special collection within the University of Oklahoma Libraries system, the Western History Collections' purpose is to enhance the University Libraries general collection of the history of the American West; to support the research and teaching programs of the University of Oklahoma; and to provide opportunities for research through the acquisition, preservation, and access of materials relating to the development of the Trans-Mississippi West and Native American cultures.

If you are interested in helping on this project, go to: <https://transcribe.ou.edu/> . You will need to create an account, and once that is set you can begin transcribing. Your transcriptions will make these important Civil War manuscripts more accessible to researchers everywhere.



