

In Memory of Murl Salem Wescott, PT 236
Passed away June 1, 2016 at the age of 94
A tribute from his son Murl "Tim" Wescott, printed with his permission.

Murl was an original crew member of PT 236 when commissioned in New Orleans at the Higgins Factory on Lake Pontchartrain.

The first 5 boats (PTs 236-240) from the newly formed RON 19 ran from New Orleans to Miami, Florida for sea trials. During these trials, Murl skillfully stuck a "fish" on the sands of Miami Beach on a Sunday afternoon.

From Miami through the Caribbean to the freeport of Barranquilla, Colombia to get fuel at a fuel dock that German submarines just departed, Murl always said the crew was "puckered-up" with tension on the run from Colombia to Panama, knowing the subs were "out there!"

The first 5 boats of RON 19 passed through the Panama Canal on their own power and laid up at the Pacific Island of Taboga. All of the necessary "items of war" were loaded on the boats, and the boats were then cradled on the deck of the tanker "White Plains" owned by Shell Oil Co and fully loaded with aviation gasoline. Murl commented on the "fastest run" his boat ever made was on what was called "The Banana Run" from the naval base at Taboga to Costa Rica and back with some tons of bananas for the base during the time in Panama.

On to the South Pacific and off-loading the boats at Espirito Santos, north to the first base of operations at Tulagi. This is where Murl said he left boyhood behind and "manned-up" when Captain Crawford told his crew to "empty the boat of everything not absolutely necessary, men, we are going to war!"

From Tulagi to the marine base at Rendova and other islands as couriers and shuttles, next, RON 19 moved to Lambu-Lambu Cove on the island of Vella-Lavella.

PT 236 was the "other boat" sent from Vella-Lavella with PT 59 skippered by then Lt. Kennedy to rescue marines from Choiseul Island. PT 236, a 78' Higgins boat, carried a majority of the rescued fighters as PT 59 was a smaller version set up as a gun boat with no torpedoes. PT 236 also carried Major "Pappy" Boyington to the island of Kolombangara to search for and bury the remains of one of his pilots from the "Black Sheep Squadron."

From Vella Lavella to the new base at Treasury Island was next up for PT 236. By this time all RON 19 boats had been absorbed by RONS 20 and 21. At Treasury Island, a USO show was in for a performance. And as the cameras and press corps and Admirals stood by, Carole Lombard autographed Murl's torpedo!

Murl's last action came as the battle group moved northwest and the base at Green Island became home.

The last duty station Murl served at was Samar in the Philippines. The boats were gathered and stripped of ordinance, engines and any scrap, and run aground and piled up and burned on a reef. Murl actually witnessed the funeral pyre of "The Mosquito Fleet."

Murl was confined to a Veteran's Hospital for 13 months before his discharge to heal from both T.B. and malaria.

There we are. Just the story of one iron man on a wooden boat.

Thank you all for preserving a magnificent piece of history that my father was a part of.

Murl "Tim" Wescott

PS: In his life, Murl traveled the whole world and witnessed all its wonders. He has said that standing on the Great Wall of China or at the Great Pyramids of Egypt paled in comparison to welcoming the Rose Festival Fleet from the wheel of PT 658.

Thanks again, Tim