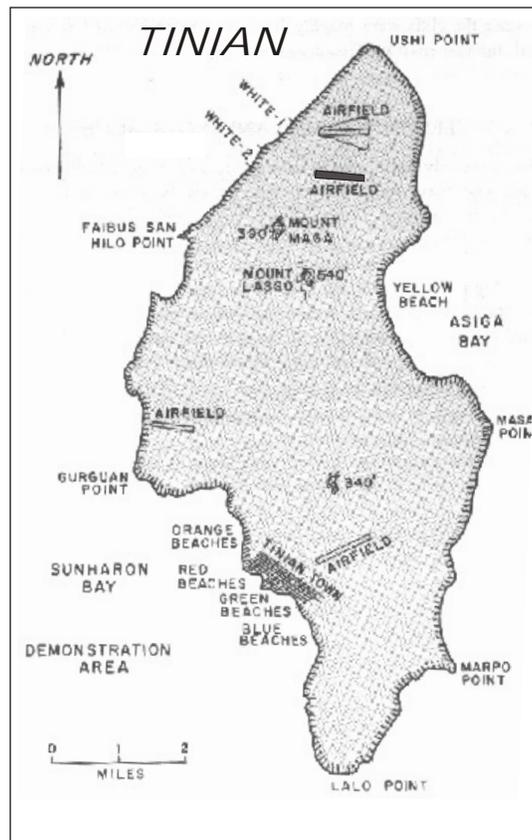




The Crew of the LCT-945: 1) Zimmer, 2) DiGeorgio, 3) Stillwell, 4) Phillips, 5) Shurette, 6) Ens. Bostick, 7) Ens. Matthews, 8) Denyer, 9) Sullivan, 10) Collier. Ensign Matthews served on the LCT-945 at Guam just before his duty on the 693 at Tinian.



of Guadalcanal, Saipan, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Luzon, Okinawa, and other Pacific islands, it was the rule rather than the exception that 95 percent or more of the Japanese would die fighting rather than surrender. They had vowed to defend their homeland; Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku and Hokkaido, to the death, and they would have been there on the beaches had an invasion of their islands been necessary. Note also that in each of the two cities it was estimated that something like 50,000 were killed. Not a large number, in terms of that war: 90,000 Japanese were killed on Okinawa, 100,000 on Luzon, 97,000 in Burma, 20,000 on the tiny island of Iwo Jima, and over 300,000 in the two Philippine campaigns (113,000 on Leyte alone when we recaptured the islands). Killed, not wounded. It may be that revisionist historians have since changed the numbers, but not the point.

We who were training aboard ships or making preparations in Navy, Marine, and Army bases throughout the Pacific, poised to make that final thrust to the heart of our enemy, were extremely grateful for the reprieve the dropping of the atomic bomb gave us.

As an epilogue to this July 1945 Tinian experience involving the USS Indianapolis and the atomic bomb, I had a coincidental meeting many years later. In 1997, I was attending the Northwestern University Mid-

shipman School reunion in Norfolk, Virginia. One morning in my hotel, I was at the breakfast room waiting to be seated, when I noted two other gentlemen who were also waiting to have breakfast. I introduced myself; their names were Erling "Erl" Podoll and George Rita. As it turned out, not only were they attending the same reunion, but all three of us had graduated in the 21st Midshipman class.

They invited me to join them and, in the course of conversation at breakfast, I recounted my story of provisioning the USS Indianapolis with 8-inch shells, while another LCT, also operating at Tinian, took the atomic bomb materials from the cruiser to the dock.

Erl and George looked at one another and Erl said, "I was the operations officer for one of the LCT groups at Tinian and was on that other LCT that went out to the Indianapolis. I had gone along on the trip to visit a college classmate."

It seems to give new meaning to the expression, "It's a small world." Here were two guys discussing the part they had played in one of the most dramatic events in the history of our country, if not of mankind, and discussing it at a chance meeting 52 years and half a world removed from the event itself.

