



# OBON SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

February 2025

USS Yorktown

*The Search for Missing Crewmen*

*Meredith Kablick*, Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Patriot's Point Museum, introduced her colleague, *Cindy Lee* of the USS YORKTOWN Association, to OBON SOCIETY. Meredith thought that we might assist them in confirming the identity of two missing American servicemen from WWII.

Cindy Lee explained that back on July 28th, 1945, Pilot Perry L. Mitchell and Louis L. Fenton launched their SB2C "*Helldiver*" from the USS Yorktown, but never returned.



USS Yorktown, CV 10

On that same day a plane crashed during a bombing mission over the Japanese city of Kure. The bodies of two American passengers were removed from plane wreckage and buried by Japanese citizens who lived near the crash-site. After WWII the American Graves Registration personnel were informed of these graves. These remains were exhumed, but positive identification could not be confirmed.

The question remains of whether the two bodies buried by the local Japanese were in fact Mitchell and Fenton. Apparently, the only way to confirm this is to find a remnant of the plane wreckage and identify it as coming from a *Helldiver*.

Cindy Lee asked if OBON SOCIETY could mobilize their connections in Japan to help locate the front wheel strut that was last seen in 1948. If this part from Mitchell's airplane is found and positively identified as coming from a *Helldiver*, Mitchell and Fenton's remains could be returned to their families.

The USS Yorktown Association supplied the following information:

## THE CRASH SITE

### US ARMY GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORTS

- On 27 December 1945, a local civilian took the AGRS Recovery Team to a grave on a hill overlooking Fukae Village on the island of Eta Jima near Kure, Japan.
- Ashes in the urn came from two severely burned bodies in the wreckage of a plane that crashed on July 28. The aircraft was taken to the Japanese Navy 11 Air Depot, but Graves Registration did not follow up on the wreckage.
- On 2 February 1948, a reinvestigation revealed that, although the wreckage was dumped in the sea, a portion of the landing gear was kept at the yard of the former 11 Naval Air Depot in Okimi. AGRS saw the landing gear but did not see a serial number.

The Curtiss *Helldiver* was a large 2-person dive bomber. Aircraft that flew from the Yorktown usually had a white strip painted on the tail.

### SIZE OF AIRCRAFT

Length: 36 feet

Wing Span: 49 feet

Height: 13 feet (with wings extended)



On their final mission, Mitchell and Fenton were assigned the task of sinking any remaining Japanese ships that were moored near the Kure shipyard. It was during this attack that anti-aircraft fire disabled their *Helldiver*, apparently resulting in the crash.

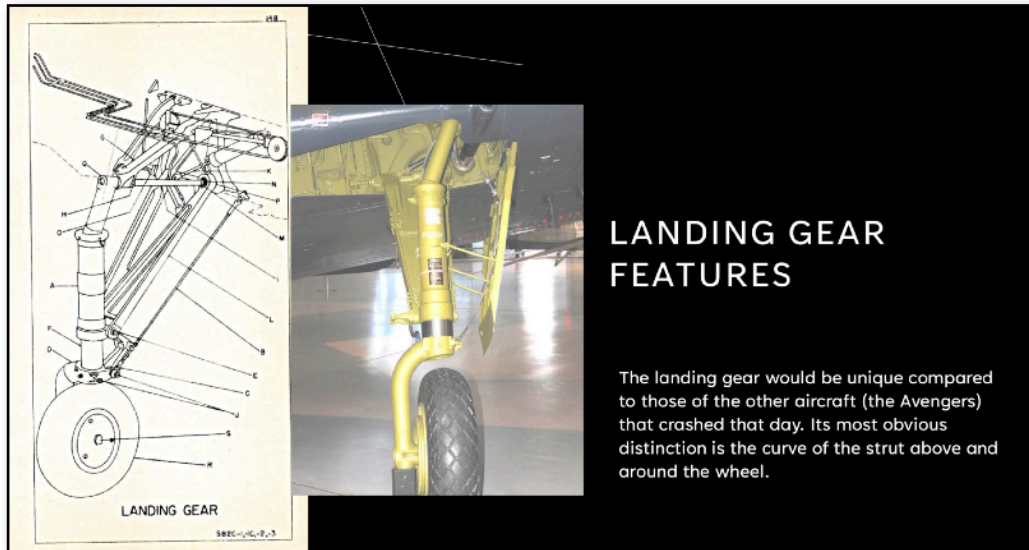


A Japanese ship, moored in front of Kure City, July 28th 1945, under bomb attack by Americans.

The USS Yorktown Association supplied additional details:

Since Perry Mitchell and his radioman Louis Fenton were in the only *Helldiver* that crashed on 28 July 1945, it is reasonable to conclude that identifying the landing gear taken from the wreckage will help in our quest to identify the ashes placed in the urn.

If the landing gear no longer exists, it is our hope that there is a photo or detailed description of it somewhere in the archives of local museums or libraries.



The front wheel strut from the SB2C *Helldiver*.  
This mechanical wheel support measures more than five feet in length.

OBON SOCIETY contacted our colleagues in Japan and explained this request. They introduced us to the staff at the Kure Maritime Museum (Yamato Museum). Because this request was so unusual, it became apparent that we would have to travel to Kure, Japan and personally meet the museum staff. We made the arrangements for this special side-excursion during our upcoming visit to Japan.

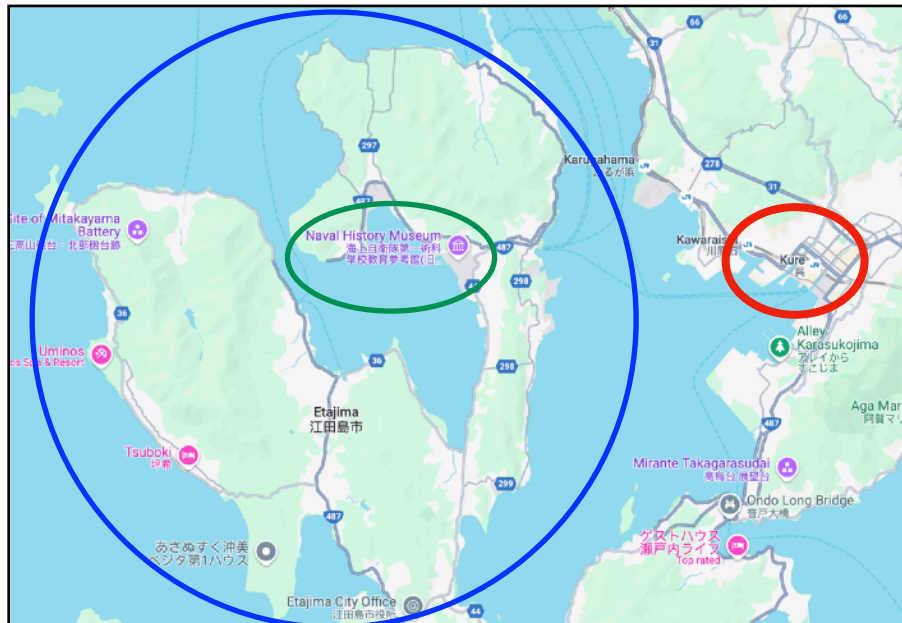


Hiroshima is located 500 miles from Tokyo. Traveling by high-speed train, including stops at various cities, requires less than four hours to reach the main train station. From there a passenger must switch to a smaller, local train system to reach the city of Kure. This leg of the journey requires an additional 45 minutes of travel.





Kure is an ideal location for a great maritime port. The water is deep and the harbor is well protected by a unique offshore island group called “Eta Jima.” This massive island acts like a large, natural breakwater protecting the Kure harbor from typhoons and ocean surge, while also providing many natural deep harbors where ships and boats can safely anchor.

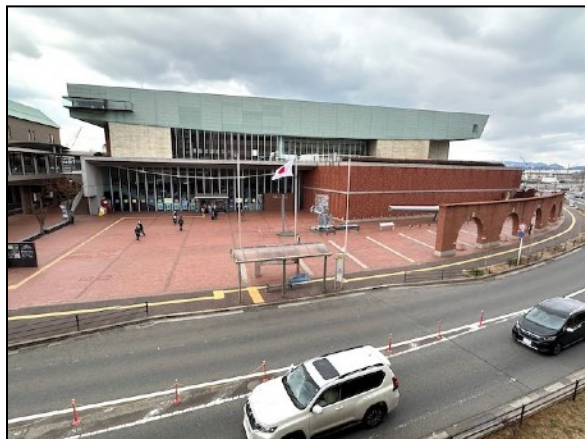


Kure city (Red Circle) is on the mainland of Japan. A short distance away is the large island of Eta Jima (Blue Circle) where the *Helldiver* reportedly crashed. Located on Eta Jima is a modern Japanese Naval Academy. (Green Circle)

The commuter train track between Hiroshima and Kure skirts along the shoreline, which provides an occasional glimpse of the harbor and the off-shore island of Eta Jima.



The Kure Maritime Museum (*below left*) is a lovely, modern building; a submarine museum is located a short distance away.



We had forwarded all the information supplied by the USS Yorktown Association to the director of the Kure Maritime Museum. She fully understood our request and happily welcomed us to the museum to pursue our search.



She confirmed that the Kure Maritime Museum had no record of ever possessing the *Helldiver* wheel strut. To be absolutely positive, she personally searched their warehouse archives, and inquired among her staff. No one in her department had ever seen or heard of such an item existing.

We asked about the existence of any museums in the area but the director replied there are no such public museums. However, she noted the Japanese Naval Training School is located on Eta Jima, which possesses a museum, so she immediately put us in touch with that director. But again, our search resulted in a disappointing reply.

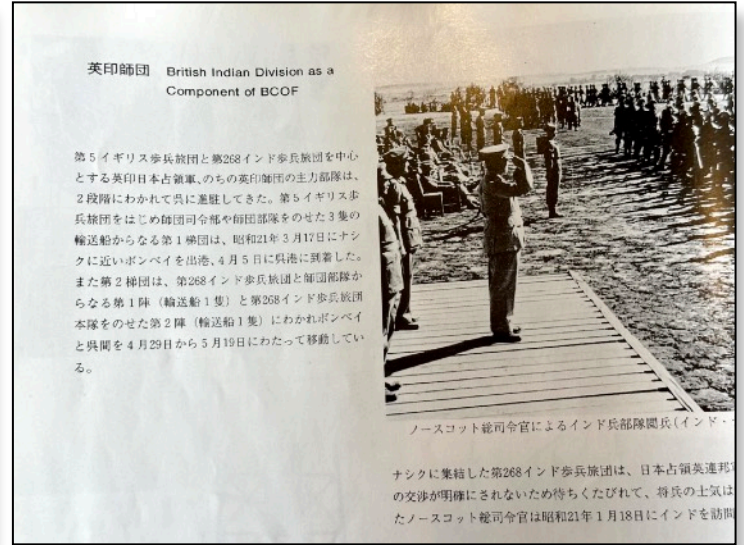


We were reminded that the Americans decommissioned the Imperial Japanese Navy on November 30th, 1945 and since Kure was a major steel factory, armory, ship yard and munitions research and manufacturing area, it was seized immediately after the surrender.



In addition to Americans, the occupation of Kure included Australians and British-Indian soldiers. The American gave the orders; the Japanese workers provided the labor. The bombed out factories were demolished, sunken ships were raised and then cut up for scrap.

The occupation forces almost certainly determined what became of that front wheel strut. The Japanese had no control.

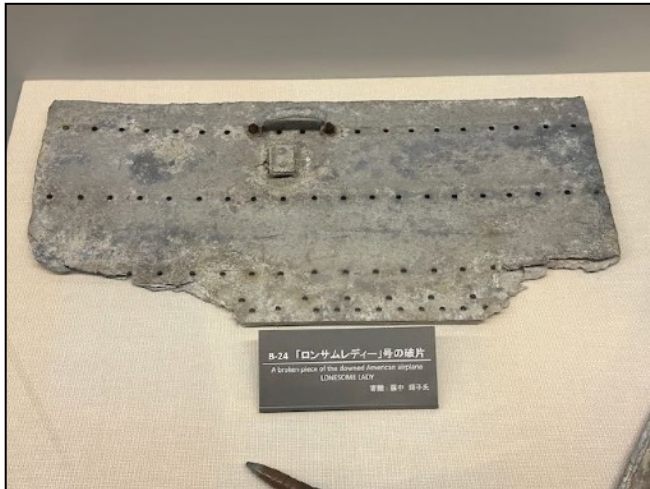


Unexpectedly, the museum director described three metal objects that came from American airplanes which had been collected by locals and later given to the museum.

We were very intrigued by this information and asked if we could examine them. To our surprise, she led us to a display case that was part of the museum exhibit.



The history of these items is unknown. It is possible that in the decades following the war some local farmer discovered these fragments, perhaps concealed from view in a dense thicket, or maybe a fisherman found them submerged in the water.



The museum director explained that the local people had no idea where these objects came from, so they put them to use around their homes. The piece with a handle was used as a lid over a garbage can and the other metal triangle was also put to some domestic use. Later, upon learning about their WWII military origin the items were immediately handed over to the museum.



The 12.7 mm bullet (50 Caliber) was also displayed. Fifty Caliber was a common gun during WWII.

When we saw how respectfully the Japanese presented these shards of downed American airplanes and how meticulously they identified their origin, we felt certain that the *Helldiver's* front wheel strut did not exist. If it did, they would have displayed it prominently in their exhibit.

OBN SOCIETY final report to the USS Yorktown Association

It was our great hope that we could have found that wheel strut. The son of Capt. Mitchell is alive and has waited all his life for his father to return. Nothing would have given us greater joy than to have played a role in that reunion.

In our report to the USS Yorktown Association we regretted the fact we were unsuccessful in our search. We explained that we felt the Japanese were fully cooperative and took this request very seriously. We even inquired whether any Japanese photographs of crashed aircraft existed, but they informed us that photographic materials were unavailable for the public in the latter part of the war.

We deeply regret that we could not deliver positive news confirming the existence of the *Helldiver* flown by Perry L. Mitchell and Louis L. Fenton so their remains could be returned to family.

P.S.....



## OBON SOCIETY has a special ask.....

Since day one, OBON SOCIETY has operated on a very tight budget. For example, when we needed a printer back in 2012 we attended an auction at the local community college and picked up a discarded laser printer for \$5.00.

It has worked fine, but now it has become a drag on our efforts.

### LaserJet 4000 [\[ edit \]](#)

The LaserJet 4000/4050 and their respective variants were the first printers released in the 4000 series. The LaserJet 4000 series printers print **letter paper** at **17 pages per minute**, and can be set to print at 600 dpi or 1200 dpi, although when set to print at true 1200 dpi, the printer runs at reduced speed. These printers may be connected to a computer using either the **serial port**, **parallel port** or **Ethernet** ( for the network capable "N" series ). The LaserJet 4000 series was introduced in November 1997 and was discontinued in May 1999. They are powered by a **NEC VR4300 CPU**<sup>[1]</sup>



A HP LaserJet 4000n printer.

series ). The LaserJet 4000 series was introduced in November 1997 and was discontinued in May 1999. They are powered by a **NEC VR4300 CPU**<sup>[1]</sup>

We exceeded this printer's technology several years ago. Now when we send it a file to print, like one of our newsletters, we often wait between **five and ten minutes** for the pages to appear. Each newsletter takes numerous drafts to make sure the images and text align. It's frustrating waiting for the printer to process each page....and a waste of our time.

We consulted a printer repair technician about installing more memory, but he insisted that a 25 year old printer should be retired. He recommended that we replace it with a modern laser printer and after learning about our system and needs, he highly recommended **Brother**.








Brother HL-L6415 Series  
Brother HL-EX415DW

### Award-winning Enterprise Monochrome Laser Printers

The Brother HL-L6415 Series and HL-EX415DW enterprise monochrome printers received Buyers Lab (BLI) 2025 Pick Awards from Keypoint Intelligence thanks to their flawless reliability, enterprise-level specifications, security features, fast print speed, flexible mobile and cloud options, and excellent image quality.

The HLL 6415DW was the specific printer the technician recommended. It is highly reliable; he claimed he has never been called to repair or adjust this model.

					
	HL-L6415DW	HL-L6415DWT	HL-EX415DW	MFC-L6915DW	MFC-EX915DW
	<a href="#">Learn More</a>	<a href="#">Learn More</a>	<a href="#">Learn More</a>	<a href="#">Learn More</a>	<a href="#">Learn More</a>
Print Technology	Monochrome Laser	Monochrome Laser	Monochrome Laser	Monochrome Laser	Monochrome Laser
Functions	Print	Print	Print	Print / Copy / Scan / Fax	Print / Copy / Scan / Fax
Max. Print Speed <sup>1</sup>	Up to 52ppm	Up to 52ppm	Up to 52ppm	Up to 52ppm	Up to 52ppm
Input Paper Capacity <sup>3</sup> (std. / max. *)	620 sheets / 2,700 sheets	620 sheets / 2,700 sheets	620 sheets / 2,700 sheets	620 sheets / 2,700 sheets	620 sheets / 2,700 sheets

If you care to help OBON SOCIETY, any amount you give will be dedicated towards upgrading the equipment we use constantly in our work.

If you are interested in helping, you can send a check or donate through PayPal on our website.

*Thank you for your support!*  
OBON SOCIETY