

= William M. Callaghan =

William McCombe Callaghan (August 8 , 1897 ? July 8 , 1991) was a United States Navy officer who served as the first captain of the battleship USS Missouri (BB @-@ 63) and the inaugural commander of the Military Sea Transportation Service . Through the course of almost 40 years , he served his country in three wars . His naval career began on a destroyer in the final months of World War I. Following command of the destroyer USS Reuben James (DD @-@ 245) and logistical work prior to World War II , he took command of the Missouri in 1944 .

Callaghan is perhaps best known for ordering , despite disagreement from some of his crew , that an honorable funeral be held for an enemy pilot who died during a suicide attack on the Missouri in 1945 . Following World War II , he directed the US Navy 's transportation service and filled senior command roles in eastern Asia , including leadership of the US Pacific Fleet 's Amphibious Force during the Korean War . He retired from the US Navy at the rank of Vice Admiral in 1957 and worked in civilian maritime transport before retiring to Maryland .

= = Early life = =

Callaghan was born on August 8 , 1897 , the son of businessman Charles William Callaghan and Rose Wheeler Callaghan . The family was devout Roman Catholic . His elder brother , Daniel Callaghan (1890 ? 1942) , would later become a US Navy Rear Admiral and posthumous Medal of Honor recipient . Both brothers studied at Saint Ignatius College Preparatory in San Francisco , the elder graduating in the class of 1911 . He subsequently attended the United States Naval Academy , graduating in 1918 .

= = Military career = =

= = = Early service = = =

Callaghan served on a destroyer during the last six months of World War I. He received a Master of Science degree in electrical engineering from Columbia University in 1925 , and would become a Knight of Malta . In the mid @-@ 1920s , he served as assistant engineering officer on board the light cruiser USS Concord , which was then performing scouting duties . From 1932 to 1933 , he was a Lieutenant aboard the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga .

= = = Ship commands = = =

At the rank of Commander , Callaghan captained the destroyer USS Reuben James from June 1936 to March 1938 , and subsequently joined the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations in 1939 . Before the US entered World War II , he was stationed in London in a logistical role . During the first part of World War II , he served as a logistics officer on the staff of the Commander in Chief , US Pacific Fleet , Admiral Chester Nimitz . He received the Legion of Merit for this work .

On June 11 , 1944 , Callaghan became the first captain of the USS Missouri , the last battleship commissioned by the US Navy . He commanded the Missouri in engagements at Iwo Jima , Okinawa , and Tokyo .

= = = Attack on the USS Missouri = = =

At 2 : 42 PM on April 11 , 1945 , off the coast of Kikaijima Island , a Japanese fighter pilot in an A6M5c Zero launched a kamikaze attack on the USS Missouri . Bill Obitz , a Seaman at the time , recalled that the attacking plane approached at an extreme angle and estimated that it was 20 feet (6 m) above the water . Although struck by intense antiaircraft fire , the plane survived and struck the ship 's starboard side at frame 169 below the main deck . While the impact of one of the plane 's

wings started a fire at 5 @-@ inch mount number 3 , its 500 @-@ pound bomb did not detonate , so the damage was minimal . There were no American casualties , but the Japanese pilot died . Parts of the plane 's wreckage and the top half of the pilot 's body landed on board the Missouri . The plane 's wing was turned over to the crew to be cut up for souvenirs .

Despite protests from some of his crew , Callaghan insisted that the young Japanese airman had done his job to the best of his ability , with honor , and deserved a military funeral . Stephen Cromwell , a corpsman at the time , later recalled , " I was able to recover his body and I called up to the bridge to ask if I should throw it overboard ... Captain Callaghan said , ? No , when we secure , take it down to the sick bay , and we 'll have a burial for him tomorrow . ? " Ivan Dexter , another crew member , gave his account of events to Herb Fahr , recalling that the top half of the Japanese pilot 's body was scattered over the deck , while the bottom half fell with the rest of the plane into the sea . What remained of the body was brought to sick bay for examination , and various Missouri crew took souvenirs from the clothing , including the helmet , scarf , and jacket . Following examination , the remains were placed in a canvas bag with dummy shell casings to weigh it down .

The following day , the Japanese pilot received a military funeral at sea . An improvised Japanese flag , sewn by one of the ship 's bosun 's mates , covered the bag holding the man 's remains . The ship 's chaplain committed the body to the sea and the six pallbearers let it slide overboard , accompanied by a volley of rifle fire . Fahr wrote , " There was still much bitterness on the part of many in the crew , but now , the honorable thing was done . " According to Lee Collins , visitor operations director for the Battleship Missouri Memorial , Callaghan said that the ceremony was simply a tribute to " a fellow warrior who had displayed courage and devotion , and who had paid the ultimate sacrifice with his life , fighting for his country . "

On May 14 , 1945 , Callaghan passed command of the Missouri on to Captain Stuart Murray , who had been a classmate of his at the US Naval Academy .

= = = Senior commands = = =

In 1946 , Callaghan held the rank of Rear Admiral , and in that year gave a presentation to the Naval War College on his experience in the Naval Transportation Service before the war . On October 1 , 1949 , he was appointed as the first commander of the Military Sea Transportation Service , which would later become the Military Sealift Command . He was promoted from Rear Admiral to Vice Admiral around this time . From 1953 to 1954 , during the Korean War , he commanded the Amphibious Force of the US Pacific Fleet . From 1954 to 1956 , he served as Commander , US Naval Forces Far East . He then replaced retiring Vice Admiral Francis Low as Commander of the Western Sea Frontier . He retired from the US Navy at the rank of Vice Admiral in 1957 .

= = Later life = =

Following retirement from military service , Callaghan served as Vice President of American Export Lines , and then as Chairman of the Maritime Transportation Research Board under the National Academy of Sciences . He would later have a transport ship named after him : the GTS Admiral W. M. Callaghan (T @-@ AKR @-@ 1001) .

Late in life , Callaghan resided in Chevy Chase , Maryland . Following a stroke , he died on July 8 , 1991 , at Bethesda Naval Hospital . His first wife , Helen Brunett Callaghan (1896 ? 1970) , and second wife , Martha Rawlins Callaghan (1905 ? 1973) , predeceased him . He was survived by his third wife , Sarah Duerson Callaghan (1914 ? 2011) , and two children , William M. Callaghan Jr . (a retired US Navy Rear Admiral) and Jane Callaghan Gude (c . 1925 ? 2008) , as well as eight grandchildren . Callaghan 's grandchildren include William Callaghan III , Chad Callaghan , and A. Carey Callaghan . His great @-@ grandchildren include Caitlin Callaghan , Larkin Callaghan , and Connor Callaghan , and many others .

= = Legacy = =

Callaghan 's decision on the Japanese pilot 's funeral in 1945 would receive praise years later , although a memorial service aboard the Missouri in April 2001 attracted controversy . Leading up to the service , Callaghan 's son said , " My father believed a burial at sea for the pilot was the right thing to do . He felt it would set a good example for the crew in showing respect for the life of people , even for the people you are opposing . "

Junko Kamata , a niece of one of the Japanese pilots killed in the April 1945 battle , said , " I want to thank Captain Callaghan for his humanitarian consideration for kamikaze soldiers . " Minoru Shibuya , Japanese Consul General , called Callaghan 's actions " a glorious deed , to salute the [pilot 's] bravery . " Daniel Inouye , US Senator from Hawaii , reflected that " from the dawn of civilization , warriors respected their adversaries ; it was an unspoken code of honor . When Callaghan saw the broken body of his sworn enemy lying upon his ship , he saw him not as an enemy , but simply as a man . "

At a 1998 reunion of Missouri veterans , many of those present who had served during World War II felt that , on reflection , their captain had acted correctly . Robert Kihune , a retired US Navy Vice Admiral , said , " In wartime , courage is measured as much by one 's actions as their strength of leadership during the heat of battle ... I think the leadership qualities showed by Captain Callaghan illustrate the ideal of what we want our military leaders to follow . "