

Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler

By Enrico Trotta

Heroic and brave Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler died on January 7, 1945 at Lingayen Gulf, Philippines aboard flagship USS Louisville (CA-28).

It was January 5, 1945, at Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, when I was a 20-year-old Seaman First Class at my 20 mm gun station on the port side of the ship below the Number 2 Main Battery 8 inch 55 caliber guns when the Japanese suicide planes came to attack. The flagship USS Louisville (CA-28) heavy cruiser with Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler in command was hit by a kamikaze which killed one man, injured 17 men, and completely knocked out of commission Number 2 Main Battery 8 inch gun turret. The USS Louisville held her position in formation to continue her mission of bombardment. The escort carrier USS Ommaney Bay (CVE-79) was also hit by the kamikazes and was sunk. The kamikazes were everywhere, difficult to shoot down, and loaded with gas and bombs.

On January 6th, about 20 Japanese suicide planes made an attack on the fleet. We were able to shoot down five or more planes, but one kamikaze slipped through our ship's massive AA gun fire and the Louisville was hit at the starboard side signal bridge. A loud explosion blast and massive ball of fire shot over the bridge area where Admiral Chandler was commanding, which also killed 36 men and injured 120 men or more. No one on the port side of the ship was injured. I looked up at Number 2 Main Battery Turret and saw Admiral Chandler with a water hose in his hands aiding crew members trying to put out the massive gasoline fireball and black smoke which went higher than the Louisville's 125 foot tall tripod superstructure. It seemed to take forever to put out the flames while all the gun crews were watching for more suicide plane attacks. Admiral Chandler was later helped to sick bay and I was told he waited his turn for medical treatment Admiral Chandler sadly and with great loss died the next morning on January 7, 1945.

Years later, at one of our Louisville reunions I asked our ship's doctor who was Dr. Winston Johnson, what was the fatal cause of death of Admiral Chandler? Dr. Johnson said he asked Admiral Chandler what he was in sick bay for because he showed no signs of an injury. When Admiral Chandler took off his shirt Dr. Johnson found that he inhaled the flames which severely burned his lungs.

I will always remember and can still see the heroic and brave Rear Admiral Chandler on deck helping to put out the fire to save his ship and lives with other heroic and brave crew members of the Louisville. The Louisville headed to Mare Island Navy Yard for major repairs to make her battle ready to return to the Pacific campaign.

To this day, I can say I was a part of history and witnessed some of the worst tragedies serving on the Louisville. I couldn't have served my country with a greater crew and a heroic and brave Admiral like Rear Admiral Theodore E. Chandler.

I know they will be remembered. Well Done.

By: Enrico Trotta S1c

USS Louisville CA 28

Served December 14, 1943 to March 7, 1946