Monday Maritime Matters

Description

Required reading: Airborne mine sweeping history by Eagle1 and Maritme Monday 103 by Fred Fry. BT

Born May 14th, 1905, he was destined to serve his Maker and our nation many years later.


default watermark

LCDR Joseph T. Oâ€™Callahan, USNR (ChC) in 1945

Shortly after completing high school, Joseph entered the Society of Jesus shortly thereafter, to begin a 13 year path to ordination as a priest in 1934. Earning his Bachelorâ€™s and masterâ€™s degrees along the way, he specialized in mathematics and science, as well as religious studies. In August, 1940, he entered the Naval Reserve as a LT(jg) in the Chaplainâ€™s Corps.Father Oâ€™Callahanâ€™s assignments are listed at CatholicMil.org:

> At the outbreak of World War II, Fr. OÃ¢â‚¬â„¢Callahan entered the chaplain corps and began a ministry focused on the sailors destined to serve in the Pacific. He was assigned to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, from 1940-42, then served at sea aboard the U.S.S. Ranger from 1942-44, and returned to shore duty at Pearl Harbor into early 1945. His final assignment of the war was to the carrier U.S.S. Franklin, which was given orders taking it close to enemy territory.



Arriving aboard USS FRANKLIN (CV-13) seventeen days before March 19, 1945, LCDR Oâ€™Callahan was assigned duties as the Shipâ€™s Chaplain. On the 19th, while sailing close to the Japanese coastline, a lone Japanese dive bomber penetrated the defensive screen of the allied forces, and dropped a single bomb on the aft of the FRANKLINâ€™s flight deck.SteelJaw Scribe detailed the struggle for the very life of the ship that resulted in his recent post. SJS gives a brief description of a bomb, slicing several decks down, wrecking combat loaded planes on the flight deck and ripping open AVGAS fuel lines below, which began an inferno that killed many of the crew, and threatened to sink the ship. The training and response of the surviving crewmen, working alone, in small and large groups, ended up saving the ship, with essentially no command level direction due to the battle damage.

This past week, I found the Spring 2008 issue of MHQ has an article by Joseph Springer about the attack on the USS FRANKLIN, too, but that is but an extracted piece from a newly published book: â€œInferno: The Epic Life and Death Struggle to Save USS FRANKLIN in WWIIâ€• by Springer.



Chaplin Oâ€™Callahan was everywhere. Besides performing his duties to the dying and wounded, he helped jettison munitions into the sea, and made several trips below decks to lead his shipmates to safety. He organized firefighting teams to water down ammo magazines and was credited with saving 700 men. The Commanding Officer of the FRANKLIN said of him: â€œhe is the bravest man I have ever seen.â€• As a result of his heroic efforts, LCDR Oâ€™Callahan was awarded the Medal of Honor. Citation:

> For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Chaplain on board the U.S.S. Franklin when that vessel was fiercely attacked by enemy Japanese aircraft during offensive operations near Kobe, Japan, on 19 March 1945. A valiant and forceful leader, calmly braving the perilous barriers of flame and twisted metal to aid his men and his ship, Lieutenant Commander Oâ€™Callahan groped his way through smoke-filled corridors to the open flight deck and into the midst of violently exploding bombs, shells, rockets and other armament. With the ship rocked by incessant explosions, with debris and fragments raining down and fires raging in ever increasing fury, he ministered to the wounded and dying, comforting and encouraging men of all faiths; he organized and led fire-fighting crews into the blazing inferno on the flight deck; he directed the jettisoning of live ammunition and the flooding of the magazine; he manned a hose to cool hot, armed bombs rolling dangerously on the listing deck, continuing his efforts despite searing, suffocating smoke which forced men to fall back gasping and imperiled others who replaced them. Serving with courage, fortitude and deep spiritual strength, Lieutenant Commander Oâ€™Callahan inspired the gallant officers and men of the Franklin to fight

heroically and with profound faith in the face of almost certain death and to return their stricken ship to port.

Retiring from the Naval reserve as a Captain in 1953, he passed away March 18th, 1964.



draft watermark

The Navy honored the life of Father Oâ€™Callahan with the GARCIA Class frigate USS Oâ€™CALLAHAN (DE-1051) (later FF-1051), commissioned July 13th, 1968. Assigned to the Pacific Fleet, she was stationed in San Diego, CA. In 1968, she was decommissioned from service in the US Navy, then leased to the Pakistani Navy as *Aslat (F-265). Eventually, she was broken up for scrap in Hong Kong.*

Category

1. Navy

Date Created
March 24, 2008
Author
admin