

World War II - 1945 Pacific Push Continues

The Allies were winning World War II in Europe. May 8, 1945 would be “Victory in Europe Day.” With the war in Europe closing, the Pacific war became increasingly focused and intense as the allies edged closer to the Japanese home islands. Elks serving in the Pacific were on the front lines.

Fire Controlman, First Class **Stanley S. Orzel** was elected and initiated May 24, 1942, as an Elks 616 member. He was born Nov 15, 1907, in Milwaukee, WI, and was living there when he joined the Navy.

Orzel came to Pearl Harbor Mar 1942 with the destroyer tender USS *Dixie*. Later he was assigned to the destroyer USS *Morrison*, one of many speedily-built war vessels nicknamed “Tin Cans.”¹ *Morrison* left Seattle for Pearl Harbor Feb 1944 and with a brief stop at Pearl Harbor, went directly into the Pacific fighting. USS *Morrison* saw action in the Marshall Islands, Carolines, Guam, Saipan, Eniwetok, and the Philippines. After a break in late 1944-early 1945, USS *Morrison* returned to the battle stopping again in Hawaii. Mar 21, 1945, she was off Okinawa supporting the Allied invasion. Apr 30, USS *Morrison* took a more vulnerable place in the line of ships. After 3 days of bad weather prevented enemy aerial attacks, May 4, 1945 came with clear skies. In that day’s battle, six ships were damaged among them the *Morrison* - struck repeatedly by Kamikaze attacks. Two explosions occurred almost simultaneously, the bow lifted into the air, and the *Morrison* sank in less than 20 minutes trapping many men below decks. One of the 152 casualties was Fire Controlman, First Class Stanley S. Orzel.

Unaware of why Orzel’s dues payments stopped, Lodge 616 dropped his membership in 1947.

The sacrifice of Elk Orzel and his fellows was repaid slowly. Although Japanese forces began to withdraw from China May 20, 1945, Premier Suzuki announced Jun 9 that Japan would not accept unconditional surrender. Mindanao fell in mid-June, but the Philippines were not considered free until July². Among those liberated from PI internment camps were 616 member civilians held since war’s start (*War comes to 616 Elks*). Finally Jun 22, 1945, the U.S. Tenth Army declared Japanese resistance on Okinawa ended.

Elk Orzel, awarded a purple heart, is remembered at the Courts of the Missing, National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, where he joins 18,096 World War II service men missing in action. A Manila memorial remembers 36,282 additional Allied missing.

Anita Manning, 616 Lodge Historian

References:

616 Membership records and Minutes American Battle Monuments www.abmc.gov
Defense Prisoner of War / Missing Personnel Office World War II <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/wwii/reports/>
National Archives World War II online Archival Databases
Naval Historical Center *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*
<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/m14/morrison.htm>
www.familysearch.org & [ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) US Navy Memorial www.navylog.org

¹ Many “Tin Can” ships survived the war and became home to sailors in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

² Gen. Yamashita, Japanese commander in the Philippines, did not surrender until Sept 3, 1945, the day after surrender ceremonies on the *Missouri*.