

During the battle of Guadalcanal, I was a Quartermaster 2nd Class and had a friend who was standing "talker" watch on the starboard wing of the signal bridge, below the chartroom. He had a pair of sound powered phones on, and at one point in the battle saw a Japanese shell headed right toward him. He dove into the signal bridge shelter, his headset being ripped off his head. The shell hit on the starboard side of the wing, and blew up. A large piece of shrapnel flew upwards, went through the deck into the Navigation Bridge, hit the alidade, which deflected it into the port bulkhead of the chartroom. One small sliver pierced the heart of a new recruit who was working in the chartroom at the time, and he fell dead onto the deck with seemingly no external wound.

A piece of that same shell, weighing about 5 pounds, smashed into the desk in the chartroom, and wound up in the back of the only drawer in that desk. Weeks later, as I was looking for something in the back of the drawer, I pulled out that piece of shrapnel, and then made the connection with what had happened earlier. I still have the piece of ragged steel in my home.

Harry Luff

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