

FACES IN THE FLAMES:
A GHOST STORY

Faces In The Flames: A Ghost Story

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FACES IN THE FLAMES: A GHOST STORY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my late father, Raymond Fulleman. He served aboard two ships during WWII, the U.S.S. *Mobile* (CL-63) and the U.S.S. *Mississinewa* (AO-59). It was what took place during his time aboard the *Mississinewa* that prompted me to write this book. My dad has been, and always will be, a hero to me. From his going to sea in the Navy, never expecting to come back alive, to his brave actions when his ship was torpedoed and sinking, to his everyday actions of raising a family, he was the best role model I could have had.

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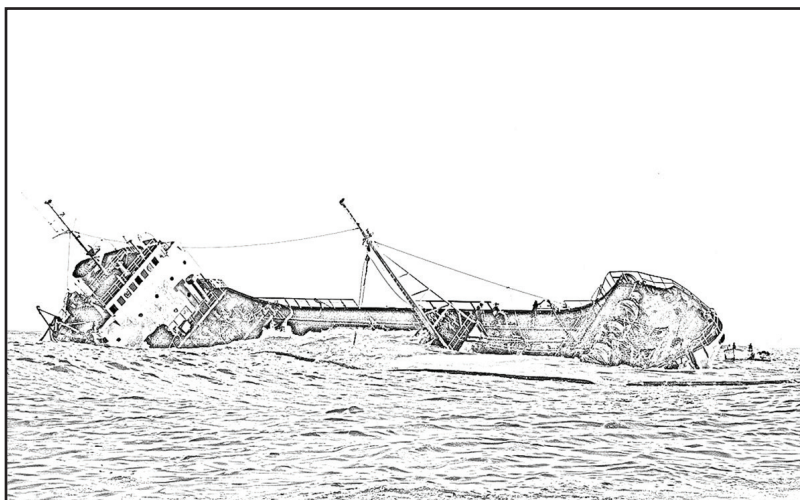
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Location of Ulithi Atoll in the Pacific Ocean

THE GHOST STORY



NOVEMBER 1944 - THE ATTACK

Chapter 1

“**W**hat the ...?” Cameron Lund said as he fell. Before he could finish, he landed on the gray steel deck of the ship. It happened so fast he didn’t have time to stop his fall. He had been sleeping in his bunk. His fall woke him up. *Who was the wise guy*, he wondered? Looking around, he saw other shipmates on the deck too.

Lund scrambled to his feet. “What gives?” he yelled to nearby sailors.

“I think the ship’s been hit,” was the first reply. “Maybe an accident up forward,” one guy said.

“Maybe . . .,” but that thought was cut off. A second huge blast went off. The whole ship lifted up and then dropped down. At

the same time, it rocked left and right. The power to move the 23,000-ton ship like that scared Lund. He grabbed the edge of his bunk to steady himself. Through an open hatch Lund could see the sky filled with flames. He looked at the hatch that led to the fire room. The fire room was where he worked aboard the ship. The boilers that powered the ship were there.

Lund turned to his friend, Bowers, who was just getting up. "Bowers . . . got to get to our battle stations. This is big!"

Bowers started forward. Lund only saw the back of his friend as Lund jumped through the fire room doorway. That was the last time he ever saw Bowers.

Outside, hot oil rained down. The sounds of the blasts echoed off the steel walls of the fire room.

Sailors were in the fire room when Lund got there. Reed and Duffy were at their work stations. Lund went straight to his work station. He controlled the water going to the boilers. Too much water would flood a boiler. Too little water and the boiler would overheat and break down.

The fire room chief, Smitty, got there just after Lund. Smitty took charge of the men. As they worked, more blasts outside increased their worries. Smitty sent Duffy topside to see what was going on with the ship. Almost right away, the blasts increased. The men were there for about 15 minutes. Lund prayed all the more with each blast he heard.

As Lund worked near the hatch, the ship's captain stopped just outside. The captain yelled in to Lund, "Get off the ship. It's going down."

Lund didn't have to be told twice. It had been the longest 15 minutes of his life. He yelled down to the men at the boilers,

“The Captain said to let it go. She’s going down!” The men quickly shut down all the boilers, except one. That one would supply some power to the ship if needed.

“Quick, out the starboard hatch!” Smitty ordered. But when they opened the hatch on the right side of the ship, thick black smoke poured in. The men could barely breathe. They slammed the hatch shut. Then, the men ran to the port side hatch. This left side hatch looked better. Only a small amount of smoke hovered in the hallway.

The three men started towards the back of the ship. With the crazy things going on, the Chief forgot Duffy. He stopped short. “Wait, where’s Duffy?” Smitty asked the two men. Smitty wasn’t sure if Duffy ever came back to the fire room. “Lund, go back and make sure Duffy got out of the fire room.” Smitty and Reed started aft.

Lund stuck his head in the fire room hatch and yelled for Duffy. Lund didn’t know Duffy was told to go topside. Lund could only see thick black smoke in the fire room from the hatchway. Lund knew it was no use. Duffy couldn’t still be alive if he was down in the fire room.

That thick smoke now made it hard to see in the hallway. From somewhere, Lund heard a guy yell, “You can’t go back aft. Fire is setting off the ammo there!”

Lund turned and said to himself, “Dear God, my mom’s going to get word I’m dead.” Just as he said this, a man ran through the smoke at the forward end of the hallway. Lund just barely saw him. *If that guy can make it out that way, maybe I can too.* So, Lund ran through the smoke. He followed the other man. He found his way to the lowest deck on the ship. He could see flames around the whole ship. Some of those flames were over

200 feet high. There was just one slim wedge of water free of flames. He lowered himself over the side and swam out. Just beyond the edge of the flames were boats from nearby ships. One of the boats pulled Lund aboard.

From the small rescue boat, Lund could see men still on the sinking ship. Some men jumped into the burning water. He could see some trying to swim under the flames. He said a prayer for them as he helped pull men into the small boat. Still, some died there in the boat. He thought of the men dying inside the ship . . . alone. Their families would never know how they died.

Later that day, all the survivors got to a nearby ship. Lund found Reed. They looked for Chief Smitty and Duffy, but no one had seen them. They and his friend Bowers were never found. It was the saddest day of young Cameron Lund's life.

On the ship, officers told the men more of what happened. It was then that Lund heard 63 men had died. It was an enemy suicide sub that hit them.

ADVENTURE AND DANGER

COME AGAIN

Chapter 2

Many Years Later
The exact spot where the ship was sunk wasn't known for over 56 years.

After Bill Lund heard his father's WWII ship had been found, he started getting ready to visit that ship. Bill's son, Cam, named after the boy's grandpa, was now 15 years old. He too, was ready for the quest of getting to the ship. For the prior year, the two had taken special SCUBA diving lessons. The lessons were special because the ship was sitting on the ocean bottom at a depth of 130 feet. That's deep diving filled with danger. But after the ship had been sunk in WWII that's where it settled.

The old sailor had been loved by Bill and his grandson, Cam. Young Cam loved hearing his grandpa's war stories. Now, young Cam was living a dream he had since his grandpa died some 5 years ago.

The trip took a lot of planning. Bill had to get an okay from the chief of the islands who owned the waters where the ship

rested. Deep water diving had to be learned and practiced. The place where the ship sank, Ulithi Atoll, was so far away. It took over 25 hours of just flight time on five airplanes to get there. The two Lunds found themselves on smaller planes for each leg of the trip. The last leg was on a 6-person, twin engine airplane. The plane barely held all the SCUBA gear that they had to bring with them.

As the plane neared the atoll, the pilot circled around. He wanted Cam and his dad to see where they would be. The group of islands that made up the atoll were laid out in the shape of a circle. "Remember, Cam, all those islands are really the tips of one old volcano. The sea covers most of it. The water in the center is shallow compared to the sea outside the atoll," Bill Lund told his son. "That's why the Navy could have so many ships anchored there in WWII."

"Just think, at one time there was a war going on down there and Grandpa was in it," Cam said. His face was pushed up against the window, taking it all in. It felt like the start to a quest when the plane landed. The plane taxied to the one small building next to the airport. Cam and his dad couldn't get over how green and lush it all looked.