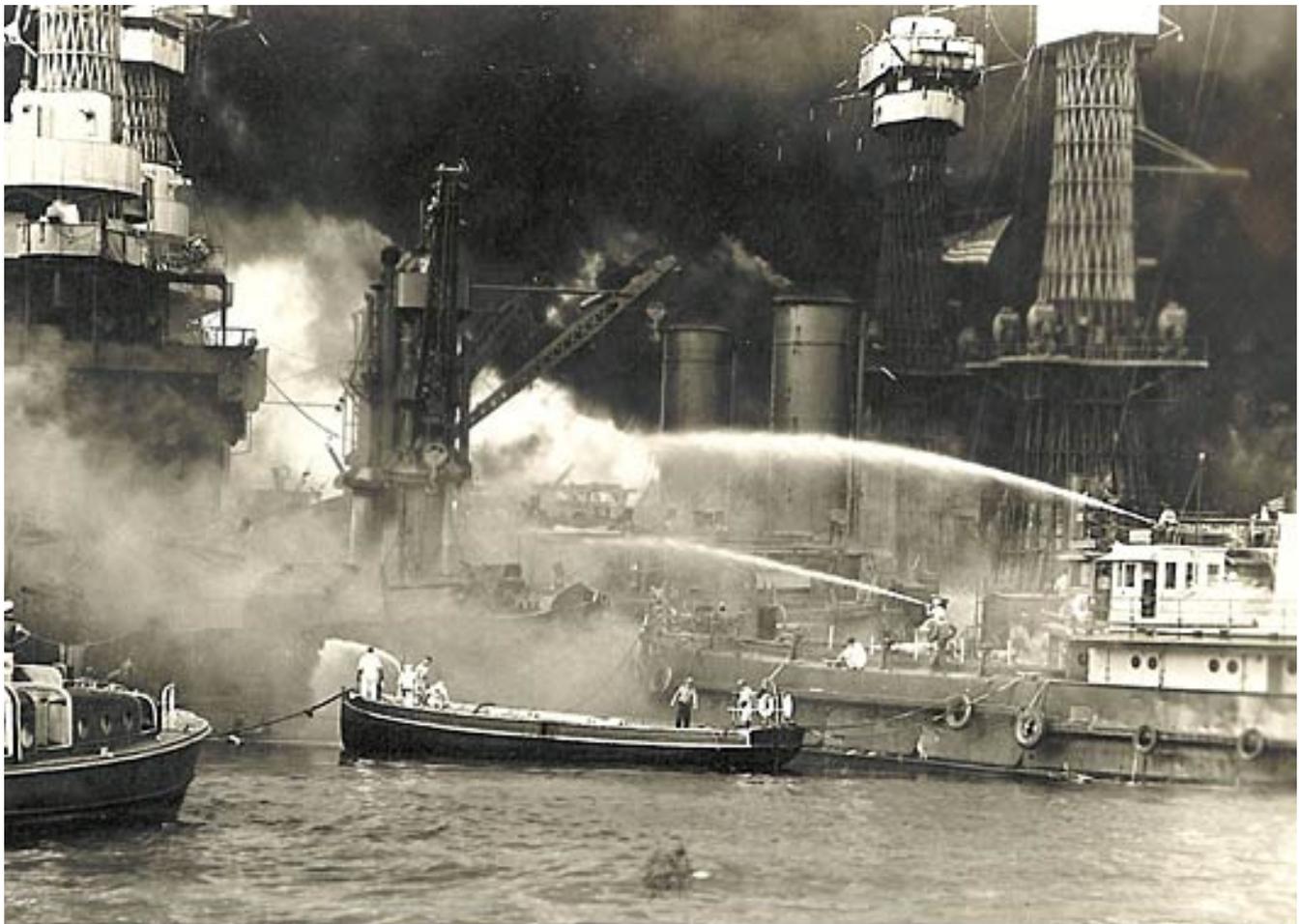




**IN LOVE AND WAR:**  
**A WWII NAVIGATOR ROMANCE**

Celebrating the 65th Anniversary of the End  
of the War in the Pacific



THE USS WEST VIRGINIA

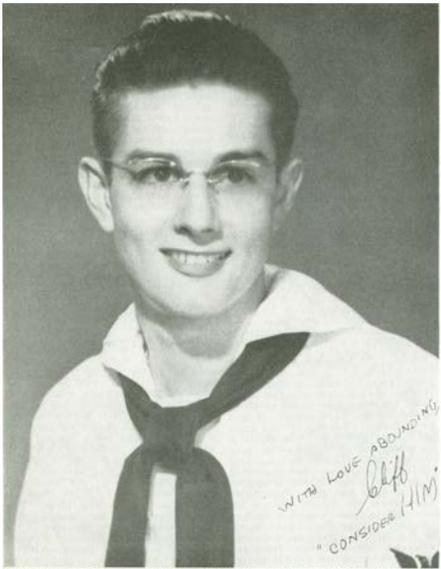
U. S. NAVY PHOTO I-1

## America and the Navigators, December 1941

*Throughout the mid-to-late 1930s, The Navigators were a small group of men and women working primarily in the Los Angeles area. Young sailors who desired to study the Word gathered aboard ships such as the U.S.S. West Virginia to pray, and study Scripture with other Christians. Amidst the economic and social upheaval of the Great Depression American spiritual life was at low tide and many of the Navigator servicemen frequently wrote home about the spiritual opposition they encountered on their ships.*

December 7, 1941, changed everything for The Navigators. During the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navigators lost several young sailors, such as Francis Cole who died with a Bible in his hand. The survivors, including Jim Downing, sailed across the Pacific Ocean and readied themselves for war. The Navigators, who had encountered so much spiritual opposition before the war, found a much-changed atmosphere aboard their ships as men began to contemplate the very real possibility of death. Downing, Cliff Holt, Jack Armstrong, Vic McAnney, and other Navigators preached the gospel of salvation to anyone who would listen. Hundreds of their fellow sailors responded. A quiet network of men discipling each other in the fundamentals of Christianity spread across the Pacific as the war took them to far-flung islands and battles. The sailors who came to Christ during the war would later return to many of these locations as missionaries.





Clifford Holt, Radarman third-class, Navigators' printer and Bible Club leader



## The Power of an Ordinary Life

The Navigators focus on creating laborers who live and work next door to everyone. During the war, ordinary sailors and airmen had tremendous spiritual influence over their comrades. Watching a fellow baker, potato-peeler, gunner, or officer walking the Christian life during wartime provided help and encouragement to fledgling believers and a powerful witness to those who had never heard the gospel. Navigator Bible studies sprang up in the holds of ships, on bases, and across the home front. The following stories are examples of the powerful witness of these ordinary laborers who had a heart for reaching people around them.

### Cliff Holt

Clifford Holt had been with The Navigators since his teenage years. He had served as The Navigators' printer and a Bible Club leader. Cliff spent a number of hours in the Navigators office, where he met, fell in love with and proposed to one of Dawson Trotman's secretaries, Yvonne Zimmer. Drafted into the Navy in 1943 he soon joined the *USS Johnston*, one of the new Fletcher Class Destroyers that was to earn one of the greatest reputations of any ship during the war. Cliff carried on the Navigator ministry on the *Johnston*, except for the short time he was away at radar school. One of The Navigators on another ship remarked that Cliff was, "in there pitching for the LORD right up until the Last".



Cliff's ship, the *Johnston*, helped save the day at the Battle of Samar in October 1944, saving the carriers and perhaps the landing itself at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. The *Johnston* and her crew faced down a massive Japanese force including the battleship *Yamato*, a whole division of destroyers, and helped sink a cruiser. The American fleet's ferocity convinced the Japanese commander that they were facing a much larger force, and led to his retreat. Sadly the *Johnston* and the other destroyers that day were lost, and with them Cliff Holt, Navigator, at the age of 20. As one of the survivors of the *Johnston* said of Cliff, "I wish I could thank you enough above all for the one (Cliff) who faithfully fed HIS Word to me in Bible study, for the fellowship he and I had together with the LORD."



## Jack Armstrong

Jack Armstrong was a handsome sailor from Austin, Minnesota. He served aboard the *USS Atlanta* for six years. Armstrong approached his captain about starting a Bible Study aboard the ship. The captain was so impressed with Armstrong's service and seamanship that he readily agreed and promised to attend himself. Jack's Bible Study attracted fifteen to twenty men each week, and he enjoyed reading ten chapters of the Word daily.

He corresponded regularly with The Navigators back in the home office and with his family and friends. In a letter to a friend Jack wrote, "We are still having our Bible classes Sundays as regular as circumstances permit. We have quite a few regulars, we always have at least 12 or 15 fellows down; sometimes we have as high as 25. Numbers don't count so much. It's man-to-man talks about God's Word that really count after all. The Lord Jesus Christ continues to become more real and personal to me as the time rolls around." In his last letter to his brother George, Jack pleaded with him to come to Christ.

"With all the love in my heart, George, and tears running down my cheeks, this may be the last letter, or chance I will have to write you, let alone ever see you again. George, won't you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour? Soon we leave the port we are in now for a dangerous mission. If we go down, George, I'm going to be with the LORD JESUS CHRIST, I want to see you there George. We might not ever meet again on this earth, but eternity can be spend together."



The *Atlanta* engaged in a midnight battle in Guadalcanal in November 1942. The chaplain tried to minister to the mortally wounded Armstrong, who replied, "Don't bother with me. I know where I'm going," and urged the chaplain to attend to the unsaved. The *Atlanta* sank later that day, taking 161 members of her crew. The ship's captain later wrote, "Jack was one of the finest and most popular men attached to the ship. His Sunday Bible class had much to do with keeping the morale up and our spirit high. He was admired and respected by all from the Captain down."



## Love Triangle, Navigator-Style

*What happens when two Navigator men fall in love with the same woman? How does a love-triangle result in the preaching of the gospel across two continents?*

Victor McAnney and Ken Watters were friends serving aboard the *USS West Virginia* before the war. Ken had been opposed to the gospel until he met up with Jim Downing during a temporary assignment on the *USS New Mexico*. By the end of their time aboard that ship, Ken had given his life to Christ and made it his mission to reach others.

Vic and Ken both became part of the original Navigator Bible study aboard the *West Virginia*. They were close friends with Dawson Trotman and were frequent visitors to Navigator headquarters. Unbeknownst to them, they both fell in love with the same woman – Vivian Pauline Fusby, Dawson Trotman’s secretary. While Ken was making plans to ask her to marry him, Victor beat him to it. Vic proposed to Vivian and she happily accepted.

A joyful Vic and a dejected Ken returned to their ship, while Vivian remained in Los Angeles. After the outbreak of war, the two friends were separated by new assignments - Ken being sent to Honolulu and Victor to the *USS Astoria*.





## Vic McAnney

In many ways, Victor McAnney personifies the Navigator laborer. He was a kid from New Jersey who first met The Navigators aboard the *USS West Virginia*. He quickly became good friends with Dawson Trotman, and benefited from Daws' discipleship and training. Vic wanted to teach others what The Navigators had taught him, and became a passionate witness for Christ aboard his ship.

After successfully proposing to Miss Vivian Fusby, Victor received a transfer to the *USS Astoria*. Although he was baker, he quickly became one of the most trusted men aboard the ship. The captain called him into service to operate the ship's radio because he thought Vic was so capable and trustworthy. Along with his regular Navy duties, Vic continued to lead his fellow sailors to Christ. He wrote letters back to the Navigators at home, telling them about the Bible studies and refreshing times of prayers that he was enjoying aboard the ship.

In one letter he wrote, "These are great days. This kind of living makes me want to ship over. After almost two years on the ship I see the beginning of the desire of my heart, definite work for the Lord and abounding opportunities to lead others into a more intimate walk with Him....Men are easy to talk to these days; they are seeing their need of the One Who made them. It is not really fear of death, although it has its effect."

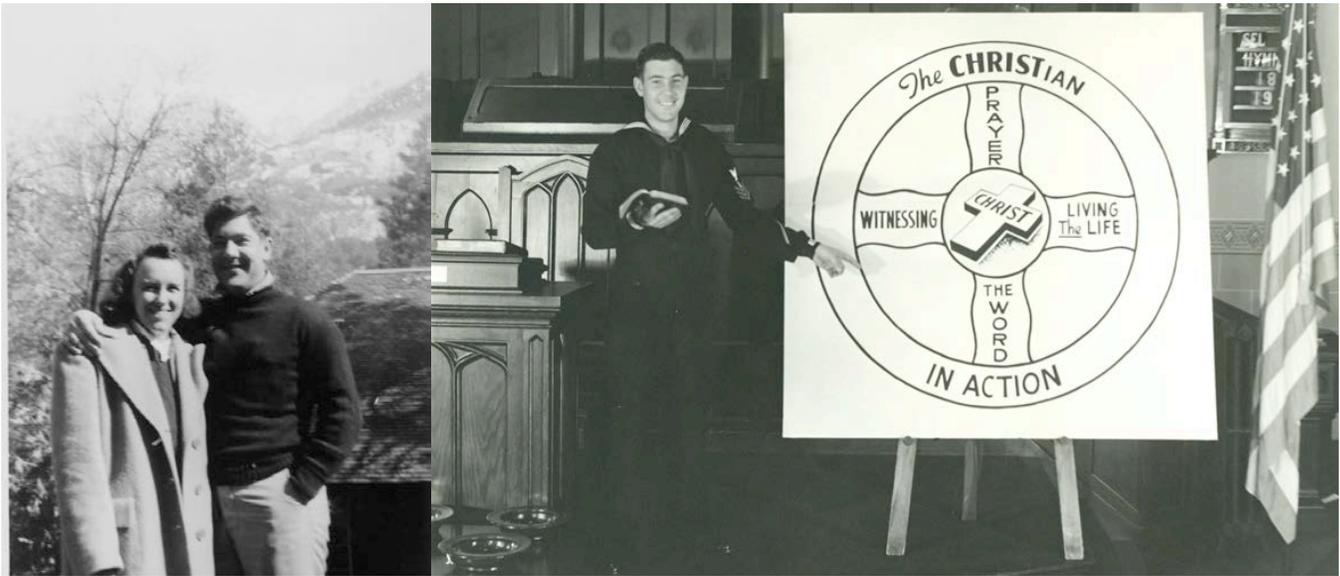


## Faithful Unto Death

On Sunday, November 8 1942, he encouraged the Chaplain of the *Astoria* to put aside the prepared message and instead preach a sermon pleading with the men to give their lives to Christ. At that service, eight men came forward and it was clear that the message was working its way on the ship through men's hearts.

That night the *Astoria* engaged in the Battle of Savo Island. Torpedoes and shells blasted the ship, killing 268. Vic died at his battle station with a smile on his face. Two of the men he had ministered to also died in the battle.

The chaplain who had preached the final message that Sunday wrote to Dawson Trotman and wondered why his life had been spared while Vic's was taken. He wrote that Victor had been far more effective at reaching his fellow sailors for Christ, and that Vic's life and witness had inspired his own ministry and love for the Scriptures.



## Howard Davis

After Vic's death, his fiancé Vivian continued to work for The Navigators. By 1944 Ken Watters had been transferred to Honolulu, he disciplined his fellow sailors. Shortly after Ken had lost Vivian to Victor, Dawson Trotman encouraged him to start considering other women. Ken began praying about young Virginia (Ginie) Chamberlain, another secretary who worked in the Biola Navs office. When Daws found out about Ken's prayers, he conveyed this information to Ginie, who found it very agreeable news.

Meanwhile, a young sailor named Howard Davis entered the picture. Howard had joined the Navy on his nineteenth birthday in 1938. Like Ken, he had also come to Christ during an assignment aboard the *U.S.S. New Mexico*. He studied Scripture with John Newman and Leo Gilcher, and visited Dawson and Lila during trips to shore. After a brief assignment aboard the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania*, he returned to the *New Mexico* where he began to disciple his friends.

After dismantling the Japanese occupation in the Aleutian Islands while on board the *New Mexico*, Howard was transferred to shore duty at the Naval Training Station in San Diego. Shortly after his transfer, a Japanese suicide plane hit the *New Mexico* just forward of his old battle station.

In 1943 Howard began making weekend trips to the Navigator Office to help print Nav Bible studies. He would hitch-hike to the South Pasadena Nav home and work in the office on Saturday and Monday before leaving again for San Diego. One Monday morning during his visit to the Nav home, he saw two of Dawson's secretaries sitting together on a bench. The Lord focused his attention on the young lady on the left - Ginie Chamberlain.

Much to Howard's chagrin, his new fondness for Ginie became public knowledge. Knowing of Ken Watters' interest in Ginie, Dawson told Howard to back off. Some time later, Howard received word from a mutual friend at the Nav home in Honolulu that Ken no longer had freedom in the Lord to pray about Ginie. Without knowing the change in Ken's heart, Ginie began praying about Howard and felt called to him instead.

Dawson eventually relented and told Howard that Ginie had something she wanted to tell him after Dick and Joyce Hightower's wedding reception in September 8 1944. Howard and Ginie took a walk around the block and she told him that she wanted him to be her husband. Howard later learned that he was the seventh man to express interest in Ginie. After a nine-month separation while Ginie worked at the Nav home in Brooklyn, Dr. Charles Fuller presided over their wedding on September 8, 1945.





### **“I Wish You Would Fall in Love with my Secretary”**

After news of Ginie and Howard’s romance had settled down, Dawson Trotman decided to end Ken’s misery. That year, Dawson Trotman flew to Hawaii to visit the local Navigator Home and to talk with Watters about the newly-termed concept of “reproducing reproducers.” When Watters asked Dawson what he wanted to talk about first, Trotman replied, “I wish you would fall in love with my secretary.” Ken showed Trotman his own printed list of things to discuss – “#1: Vivian.”

Back at home, Vivian eagerly awaited word on whether or not Ken still loved her after everything that has transpired in the war and in their personal lives. Delighted at the positive news, Vivian accepted Ken’s proposal. Dr. Charles Fuller married the couple on May 14, 1945. Evidently, Ken had forgiven Howard Davis for claiming Ginie Chamberlain, for Ken asked Howard to be his best man. After the wedding, the couple moved to New York to run a Nav Home for soldiers returning from the European theater.

Just as he sent his own staff to work with the Graham crusades, Dawson eventually loaned Viv and Ken to the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Ken had learned about “reproducing reproducers” from Dawson in Honolulu and he applied the concept to his own ministry and family life. After years of mission work in Peru and California, Watters became the Treasurer and Vice President for Wycliffe. In the 1960s he and Vivian started the Youth Missions Fellowship, out of which 14 young people went out to the mission field. Both of the Watters’ sons ended up giving their lives to Christ and serving with Wycliffe. One of them befriended a young Navigator Missionary in Africa, Mike Treener, before himself becoming the current International President of Wycliffe. Their grandson Josiah is now serving with a mission group in Indiana.



The young man who began his Christian walk on a Navy ship in the 1930s and the bespeckled young secretary have impacted the world for Christ. Through their lives and witness they raised up spiritual generations who are following Christ. These young people are in turn raising up their own spiritual generations - ordinary people who come alongside their neighbors and friends and share the love of Christ.



## The War's End and New Frontiers

*On August 15, 1945 Japanese Emperor Hirohito formally accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. Two weeks later the Japanese officially surrendered to the Allied forces, marking the end of the war in the Pacific. The conclusion of the war marked a new beginning in Navigator ministry.*

The war had ended, but not God's use of The Navigators. When WWII started there were only seven Navigator Homes and a few people really carrying on The Navigator vision. During those four turbulent years thousands of young men came to Christ and many thousands more were touched with Navigator

vision. These young men and women (for The Navigators also had a ministry to the nurses and other women's auxiliary functions) had gone from people who had rarely been 50 miles from their hometown to having seen the world. The Lord placed in their hearts a vision for the nations. Coming out of World War II the next great wave of missions began. These young men and women who had seen the world while serving their country decided to minister to the nations serving their Lord. During this time Dawson started The



Navigator collegiate work to minister to the thousands of newly released servicemen taking advantage of the GI Bill. He sent Roy Robertson to China, and loaned other Navigators, like Ken and Viv (who Dawson would call on a trip to Peru to visit them "still one of my top Navigators), to other organizations to advance the Gospel into the nations. VJ Day was the end of the war, but the start of something great through our Lord Jesus Christ, something great that we all are still a part of today.



A Presentation by The Navigators History Department  
by Susan Fletcher, Christopher Morton, and Rusti Keen