

Lauren Brown
Granddaughter of Paul Murphy, Survivor
2008 Recipient of USS Indianapolis/Gwinn “Angel” Scholarship

Q. 1. *How has being a child/grandchild/great-grandchild of a USS Indianapolis Survivor (or LAS) affected your life? Please include details of your specific Survivor’s experience that you can obtain through a person interview with either him or another relative (his wife, siblings, etc.).*

Being a granddaughter of USS Indianapolis Survivor, Paul J. Murphy, has given me something and someone to be very proud of. The USS Indianapolis has been a part of my life for as long as I remember. I was taught to honor and respect the flag of the United States of America as it stands for the sacrifices of the many men and women in our militaries. I attended my first reunion in Indianapolis when I was five. I have been to every reunion since and it has become one of my favorite things to do in the summer. Many survivors have come to Colorado for mini-reunions. In 2000, 21 survivors were in our hometown of Broomfield as we dedicated a monument honoring the USS Indianapolis. This allowed me to spend quality time with these special men. I love talking to other survivors to hear their stories. I am amazed at how their friendships have continued over the years. I have had the opportunity to hear my grandpa tell his story to churches, Rotary Clubs, and schools from little on. I was so proud to finally be in elementary school so he could tell his story to my class. I am honored to say that even though most of my classmates at Broomfield High School have now heard the story several times, they always listen intently like it was the first time. Every time I hear him speak I always learn something new and am amazed at the story. Each time I hope that the story will end differently; that the ship didn’t sink and 880 lives weren’t lost. Unfortunately, the story never changes, 880 men die, and 317 men survive. I take great pride knowing that my grandpa is a local hero. One of my favorite parts of grandpa’s speech is when he tells of being 18 years old in boot camp in Farragut Idaho. The men climbed to a platform 80 feet above a swimming pool. They were told to place one hand on the collar of the lifejacket, the other hand “on the family jewels” and then to jump. He was so scared. My grandpa says how thankful he was that his name began with an “M” as the men had to jump alphabetically. He was able to watch the men before him jump and he thought “if they can do it, I can do it!” and when his turn came, he jumped. Little did he know that several years later that training would be put in practice as he jumped off the Indianapolis as it sank! I have learned from this that there is nothing in life that I can’t do if I just put my mind to it. I often think of my grandpa’s words, “If they can do it, I can do it”. I have carried my grandpa’s banner for many years as he has been honored in local Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, Broomfield Days parades and also in parades out of state. It always brings me to tears to hear the spectators stand, applaud and say “Thank You!” to my grandpa. Often people will salute him. I am always excited to see parents explaining the USS Indianapolis story to their children as we walk by in the parades. Sharing the USS Indianapolis saga with others outside the “USS Indianapolis family” has been a big part of my family’s life. I am always proud to wear my USS Indianapolis t-shirt. People often ask about it and I am always happy to tell the story of the Indianapolis and my grandpa’s ordeal. I always promote the book, Only 317 Survived that my grandparents created with the survivor’s own stories. It seems that I run into more and more people that have heard of the story due to the coverage by the media and by other survivors sharing their stories. My grandpa is one of the most inspirational men in my life. He has

taught me never to give up, and to have faith. He acquired these skills out in the ocean with the other men that survived. They constantly motivated each other not to give up and that help was on the way. They needed to have faith that someone was going to come help them. They joined hands and said the Lord's Prayer several times a day, especially as one of their shipmates passed away. We say the Lord's Prayer at mealtime to honor those lost in the tragedy. Some men gave up, some men had no choice, but my grandpa fought through all the obstacles and is here today. He says it is because "sharks don't like Irishmen" but I know that God was watching over him. There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about the men of the USS Indianapolis and all they did for our country. I am thankful for my grandpa and all the brave men of the USS Indianapolis. My grandpa, Paul J. Murphy, is my hero.

Q. 2. *Understanding the miraculous and heroic story of the USS Indianapolis and its crew is one way to ensure that the service and sacrifices made by the men of the ship will not be forgotten. Please choose one of the following themes: miracle of the sighting, heroism, loyalty and brotherhood, service to country, forgiveness, righting a wrong, survival against all odds. In approximately 500 words, share your understanding of the tale of the USS Indianapolis.*

It was cloudy night with an intermittent moon on July 29, 1945 as the USS Indianapolis sailed unescorted from Tinian to Leyte. She and her crew had just delivered the components of the atomic bomb which would destroy Hiroshima days later. Because clouds covered the moon and in order to speed ahead, Captain Charles Butler McVay III made the decision to cease zig-zagging and to travel in a straight line. My grandfather, Paul J. Murphy, had just finished his 8 to midnight watch. He had fallen asleep, just past midnight on July 30, as an explosion echoed through the ship. At that point, chaos ensued on the USS Indianapolis. Men were grabbing life jackets and running to see what had happened. As my grandfather reached his general quarters station, the ship had already begun to list to the starboard side. As he jumped in the water, he swam through the thick oil slick from the ship, turned around and watched his home sink as the screws continued to turn as it went down. The ship had been torpedoed by the Japanese submarine I-58, commanded by Mochitsura Hashimoto. 880 men lost their life that night and over the next four days. 317 men survived. One of them was Captain Charles McVay. Captain McVay was later court martialed for not zig-zagging that fateful night. The US Navy even brought Commander Hashimoto to testify against Captain McVay. Even though Hashimoto stated that he had a clear sight of the Indianapolis and would have been able to hit her whether she was zig-zagging or not, the Navy convicted Captain McVay. Unable to bear the weight of the tragedy and the court martial conviction, Captain McVay took his own life in 1968. From that point on, the survivors of the USS Indianapolis began their long fight to clear their beloved captain's name. They felt the Navy was using him as a scapegoat for their own mistake of not reporting the ship missing.

My grandfather became the Chairman of the USS Indianapolis Survivor's Organization in 1995. He, along with many others pursued the quest to clear Captain McVay. I was so lucky to have the opportunity to be with my grandparents in Washington DC as the bill was placed on the House floor to begin the process. My grandfather and others testified on numerous occasions to the Navy and members of Congress. Finally, on October 12, 2000 Congress passed an amendment exonerating Captain Charles McVay for the loss of the USS Indianapolis and for those men lost at sea. At the reunion in 2001, Secretary of the Navy, Gordon R. England presented the

survivors with the proclamation that Captain McVay's record now reflects the exoneration. I am proud that my grandfather was able to be a part of the long struggle to clear Captain McVay. I am also thankful that I was able to be there in the beginning as the wrong of history was righted.

Lauren lives in Broomfield, CO. She plans a major in Elementary Education with an additional Early Childhood Endorsement from the University of Northern Colorado.