

= Mochitsura Hashimoto =

Mochitsura Hashimoto (1909 - 25 October 2000) was an officer and a submarine commander in the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II . He is best known as the captain of Japanese submarine I-58 , which sank the USS Indianapolis in 1945 .

Born in Kyoto and educated at the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy , Hashimoto volunteered for service in submarines and was later aboard submarine I-24 during the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 . Hashimoto commanded coastal patrol and training submarines off Japan for much of the war , and in 1944 took command of I-58 , a ship which was equipped to carry kaiten , or manned torpedoes . After a number of unsuccessful operations , I-58 sank the Indianapolis on 30 July while on a midnight patrol . Hashimoto 's submarine then returned to Japan , one of the few such ships to survive the war . Hashimoto was then called to testify at the court martial of Charles B. McVay III , the Indianapolis commander , a move which was controversial at the time . He was later part of an effort to exonerate McVay . Hashimoto later became a Shinto priest . He died in 2000 .

= = Biography = =

Mochitsura Hashimoto was born in 1909 in Kyoto , Japan , the eighth of nine children and fifth son of a kannushi (Shinto priest) . He attended Kyoto Third High School , a prestigious school , where he performed well . In his youth he was described as self - possessed and respectful . At the behest of his father , he applied for the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy . The family did not have a naval background , but Hashimoto 's father struggled financially on a priest 's government subsidy and he felt entering his son into the military would help to provide for them . One of Hashimoto 's older brothers subsequently attended the Imperial Japanese Army Academy and was commissioned into the Imperial Japanese Army . Hashimoto graduated from high school in 1927 and was accepted into the Naval Academy . Leaving home for the first time , Hashimoto then attended the naval academy at Eta Jima for four years , studying Japanese history , engineering , and naval tactics , as well as judo and other military athletics . He graduated and commissioned in 1931 .

In 1937 , Hashimoto married Nobuko Miki , the daughter of a successful Osaka businessman . The couple had three sons ; Mochihiro , born in 1940 , Nobutake , born in 1942 , and Tomoyuki , born in 1944.and Sonoe , a daughter born in 1947 .

= = = Military career = = =

In 1934 , Hashimoto volunteered for the submarine service , and in 1937 he served aboard destroyers and submarine chasers off the shores of the Republic of China . On 15 November , as a sub - lieutenant , Hashimoto was assigned to the crew of the gunboat Hozu , and was promoted to lieutenant on 1 December . During that time , his brother was killed in action fighting on the Chinese mainland .

In 1938 he was assigned to the destroyer Okikaze on 15 December . Selected for submarine school the following year , Hashimoto was assigned to the Yokosuka Naval District on 20 May 1939 and enrolled in a six - month torpedo course on 1 June , subsequently entering the naval submarine school as a Class B student on 1 December . Upon completion of this training , he was assigned to the submarine I-123 on 20 March 1940 as torpedo officer , transferring to the I-155 on 15 October in the same role .

On 15 July 1941 , he was assigned to the submarine I-24 , becoming its torpedo officer on 31 October , under Lieutenant Commander Hiroshi Hanabusa ; the ship was based out of Kure . Throughout the year , the submarine conducted training maneuvers with a group of midget submarines . On 18 November , I-24 and her group sailed from Kure with a midget submarine attached to her afterdeck . Steaming eastward , she surfaced 10 miles (16 km) off Waikiki on 6 December . The sub was a part of a large group of submarines which would support the Attack on Pearl Harbor . Hashimoto witnessed the final ritual of Kazuo Sakamaki and Kyoji Inagaki , who

would man the midget submarine , which cast off at 05 : 30 . I @-@ 24 remained at a rendezvous point to wait for the midget sub , which never came . On 9 December , I @-@ 24 steamed for Kure .

Upon the submarine 's return to Kure , Hashimoto was detached and assigned to the advanced course at Submarine School on 1 February 1942 , to prepare him for command of a submarine . Graduating from this course on 30 June , Hashimoto was given command of submarine Ro @-@ 31 , a coastal defense vessel . For the remainder of 1942 , Hashimoto operated his ship in home waters off Yokosuka training crews and trying new equipment and doing research for the development of Japanese submarine doctrine . He was promoted to lieutenant commander on 1 November . In 1943 , he was given command of submarine I @-@ 158 for coastal defense , and later in the year was given command of submarine Ro @-@ 44 for the same duties .

= = = Commanding I @-@ 58 = = =

In May 1944 , Lieutenant Commander Hashimoto was given command of submarine I @-@ 58 which was still under construction in Sasebo . Hashimoto oversaw much of the construction of I @-@ 58 . The submarine was later overhauled mid @-@ construction to carry Kaiten manned torpedoes , which was considered a great honor by Hashimoto 's crew . I @-@ 58 was commissioned on 13 September 1944 and Hashimoto commanded her during her shakedown cruises , commanding his men on repeated drills without shore leave . He completed training on the submarine in December 1944 . The ship traversed Shimonoseki Strait into the Inland Sea and to Kure for supplies . She then moved to Hirao where she loaded six kaitens .

On 29 December she left on her first war patrol , steaming for the Mariana Islands . She arrived off the coast of Guam at 03 : 00 on 11 January 1945 and Hashimoto ordered four kaitens launched . The kaitens tentatively claimed a tanker sunk , though it was unable to verify if the ship had actually been struck . The strike had been unsuccessful . She then sped back to Kure and arrived there on 20 January . She remained in port there until March , likely due to supply shortages . On 1 March , she was ordered to Iwo Jima to support the battle taking place there . Once there , I @-@ 58 was ordered to launch all of its kaitens without their pilots and immediately return home . She was ordered out again on 2 April sailing to support Japanese forces at the Battle of Okinawa . While there , she was attacked by aircraft 50 times . She never surfaced for more than a few hours . She limped to Kure on 29 April 1945 , the only Japanese submarine to withdraw from the operation . She remained in port because of continued mining conducted by U.S. Army Air Forces , and departed on 16 July on another war patrol . At the time , she was one of only four large submarines left in the Japanese Navy , and her mission was to harass Allied lines of communications .

Passing through the Inland Sea around minefields , I @-@ 58 headed for the east coast of The Philippines intending to attack ships there . Passing east of Okinawa and spotting no ships , she cruised south arriving at the Guam @-@ Leyte shipping lane on 27 July . She spotted a tanker escorted by a destroyer and Hashimoto ordered her to launch two kaitens at 14 : 31 and 14 : 43 . She heard explosions at 15 : 21 and 15 : 31 but her crew was unable to determine if the kaitens had struck their targets . Hashimoto reported a tanker assumed sunk .

= = = Sinking of the Indianapolis = = =

On 29 July he ordered the submarine to make for an area where he believed shipping lanes between Guam , Leyte , Peleliu and Okinawa intersected . At 23 : 35 that evening , Hashimoto spotted the heavy cruiser Indianapolis at 10 @,@ 000 metres (33 @,@ 000 ft) cruising for his position at medium speed . Believing the ship to be an Idaho @-@ class battleship , he ordered I @-@ 58 to dive and once Indianapolis closed to 1 @,@ 500 metres (4 @,@ 900 ft) he ordered six regular torpedoes fired at 00 : 02 on 30 July . Spotting three explosions strike the Indianapolis , Hashimoto ordered the submarine on a deep dive fearing detection . After an hour at a deep dive to reload , she surfaced and did not spot Indianapolis . After searching unsuccessfully for flotsam or any sign of the ship , he ordered the I @-@ 58 to retire at 02 : 30 . He transmitted a short wave radio message to the 6th Fleet headquarters in Kure at about 03 : 00 noting the destruction of the

ship . He later wrote of the incident :

We had the moon behind us and the enemy ship was now clearly visible . She had two turrets aft and a large tower mast . I took her to be an Idaho @-@ class battleship . The crew were all agog , awaiting the order to fire the torpedoes . All was dead quiet ... the favorable moment for firing was approaching At last in a loud voice , I gave the order ' Stand by ? fire ! ' The torpedo @-@ release switch pressed at intervals of two seconds and then the report came from the torpedo room , " All tubes fired and correct . " Six torpedoes were speeding , fanwise , toward the enemy ship Bringing the boat on to a course parallel with the enemy , we waited anxiously . Every minute seemed an age . Then on the starboard side of the enemy by the forward turret , and then the after turret there rose columns of water to be followed immediately by flashes of bright red flame . Then another column of water arose from alongside the Number 2 turret and seemed to envelop the whole ship ? " A hit , a hit ! " I shouted as each torpedo struck home , and the crew danced for joy .

Hashimoto ordered I @-@ 58 northward looking for additional ships to attack . She picked up reports of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in intercepted radio transmissions on 7 August but Hashimoto continued to hunt for Allied ships south of Bungo Strait . On 9 August she launched two kaitens against a convoy , and Hashimoto claimed a destroyer probably sunk . On 12 August he launched his remaining kaitens and claimed a merchant ship probably sunk . I @-@ 58 surfaced in Bungo Strait on 15 August , where Hashimoto learned of the Gyokuon @-@ h?s? signaling the Japanese surrender and end of the war . She traveled up the Inland Sea and arrived at Hirao where Hashimoto emotionally informed his crew of the end of the war . After the war , it was confirmed Indianapolis was the only ship I @-@ 58 had sunk . It was the last Japanese naval success of World War II .

= = = McVay court @-@ martial = = =

Three days after Japan 's formal surrender in Tokyo Bay , Hashimoto was promoted to his final rank of commander . On 20 November , he was given command of the destroyer Yukikaze , among the few Imperial Navy ships to survive the war , and assigned to repatriation duties , returning troops to Japan from overseas . Before Hashimoto could begin his new duties , however , he was summoned by the United States military to be a witness for the prosecution in the court @-@ martial against Indianapolis commander Captain Charles B. McVay III , who was on trial on charges of negligence leading to the ship 's sinking . On 9 December 1945 he was transported from Tokyo to Oakland , California aboard an aircraft of the Naval Air Transport Service . Hashimoto was assured he would be treated as a naval officer instead of a prisoner of war or war criminal , but he remained under guard during his time in the United States and was not allowed to leave his hotel , as his appearance had been front page news that day in the New York Times and in other newspapers . The next day he arrived in Washington , D.C. where hearings were taking place . For the duration of his time in the United States , he spoke through translator Francis Earl Eastlake from the Office of Naval Intelligence .

Hashimoto spoke first with judge advocate Captain Thomas J. Ryan for four hours on 11 December . He spoke the next day with Captain John P. Cady , McVay 's chief defense counsel , for several hours , as both officers sought to determine his credibility and competence to take the stand in the trial . He told them the visibility was good on the night of the attack and he had been able to easily spot the Indianapolis . Hashimoto testified in the court on 13 December in a crowded courtroom . It was the first time that an officer of a nation at war with the United States had testified against an officer of the U.S. Navy in a court martial . At the behest of Cady , Hashimoto took both a Japanese civil oath and an U.S. Navy oath so he could be charged for perjury in both nations if he lied . Hashimoto 's 50 minutes of testimony focused on whether or not Indianapolis was " zigzagging " and he noted the ship did not deviate from its course . However , he also noted that , due to his position , such evasive maneuvers would not have diminished his ability to attack the ship . Still , his testimony is considered integral in McVay 's eventual conviction that he had been negligent . Charles Butler McVay III was exonerated in 2001 . Following his appearance at the trial , Hashimoto remained in U.S. custody under guard until early 1946 , when he was returned to Japan aboard USS Effingham .

With the Nuremberg Trials underway and Japanese war crimes during the war coming to light , the announcement of Hashimoto 's appearance in testimony against an American officer caused considerable controversy in the American news media . Though Hashimoto was himself known to be innocent of any war crimes and was generally treated well by his guards , he spoke little English and was subject to derision in the press . Among the public responses , socialite Evalyn Walsh McLean sent an angry telegram to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal to complain , and U.S. Representative Robert L. Doughton publicly stated , " It is the most contemptible thing I ever heard of to summon a Jap officer to testify against one of our own officers . I made my living practicing law before Navy courts and boards for 25 years , and this reaches an all @-@ time low in courts , board or congressional investigation . " Columnist Robert Ruark accused the Navy of using Hashimoto to " hype up " the court martial . Even after his departure his testimony remained controversial , and the Chicago Sun criticized his trip , which it estimated to have cost \$ 1 @,@ 820 .

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

After his return to Japan , Hashimoto worked as a demobilization officer with the naval section of the Ministry of Demobilization , responsible for demobilizing veterans and dismantling what remained of the Japanese Navy . He completed his final assignment in June 1946 , after which he became a civilian , opting to retire from the military . Towards the end of his life , he became a Shinto priest at a shrine in Kyoto . He was later interviewed by author Dan Kurzman for his 1990 book *Fatal Voyage* , in which Kurzman stated , " Commander Hashimoto was amazed by the Americans . While penned up in his dormitory during the trial , he was treated more like an honored guest than an enemy officer who had caused the deaths of so many American boys . " Hashimoto later authored a book *Sunk : The Story of the Japanese Submarine Fleet , 1941 ? 1945* in which he detailed Japanese submarine operations in the war , including an account of the sinking of *Indianapolis* .

In December 1990 , Hashimoto met with some of the survivors of the *Indianapolis* at Pearl Harbor where he stated (through a translator) : " I came here to pray with you for your shipmates whose deaths I caused , " to which survivor Giles McCoy simply responded : " I forgive you . "

In 1999 , he assisted the surviving crew of the *Indianapolis* in attempting to exonerate McVay of blame for the ship 's sinking , writing a letter to the Senate Armed Services Committee in which he stated , just as he had more than five decades earlier , that even if the *Indianapolis* had been zigzagging , it would have made no difference : " I would have been able to launch a successful torpedo attack against his ship whether it had been zigzagging or not . " Regarding McVay 's conviction , Hashimoto wrote :

Our peoples have forgiven each other for that terrible war and its consequences . Perhaps it is time your peoples forgave Captain McVay for the humiliation of his unjust conviction .

Hashimoto died at age 91 on 25 October 2000 . Five days after his death , the reputation of Captain McVay was restored .