

# Dudley Walker Morton

## (1907-1943)

By Jerry Long



Dudley Walker Morton (1907-1943)



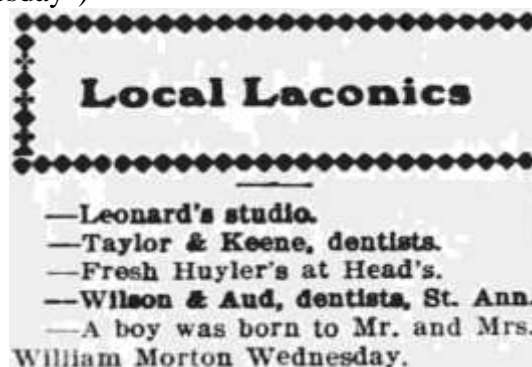
Dudley Walker ('Mush') Morton was born 17 July 1907 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY. He was the son of William Dix Morton (1884-1969) & Elizabeth Rebecca Rowe (1885-1987) and grandson of William Christopher Morton & Sallie Helm Dix and Jacob Edwin Rowe & Logan Mahala Walker. Dudley married Harriet Rose Nelson (1913-2000), 5 May 1936 in Tsingtao, China. They had two children – Douglas Nelson (born 9 October 1939 Portsmouth, VA and died 9 July 2016, married Marilyn Brown) and Edwina Rowe (born 5 November 1941 Norfolk, VA, married Robert Bradford, Alan Roy Gass & Edward Leo Thirsher). Dudley Walker Morton died on 11 October 1943 in the sinking of the submarine , USS Wahoo in the Sea of Japan. His body was never recovered. A memorial monument was erected in the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA.



## Articles about Dudley Walker Morton in Owensboro, KY newspapers

(abstracted by Jerry Long, Kentucky Room, Daviess County Public Library, Owensboro, KY)

- Owensboro Messenger – 1907: 7/18 p.8 (Local Laconics: "A boy was born to Mr. and Mrs. William Morton Wednesday")



- Owensboro Messenger – 1910: 6/24 p.5 (returns with mother, Mrs. W. D. Morton, to their home in DeKoven, after a visit to Mrs. Morton's mother, Mrs. J. E. Rowe, on Griffith Avenue)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1918: 9/4 p.8 (left Saturday for his home in Nortonville after spending several months a guest of his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. Edwin Rowe)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1926: 6/19 p.5 (graduated from Miami Florida high school last week; in the near future he will enter the Annapolis naval academy)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1926: 6/24 p.2 (on June 23 will enter the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD, he recently received his appointment from Representative Sears of Florida)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1927: 6/5 p.7B (cadet in first year at Annapolis)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1929: 7/5 p.7 and Owensboro Messenger – 1929: 7/5 p.7 (Midshipman at Annapolis is on a cruise)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1935: 1/12 p.8 (lieutenant stationed in the Philippines)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1936: 7/22 p.5 and Owensboro Messenger – 1936: 7/22 p.10 (married Miss Harriet Rose Nelson, of DeKalb,IL, on May 5 in Tsingtao, China; a lieutenant junior grade in the US Navy)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1939: 7/5 p.4 (Midshipman at Annapolis is on a cruise)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1939: 10/24 p.10 (son, Douglas Nelson, born at naval hospital in Portsmouth, VA)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1943: 2/14 p.16 ("Sub Commanded By Owensboro Native Sinks 8 Ships)
- Owensboro Inquirer, 1943 – 4/21 p.1 ("Former Owensboroan's Sub Sinks Eight More Jap Subs")

- Owensboro Messenger – 1943: 4/27 p.1 ("Ex-Owensboroan's Sub Sinks Ship"), 12/3 p.1 ("Dudley Walker Morton Missing With Heroic Submarine Wahoo")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1943: 5/23 p.1A ("Dudley Morton Is Awarded Medals", awarded the Navy Cross, the Silver Star and the Distinguished Service Cross, skipper of the submarine Wahoo, which sank 13 Japanese ships in 13 weeks, they were given in a ceremony conducted on the bridge of the Wahoo by Gen. Chester W. Nimitz, commander-in-chief of the Pacific fleet)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1943: 12/1 p.1 and Owensboro Inquirer – 1943: 12/1 p.5 ("Dudley Morton Missing In Action"; resident of Owensboro, Daviess County; soldier - World War II veteran)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1943: 12/3 p.1 ("Dudley Walker Morton Missing With Heroic Submarine Wahoo")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1943: 12/4 p.8 ("Missing In Action")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1944: 2/11 p.6 (Film "Destination Tokyo" of Local Interest" - based on deeds of Dudley "Mush" Walker Morton)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1944: 6/16 p.2 ("Dudley Morton Is Awarded Gold Cross")
- Owensboro Messenger – 1945: 5/9 p.6A (picture, lieutenant commander, Navy)
- Owensboro Inquirer – 1945: 8/15 p.11 (son of W. D. Morton, of Los Angeles, CA, wife & children reside in Los Angeles, nephew of Miss Sallie Morton & Samuel H. Morton of Owensboro)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1945: 8/16 p.11 (movie, "Destination Tokyo", was based on his gallant deeds)
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1958: 4/30 p.4B ("Destroyer To Be Named For Hopkins County Submarine Commander")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1958: 5/18 p.1D ("Navy Names New Ship For Owensboroan: U.S.S. Morton Recalls Deeds In Jap Waters")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1991: 6/21 p.1C ("Honors sought for sub commander: Owensboro native Morton sank 25 ships")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1991: 9/2 p.1C ("Monument to honor submarine commander")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 11/8 Community section, p8 (Dudley Morton was born in Owensboro)
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 8/22 p.1C ("Family working on raising \$6,000 for memorial to Morton")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 8/29 p.1C ("Local WWII hero gains Clancy fame")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 10/3 p.1C ("Sub commander to be honored Saturday")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 10/9 p.9C ("World War II Navy hero honored with memorial")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 10/14 p.1C ("Torpedo propelled here to honor WWII commander")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1994: 11/8 Community p.8 ("Kind Words" - letter by Robert W. Rowe)

- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1995: 7/25 Community p.5 ("'Mush' Morton to be honored with peace memorial in Japan")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 1995: 8/28 p.1C ("USS Wahoo finally to get a tombstone")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 2006: 12/11 p.1A ("Wreckage of famed sub found: USS Wahoo, with Owensboro native as its captain, went down in 1943")
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 2013: 10/10 p.1A ("Vets will pay tribute to lost World War II sub Saturday", late December 1942 he took command of the USS Wahoo, a Gato class attack submarine stationed at Pearl Harbor, on his first war patrol between January and February of 1943, the Wahoo's crew sank three Japanese ships and damaged several others, according to the Naval Historical Center, Morton sunk nine ships on his second patrol in the East China Sea and Yellow Sea, the Wahoo's crew is believed to have sunk more than 20 Japanese ships, making it one of the most successful American submarines of the war, on 11 October 1943 while on patrol in a strait between the Japanese island of Hokkaido and Sakhalin Island, the Wahoo was attacked and sunk, all 80 crew members went down with the submarine)
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 2015: 10/3 p.1A ("Sub vets to pay tribute to WWII skipper", 'In his short career as a submarine commander, Dudley "Mush" Morton became something of a legend in the U.S. Navy. Morton, an Owensboro native, took command of the U.S.S. Wahoo, a Gato class attack submarine, in December 1942. Although the Wahoo had sailed two different times with a different commander, the boat had very little success against the Japanese Imperial Navy. With Morton as commander, however, the Wahoo became deadly. Between Dec. 10, 1942, and Dec. 11, 1943, the Wahoo sank 20 Japanese cargo and transport vessels, putting 60,000 tons of shipping on the bottom of the sea. On Jan. 24, 1943, the Wahoo slipped undetected into Japanese-controlled Wewak Harbor at Papua New Guinea and launched a surprise attack on a Japanese destroyer. The Wahoo is credited as both the first U.S. submarine to penetrate an enemy harbor during the war, and the first to successfully pull off a "down the throat" shot. The Wahoo kept up its reign of destruction throughout the spring and summer, and is ranked as the third-most successful submarine of the war. But on Oct. 11, 1943, the Wahoo was attacked and sunk while on patrol in the strait between Hokkaido and Sakhalin Island. None of the crew survived the attack, and the Wahoo's resting place wasn't discovered until 2006.')
- Owensboro Messenger & Inquirer – 2015: 10/11 p.1C ("Morton, U.S.S. Wahoo honored at ceremony")





Lieutenant Commander Dudley W. Morton, USN, Commanding Officer. Two pictures on bottom were taken on the submarine USS Wahoo. In picture on bottom right he with his Executive Officer, Lieutenant Richard H. O'Kane (on left), on Wahoo's open bridge, at Pearl Harbor after her very successful third war patrol, circa 7 February 1943.



USS Wahoo and Memorial monument in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY  
1 December 1943 p.1 and  
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY  
1 December 1943 p.5

## Dudley Morton Missing In Action

Los Angeles (AP)—Lt. Comdr. Dudley W. "Mush" Morton, famed United States submarine skipper, is missing in action, his wife said Tuesday night she had been advised by the Navy Department.

Commander Morton, whose submarine wiped out a Japanese convoy in action in the Pacific last Spring and who had at least nineteen ships to his credit, was only thirty-six years old.

His wife Harriett, and their son, Douglas, three, and a daughter, Edwina, about two, have lived here for a year and a half.

Besides confirming that she had been notified by the Navy Department that her husband was missing in action, Mrs. Morton declined to talk.

Mrs. Morton said no details were contained in the Navy telegram and that she did not know in which theater of war operations the commander had been serving recently.

Comdr. Morton was one of the few men to wear the Distinguished Service Cross of the U. S. Army. He also wore the Navy Cross and one gold star.

Lieut. Commander Morton is a nephew of Miss Sallie Morton and Sam Morton, of Owensboro. He is a son of W. D. Morton, of Los Angeles, Calif., and was born and reared in Owensboro. Commander Morton's wife and children also reside in Los Angeles.

Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY  
11 February 1944 p.6

## 'Destination Tokyo' Of Local Interest.

Special interest locally is being taken in the presentation of "Destination Tokyo" at the Malco theater for a four-day showing, due to the fact that the story was written and staged around the heroic deeds of Lieut. Commander Dudley "Mush" Walker Morton, a native of Owensboro, and his gallant and daring U. S. Submarine Wahoo crew, who were lost in action in the Pacific area in December. Commander Morton assisted in the making of the picture, directing the technicalities of the operation of the submarine.

Cary Grant, who is starred as the "Skipper," studied Commander Morton's mannerisms in the handling of the men while the picture was being made, in his endeavor to portray the personality of the famed Wahoo commander. Grant presents in the role of the "Skipper" an excellent understanding of the leadership of famed Commander Morton, according to his aunt, Miss Sallie Morton. Large crowds are attending each showing of the picture.

Commander Morton, whose submarine wiped out a Japanese convoy in action in the Pacific last Spring, and who had at least nineteen ships to his credit, was only 36 years old. He was a son of W. D. Morton, formerly of Owensboro, now of Los Angeles, Calif., and was born and reared here. His wife and children reside in Los Angeles.



**LIEUTEANT COMMANDER DUDLEY "MUSH" WALKER MORTON**, a native of Owensboro, reported missing aboard his submarine, the Wahoo, in action in the Pacific in November, 1943, was one of the heroes of the war in the Pacific. The famed submarine skipper's record shows the Wahoo and crew of sixty-five, which won the presidential citation for action in the Pacific, under his guidance wiped out a Japanese convoy in the Spring of 1943, and had at least nineteen ships to its credit. Commander Morton was one of the few Navy men to wear the Distinguished Service Cross of the U. S. Army. He also wore the Navy Cross and one gold star.

"Destination Tokyo" a film feature, was written and staged around the heroic deeds of Commander Morton and his gallant and daring crew. This picture was shown at the Malco in February, 1944.

Lieut. Commander Morton is a son of W. D. Morton, of Los Angeles, Calif., and was born and reared in Owensboro. His wife and children also reside in Los Angeles. He is a nephew of Miss Sallie Morton and Samuel H. Morton, of Owensboro.

## Dudley Morton Is Awarded Gold Cross

Washington, (AP)—The Navy announced Thursday award of gold stars in lieu of fourth Navy Crosses to two officers—the first awards of that type in naval history.

Commander Dudley W. Morton won his Gold Star for heroism as commanding officer of a United States submarine operating in Japanese waters. A native of Owensboro, Ky., he now is listed as missing in action since Dec. 2, 1943, when his submarine, Wahoo, was reported overdue and presumed lost. His wife, Mrs. Harriet Nelson Morton, lives at 719 Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, and his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth R. Morton, lives in Anchorage, Ky.

Heroism in action against the Japanese on New Britain island won a Gold Star for Col. Lewis B. Puller, of the Marines. Puller was decorated for disregarding personal safety in moving from company to company along his front lines and maintaining a critical position on a fire-swept ridge. His wife lives in Saluda, Middlesex County, Va.

# Monument to honor submarine commander

By Keith Lawrence  
Messenger-Inquirer

A submarine torpedo that was never needed in World War II will soon be on its way to Owensboro to become a monument to a famous Daviess County submarine commander.

Frank Boarman and Bill McDonough, two Owensboro men, began a campaign earlier this year to erect a monument to Commander Dudley "Mush" Morton, one of World War II's most famous submariners.

Morton was born in Owensboro on July 17, 1907. He and the 80 men of the USS Wahoo died in the Sea of Japan when their submarine was sunk by aerial bombs on Oct. 11, 1943.

Boarman, a WWII submarine veteran, and McDonough, a military collector, are trying to get a historical marker erected near Morton's birthplace on West Second Street. And they want a WWII torpedo to mount on a concrete pedestal with a plaque highlighting Morton's life.

This week, U.S. Sen. Wendell Ford's office tracked down an old torpedo in a Navy munitions yard in New Jersey. And Boarman and McDonough are preparing to go get it.

"It's 21 inches in diameter, 20.5 feet long and weighs 3,200 pounds," Boarman said. The men plan to move the torpedo on a boat trailer.

Boarman said he didn't ask if the torpedo has been deactivated. "I hope it doesn't have 500 pounds of TNT inside it," he said.

So far, though, the men haven't found a place for the monument. They want to put it in one of the two city parks along the Ohio River. But they need city permission to erect the monument there.

Morton's name does not appear on any local WWII monuments. His family moved to Nortonville in Hopkins County when he was a child. But he is still an Owensboro native, the men say. And, they say, he should be recognized locally.

The Wahoo, under Morton's command, was the first submarine to penetrate an enemy harbor and sink a ship within it, the first to challenge a ship head-on in a "down-the-throat" maneuver and the first to single-handedly wipe out an entire convoy.

The Navy commissioned a destroyer, the USS Morton, in his honor in 1959.

"He was a submariner's submariner," Boarman said.

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 9 October 1994 p.9C



## World War II Navy hero honored with memorial

By Stewart Jennison.

When the USS Wahoo returned to port after its third patrol in World War II, a broom tied to the submarine's periscope announced that the crew had made "a clean sweep," destroying an entire Japanese convoy of five ships, including its escort destroyer.

On Oct. 11, 1943, the Japanese made their own sweep, using aerial bombs and artillery to send Owensboro native Dudley "Mush" Morton and his entire crew of 80 to the same watery grave the Wahoo had made for 28 enemy ships.

Technically, there were no survivors, although retired Navy Chief Yeoman Forest J. Sterling certainly considers himself one.

Sterling was aboard for all but the first and the last of the seven hugely successful war patrols piloted by Morton, who was 36 when he died.

Saturday, Sterling was in Owensboro for the formal dedication of a memorial honoring Morton and the rest of the crew, most of whom had been his shipmates on previous hunts.

Morton "was a natural-born leader. Everybody on ship was glad to follow him wherever he would go," Sterling said following the dedication on the lawn of the American Legion's James L. Yates Post 9, 118 W. First St.

Sterling had expected to sail again with Morton, but received an offer to return to the United States just days before the Wahoo began its last, fateful mission.

His memories of watching the submarine head out to sea for the last time are recorded in his own book, "Wake of the Wahoo." With much of the U.S. Navy's fleet in ruins after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the surviving submarines were the nation's best hope of stopping Japan's domination of the Pacific, Sterling said.

"We spoiled a lot of their plans," he said.

Morton upped the ante on what underwater boats were capable of doing. He was the first to wipe out an entire convoy, the first to enter an enemy harbor and sink a ship at anchor, the first to challenge and sink an enemy destroyer with a head-on, "down-the-throat" torpedo shot.

His legacy was first recognized in 1945, when the Navy named a building at its submariners school in New London, Conn., for him. And in 1959, the destroyer "USS Morton" was commissioned.

But in Owensboro, where Morton was born July 17, 1907, he had largely been forgotten. Until Saturday, his name did not appear on any World War II monuments. Since 1991, two Owensboro men, Frank Boarman, a World War II submarine veteran, and Bill McDonough, a military collector, have worked to arrange the torpedo-crested memorial unveiled Saturday.

Betsy Jones, a cousin of Morton's who lives in Decatur, Ill., placed a wreath at the base of the memorial.

Retired Navy Capt. John Wright, the last commander of the Naval Reserve Center in Owensboro, told about 100 friends, family and military personnel who attended that "Memorials are important. Heroes are important. There's not enough of them in the United States today." Morton had a "brief but brilliant career," Wright said. He and his crew were, by definition, "volunteers, smart, brave and tough."

**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY,  
8 November 1994, Community section, p.8**

The submarine commander Dudley Walker Morton, who was recently honored with a ceremony in Owensboro, had ties to this city which are not generally known.

He was born in a house at 1405 W. Second St., owned by his paternal grandparents, William C. and Sallie Dix Morton. His father was William Dix Morton Sr. and his mother was "Bessie" Rowe Morton, daughter of J. Edwin Rowe, commonwealth attorney in Owensboro.

Dudley's daughter was named Edwina, derived from his grandfather's name. Dudley's grandmother was Logan Walker Rowe, daughter of Judge Elijah Dudley Walker, whose name the commander bore.

Dudley's family moved to Nortonville, but they kept their contact with Owensboro as his father worked in a coal mine nearby and they often visited my dad's brother Ernest Rowe, who lived on Griffith Avenue. He also attended school here on two occasions.

**Robert W. Rowe  
Frankfort**

**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 11 December 2006 p.1A**

Wreckage of famed sub found: USS Wahoo, with  
Owensboro native as its captain, went down in 1943

By Keith Lawrence

In July, Russian divers discovered the final resting place of the USS Wahoo, one of World War II's most famous submarines, in the La Perouse Strait between Russia and Japan.

And sometime in 2007, the Russian and U.S. navies - with possible participation by the Japanese - will conduct a memorial service on the waters 212 feet above the site where Cmdr. Dudley "Mush" Morton and his 80-man crew have been entombed for more than 63 years.

Next year will also mark the 100th anniversary of Morton's birth in Owensboro on July 17, 1907.

Charles R. Hinman, director of education and outreach for both the USS Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park in Hawaii and The Wahoo Project Group, said the discovery of the submarine is important to historians because "The USS Wahoo is, according to most informed sources, the most famous U.S. submarine of World War II, and 'Mush' Morton is the most well-known submarine commanding officer of the war."

He said, "In the final totals, the boat and her skipper did not have the greatest record in terms of ships and tonnage sunk, but the influence of the aggressive Commander Morton on the U.S. Submarine Force is unquestionably of the highest order.

"By the end of the war, American submarines had accounted for approximately 55 percent of the enemy vessels sunk in the Pacific, more than all other forces combined," he said.

Hinman said the Wahoo, named for a dark blue food fish found in Florida and the West Indies, and Morton are "immortal figures in the Silent Service, and part of the tradition that submarines and their crews do not die but are merely said to be 'on eternal patrol.' "

Morton was born on West Second Street, where Taylor's Supermarket is today. His father, William D. Morton, worked in the Daviess County coal mines.

The family moved to Nortonville when Morton was about 10 years old and then moved to Miami when he was in high school. An uncle was mayor of Miami at one time.

In 1926, Morton entered the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. There, according to Navy legend, his Kentucky accent gave him the nickname "Mushmouth" - later shortened to "Mush."

He graduated in 1930 and was assigned to submarines three years later.

Today, Morton is credited with being the first submariner to penetrate an enemy harbor and sink a ship within it, the first to challenge a ship head-on in a "down-the-throat" maneuver and the first to single-handedly wipe out an entire convoy.

He was promoted to commander on Oct. 15, 1942, and took over the Wahoo on Dec. 31.

Between Jan. 26 and Oct. 11, 1943, the Wahoo is credited with sinking 19 cargo and transport ships for a combined total of 55,000 tons.

That fall, Morton was assigned to penetrate the Sea of Japan. When he didn't return, the Wahoo was reported missing that December.

After the war, the U.S. Navy determined from Japanese records that on Oct. 11, the day the Wahoo was due to leave through La Perouse Strait, an antisubmarine aircraft discovered it on the surface and attacked, dropping three depth charges.

On Jan. 7, 1946, Morton and his crew were declared dead.

He had been awarded the Navy Cross with three gold stars and the Army Distinguished Service Cross.

"When a natural leader and born daredevil such as Mush Morton is given command of a submarine, the result can only be a fighting ship of the highest order, with officers and men who would follow their skipper to the Gates of Hell.... And they did," Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood Jr., wrote in 1960.

In 1959, the USS Morton, a destroyer, was named in his honor. It was decommissioned in 1982 and sold for scrap in 1992.

In October 1994, a memorial honoring Morton and his crew was dedicated on the grounds of the American Legion's James L. Yates Post 9, 118 W. Veterans Blvd., in Owensboro.

The local monument, which features a deactivated, 20-foot, 31,000-pound torpedo displayed horizontally atop a four-foot-high pedestal, was a project coordinated by Frank Boarman and William McDonough, who wanted to honor Morton in his hometown.

It includes two bronze plaques on the base. One has an image of the famous submariner and a list of his exploits. The other names the 80 men who died with him aboard the Wahoo in 1943.

Sixteen years of searching for the Wahoo ended in July when the Russian dive team Iskra located wreckage thought to be the famous sub. It was reported to be sitting nearly upright on a sandy bottom in 212 feet of water in the La Perouse Strait between the Japanese island of Hokkaido and the Russian island of Sakhalin.

On Oct. 31, the U.S. Navy confirmed that wreckage was the Wahoo.

"After reviewing the records and information, we are certain USS Wahoo has been located," Admiral Gary Roughead, the U.S. Pacific Fleet commander, said in a news release. "This brings closure to the families of the men of Wahoo - one of the greatest fighting submarines in the history of the U.S. Navy."

"We, the families of Wahoo, recognize the historical scholarship and support provided by the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force," Morton's son, Douglas, said in a news release. "The Morton family is thrilled that there will be closure to the loss of our father."

The Navy said it has no plans to salvage or enter the Wahoo wreckage. Naval tradition has long held that the sea is a fitting final resting place for sailors, the news release said.

It said the Sunken Military Craft Act protects military wrecks, such as the Wahoo, from unauthorized disturbance.

Hinman said the Wahoo Project Group, an international team of Americans, Australians, Japanese and Russians, "would like to make a dive on the wreck to produce a more complete photographic record of the vessel and damages sustained by her."

He added, "We are awaiting permission from the Russians to dive in their waters."

Hinman said, "There will likely be a simple, on-site ceremony by the Russian and American navies, with possible Japanese participation, in the spring or early summer."

"The main memorial ceremony for the families and friends of the men lost on USS Wahoo will be held here at USS Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park, on the shores of Pearl Harbor, during the week of Oct. 11, 2007 - the 64th anniversary of the vessel's loss."

The Russian divers reportedly shot about 20 minutes of color video of the wreck. The video is expected to become part of the Wahoo exhibit at the Bowfin Museum.



### **From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:**

Dudley Walker Morton (July 17, 1907 – October 11, 1943), nicknamed "Mushmouth" or "Mush", was a submarine commander of the United States Navy during World War II. He was commander of the USS Wahoo (SS-238) during its third through seventh patrols. Wahoo was one of the most-celebrated submarines of World War II, as it sank at least 19 Japanese ships, more than any other submarine of the time.[1] Morton and Wahoo disappeared in 1943 during a transit of La Pérouse Strait. He was legally declared deceased three years later.

Morton was born in Owensboro, Kentucky, on July 17, 1907. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1930. There he received the nickname "Mushmouth", after a character in the cartoon strip Moon Mullins whose large square jaw and prominent mouth resembled Morton's. The nickname was shortened to "Mush", by which he was known for much of his life.[2]

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, Morton served on the USS Saratoga (CV-3), USS Chicago (CA-29), USS Canopus (AS-9), USS Fairfax (DD-93), and the submarines USS S-37 (SS-142) and USS R-5 (SS-82), which he commanded from August 19, 1940 to April 23, 1942.[3] Morton was promoted to lieutenant commander on October 15, 1942, and was in nominal command of USS Dolphin (SS-169) while it underwent extended repairs at Pearl Harbor. He was relieved to make a war patrol in USS Wahoo (SS-238) between November 8 and December 26 as prospective commanding officer, a supernumerary position to prepare him for command of a fleet boat. Morton took command of Wahoo on December 31 in Brisbane, Australia. Between January

26, 1943 and October 11, he carried out four offensive patrols, during which Wahoo was responsible for sinking 19 cargo and transport ships for a combined total of 55,000 tons.

During Wahoo's third war patrol, Morton was responsible for an incident which resulted in shipwrecked soldiers in about twenty lifeboats of sunken Japanese transport Buyo Maru being fired on while in the water. The transport was torpedoed by Wahoo on 26 January 1943. Morton was responsible for ordering the machine gunning of the shipwrecked survivors in the water.[4][5][6] Morton and his executive officer, Richard O'Kane, had misidentified the survivors as solely Japanese. In fact, they were mainly Indian POWs of 2nd Battalion, 16th Punjab Regiment, plus escorting forces from the Japanese 26th Field Ordnance Depot.[7]

O'Kane's account describes Morton explaining that he should prevent enemy troops from getting ashore to fight again - as each one of them could cost an American life.[6] However, the Hague Convention of 1907 bans the killing of shipwreck survivors under any circumstances.[8] O'Kane further explained that the fire from Wahoo was intended to force the troops to abandon their boats and no troops were deliberately targeted.[9] Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, the Commander of the Submarine Force for the U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMSUBPAC) asserted that the survivors were army troops and turned machinegun and rifle fire on Wahoo while she maneuvered on the surface. He further stated that such resistance was common in submarine warfare. In 1975, historian Clay Blair claimed Morton opened fire first and the shipwrecked returned fire with handguns.[10]

After three arduous war patrols, Morton was given the highly dangerous assignment of penetrating the Sea of Japan for the second time, in October 1943. Morton was reported missing in action that December, when his submarine was presumed lost. After the war, it was determined from Japanese records that, on October 11, in the time frame in which the Wahoo was expected to exit through La Pérouse Strait, an antisubmarine aircraft found a surfaced submarine and attacked, dropping three depth charges.[11]

Declared deceased on January 7, 1946, Morton's decorations included the Navy Cross with three gold stars in lieu of a second, third, and fourth awards, and the Army Distinguished Service Cross. O'Kane believed the Buyo Maru incident prevented Morton from being awarded the Medal of Honor.[12] The destroyer USS Morton (DD-948) was named in his honor.

With six war patrols, Morton ranked third among the Navy's top skippers, credited with 19 ships and 54,683 tons sunk, per JANAC[13] (alternatively recorded as 17 ships/100,400 tons, per Blair[14]) In 1960, Vice Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, Jr., ComSubPac during World War II, was asked to write the foreword for former Wahoo crewmember Forest Sterling's book, *Wake of the Wahoo*. He wrote about Morton: "When a natural leader and born daredevil such as Mush Morton is given command of a submarine, the result can only be a fighting ship of the highest order, with officers and men who would follow their skipper to the Gates of Hell... And they did." Added Lockwood: "Morton lined up an impressive number of 'firsts' during the short ten months that he commanded Wahoo: first to penetrate an enemy harbor and sink a ship therein; first to use successfully a down the throat shot; and first to wipe out an entire convoy single-handed."

He was awarded: Submarine Warfare insignia; Navy Cross (with three Gold Stars); Distinguished Service Cross; Purple Heart; Combat Action Ribbon; Navy and Marine Corps Presidential Unit Citation; American Defense Service Medal (with Fleet Clasp & Bronze Star); American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (with one Silver Star); World War II Victory Medal; and Submarine Combat Patrol insignia.

Notes:

1. A WWII Submarine Finally Comes Home". abcnews.go.com.

2. Toll, Ian W. (2015). *The Conquering Tide*. Norton. p. 260.
3. "subcommanders". [fleetorganization.com/](http://fleetorganization.com/).
4. Bridgland p115-129.
5. Holwitt, Joel I. "Execute Against Japan", Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 2005, p.287.
6. O'Kane. *Wahoo: The Patrols of America's Most famous WWII Submarine*. pp. 153–154.
7. Holwitt, p.288; DeRose, James F. *Unrestricted Warfare* (John Wiley & Sons, 2000), pp.287–288.
8. Convention for the Adaptation to Maritime Warfare of the Principles of the Geneva Convention, Article 16
9. O'Kane, Richard (1987). *Wahoo: The Patrols of America's Most Famous WWII Submarine*. Presidio Press.
10. Blair, pp.384–386.
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15. Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee. Blair rounded entries in his tables (see Blair p. 900, bottom) while Roscoe's tables are an accurate transcription of the JANAC report.
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17. Blair (1975) p. 923
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19. Blair (1975) p. 930
20. Blair (1975) p. 933
21. Blair (1975) p. 939

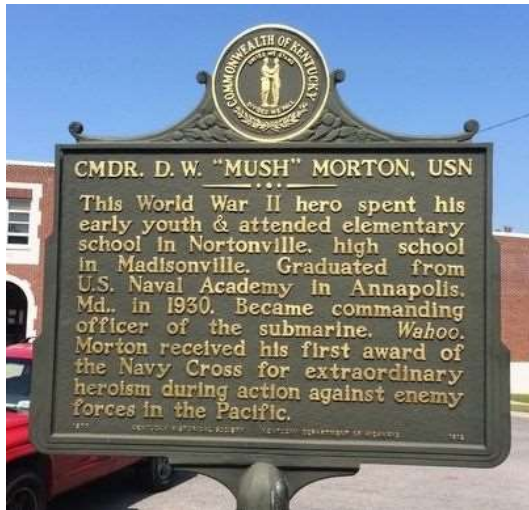
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#### External links:

- [history.navy.mil](http://history.navy.mil): USS Morton
- USS Morton website biography
- Page on the third patrol controversy on [warfish.com](http://warfish.com), a site about Wahoo
- Geneva Convention Article 16
- Submarine atrocities(Archived 2009-10-25)

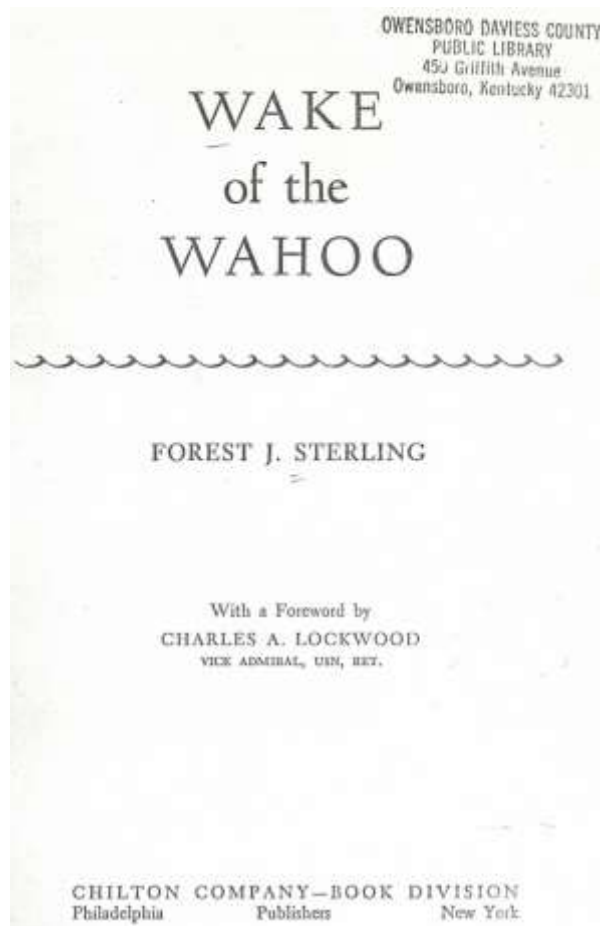




Kentucky Historical Highway marker in Nortonville, KY. Erected in December 1977 in front of the Nortonville Municipal Building and Library.



See also book:



c1960