

## Cover

Comment by Yamashiro

A destroyer group consists of at least two destroyers, usually four. It has its commanding officer. The ship that is boarded by the commanding officer is called the command destroyer and will fly the commanding officer's ensign. On occasion when a destroyer works singly, the action is still considered being carried out as a group as long as the commanding officer is aboard.

The commanding officer is equivalent to the captain of a larger ship, and is usually filled by someone with the rank of captain. The skipper of a destroyer is equivalent to the navigator or the chief torpedo officer of a larger ship, and is filled by someone with the rank of commander or lieutenant commander. The skipper of a destroyer is called "captain" when there is no risk of confusion with a captain of a larger ship.

( Matsuoka's note: In Japanese, the word captain as the head of a ship and captain as a rank of a naval officer are two different words. Therefore, I don't understand his remark about the risk of confusion. )

The commanding officer commands the destroyer group, and has the final responsibility of the group's action.

Lieutenant Commander Hanami, the skipper of the command destroyer therefore acted according to my command.

After the war, when Mr. Kennedy made the invitation, somehow Mr. Hanami concealed the fact that he was under my command, and said that he acted on his own when the destroyer rammed into the torpedo boat Mr. Kennedy was operating. He praised Mr. Kennedy's valiance. Mr. Kennedy responded by praising Mr. Hanami's bravery in a tape he sent back.

Mr. Hanami blatantly states that "he ordered each destroyer to return to base upon completing its task etc." in an insert titled "Kennedy and me" attached to the Japanese translation of "Brave One" by JFK.

## Inside Cover

He said, "he rammed the torpedo boat daringly." When JFK won the election, Mr. Hanami repeated the same lie in a weekly magazine, and is said to have talked the same way on a TV appearance, too.

When I learned about the coming publication of Donovan's "PT 109" after the election, I wrote to him exposing Mr. Hanami's lies, and when the author came to Japan, I met him and repeated my explanation.

However, I was shocked to find out that Mr. Hanami's story was carried in his book with full face value, and my rebuttal was treated as a heresy. In addition, my presence in the destroyer was explained as being a senior naval officer who happened to be on a ferry ride, rather than the commanding officer. Ordinary readers may not notice anything amiss, but I could not let it pass as it was made out. I will attempt to describe the particular action briefly in the following paragraphs.

The operation was called Coronbangara Transport Operation, and had two contingents. One was the Transport Unit, and another the Patrol Unit. I was second in command of the whole operation, and was assigned to command the Patrol Unit.

As the Transport Unit finished operation and headed for base, the Patrol Unit ended the vigil on Ferguson Strait, and raised its speed to 30 knots to catch up with the Transport Unit. I did the fine adjustments of the course, and instructed the watch master and the steersman myself.

A short while later, I saw the shape of a ship ahead. At first, I thought it was one of the junks we used for transportation. However, a bulge on the starboard betrayed its identity as a torpedo boat. General alarm was issued, and the operation of the ship is now transferred from the watch master to Lieutenant Commander Hanami, the skipper.

I saw that if we kept the course, we would ram the starboard side of the torpedo boat.

I have seen collisions between high-speed boats in training runs, and knew the dire consequences. Moreover, if the collision would induce chain explosion of torpedoes aboard the torpedo boat, surely Amagiri will lose her bow. There was no time to spare, so I ordered "Torikaji-Ippai(hard aport)" in order to avoid it.

Probably I shouted real loud in the split-second decision, skipper Hanami must have been startled, and reversed my command said "Omokaji-Ippai(hard starboard)." Before I shouted for correction, he realized his mistake and corrected himself, saying "rudder back, hard aport." Because of this mix-up, the bow first turned to the right a little, then began turning to the left. However, with the

speed of fifteen meters per second, it was too late, and the shadow of the torpedo boat came under our bow. The two ships collided.

It seems that Author Donovan has taken a part of the letter written by Mr. Doi, the steersman, and has tried to verify Mr. Hanami's statement. He has focused on the mistake Hanami made, the 'full starboard' command, leaving other facts out. I have received Mr. Doi's letter, too, and what he wrote is correct. He says when "hard starboard" was heard, the wheel was turned roughly 10 degrees (Just the rudder; the ship has not began turning.) Then the "rudder back" and "hard aport" commands were heard, and the ship began to turn left, followed by the collision. He says he saw the flash, and felt heat in his face. Because our destroyer turned left, her stern swung to the right, and our right screw came in contact with the torpedo boat's bow, causing a partial damage to the screw. Mr. Donovan's theory "turning to starboard" does not hold water.

### Map Page

Amagiri did not sail to Villa that was the port of anchor, but was patrolling Bracket Straits, and collided with the torpedo boat on her way back.

142~143

### The Formation

Unit	Command Destroyer	Equipment	Duty
Transport	<u>Flagship</u>	DG.4 (Hagikaze, Arashi)	1. Transport personnel & supplies 2. Destroy enemy fleet
	DG.4	DG.27 (Shigure)	
Patrol	<u>Flag-ship</u> DG.11	DG.11(Amagiri)	Guard Transport Unit

Destroyer group consists of more than 2 destroyers (usually 4 destroyers). Due to repairs, the above was the formation. A single destroyer is considered a group when boarded by a C.O.

Commanding Officers: DG.4 Captain Sugiura (the senior officer)  
 DG.11 Captain Yamashiro  
 DG.27 Captain Hara

The formation of destroyers in the book is wrong. Amagiri was always at the tail end of the convoy.

The book says Amagiri moved in and out of the convoy to guard etc. In fact, it is not possible to go in front and around the fast-moving destroyers, and there is no need for that.

144~145

The book says that Vice Admiral Sameshima on July 29 summoned the captains of destroyers Amagiri, Hagikaze, Arashi and Shigure aboard Hagikaze for an emergency meeting.

It is not conceivable that the commanding officers of the destroyer groups were not included in any meeting like this. Also, Adm. Sameshima was the fleet commander of the 8th Fleet, and was located at Buin. There is no reason the fleet commander should be on board a destroyer.

146~147

The book says Lieutenant Commander Tameichi Hara the skipper of Shigure, left his personal belongings packed in a suitcase behind with a friend of his in Raboul, with the request to have it sent back home in case he did not return.

Mr. Tameichi Hara was a full captain, and was the commanding officer of the destroyer group 27 boarding Shigure. The skipper of Shigure was Lieutenant Commander Yamagami.

166~167

The book says that he (Yamashiro) became the CO of DG 11 about a month ago. He was the senior officer aboard Amagiri for his duty, but L.C. Hanami performed the job of the skipper.

Hanami is not familiar with the duties of the CO, and this passage betrays his ignorance.

The book says Lieutenant S.G. Akira Nakajima aboard Amagiri was the Chief Surgeon.

The Chief Surgeon was aboard Yugiri. Nakajima was a surgeon attached to Amagiri.

The book says the four destroyers were passing through the Bougainville Strait toward Vera Lavela.

This is wrong. The destroyers were sailing down the west side of the island.

192~193

The book says Lt. Commander Hanami increased the speed and commanded the steersman to head northwest in order to catch up with the other three.

In fact, it is the commanding officer that directs the speed and direction.

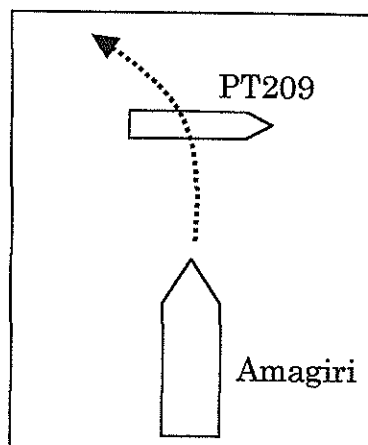
The book says Lieutenant S.G. Hiroshi Hosaka, the torpedo master, was standing between the two.

Actually, Hosaka was standing behind, to the right of us.

196~197

The book says "Hard aport." This is an error in translation. The original book said "Hard astarboard." I notified Mr. Hatano, the translator of this error, and he promised to correct it at the next printing.

In the "Note," it says that several years later, Capt. Yamashiro said, "I ordered 'Hard astarboard,' (Original edition 'Hard aport') and the collision was a pure accident." Naturally, Mr. Yamashiro and Mr. Hanami went into a somewhat contentious relationship. Judging from the testimonies of other members of the crew, it is difficult to agree to the assertion that the collision was an accident. Mr. Doi, then the steersman, said he did not clearly remember Capt. Yamashiro.



I blame Mr. Donovan for collaborating with Mr. Hanami for the benefit of President Kennedy. As I said before, Mr. Doi wrote me and agreed with my version of the story.

The bridge was darkened, and I could not observe Mr. Hanami, but he just carried out my commands without ado, probably because the mistake he made humbled him.

Hanami realized his error as soon as the rudder turned 10 degrees, and corrected, saying "Rudder back," "Hard aport." If the collision was intentional, turning left (aport) was not necessary.

256

Caption under Yamashiro's photo says 'Capt. Yamashiro, former CO of Destroyer Group 11. He was aboard Amagiri as a senior officer at time of collision with PT109.

It should be corrected to read: CO of Destroyer Group 11 on duty aboard Amagiri at time of ...

#### 4 Photographs

The photograph taken at a dinner with the Donovans. Its caption says "Capt. Kouhei Hanami and all the crew members of the Destroyer Amagiri, at the dinner with the author."

Mr. Hosono who made arrangements, and a young lady interpreter were in it. But I was not invited.

As I said earlier, I wrote to Donovan and revealed the truth. Probably the author found it too embarrassing, and probably too late, to make corrections.