



## Left for Dead: A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS Indianapolis

By Pete Nelson

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### Left for Dead: A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS Indianapolis

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**For fans of *Unbroken*, *Left for Dead* is the incredible story of a boy inspired by *Jaws* to help bring closure to the survivors and their families of the World War II sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*.**

Just after midnight on July 30, 1945, the USS *Indianapolis* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. The ship sank in 14 minutes. More than 1,000 men were thrown into shark-infested waters. Those who survived the fiery sinking—some injured, many without life jackets—struggled to stay afloat in shark-infested waters as they waited for rescue. But the United States Navy did not even know they were missing.

The Navy needed a scapegoat for this disaster. So it court-martialed the captain for “hazarding” his ship. The survivors of the *Indianapolis* knew that their captain was not to blame. For 50 years they worked to clear his name, even after his untimely death. But the navy would not budge—until an 11-year-old boy named Hunter Scott entered the picture. His history fair project on the *Indianapolis* soon became a crusade to restore the captain’s good name and the honor of the men who served under him.

#### **Praise for *Left for Dead*:**

**Christopher Award Winner**

**An ALA-YALSA Best Nonfiction for Young Adults Book**

“Compelling, dreadful, and amazing.”—*VOYA*

“This exciting, life-affirming book about war heroics and justice . . . proves without question the impact one student can have on history.”—*Booklist*

“Well written and well documented . . . this excellent presentation fills a void in most World War II collections “—*School Library Journal*

“Young readers . . . will no doubt be inspired by the youth’s tenacity—and by the

valor of those who served on the *Indianapolis*.”—***The Horn Book***

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### **Editorial Review**

#### *Amazon.com Review*

It's an unlikely beginning to what became a momentous, history-changing history fair project. Eleven-year-old Hunter Scott was watching *Jaws* one day when he first heard about the World War II sinking of the USS Indianapolis. Intrigued, he investigated further, and discovered a shocking, heartbreaking story behind what should have been a tale of heroism and patriotism. Torpedoed by a Japanese submarine, the Indianapolis went down in minutes, taking more than 800 sailors with it. Several hundred survived, but only after spending days in the open sea with sharks diminishing their numbers hourly. This is only the beginning of the tragedy, however. In an effort to make an example of the ship's captain, and in order to deflect blame from itself, the U.S. Navy unfairly court-martialed the captain, painfully changing the lives of all the men involved.

Basing much of his text on young Hunter Scott's research, author Pete Nelson does a fine job of presenting this story through the eyes of many of the survivors. Old and new photos allow readers to know many of the men of the ship, and personal accounts reveal the horrors of those days in the ocean--and later in the courtroom. A bittersweet ending will leave the reader pensive and deeply moved. (Ages 12 and older) --  
*Emilie Coulter*

#### *From Publishers Weekly*

*Left for Dead* by Pete Nelson explains how the research of 11-year-old Hunter Scott who was inspired by a passing reference in the movie *Jaws* uncovered the truth behind a historic WWII naval disaster aboard the USS Indianapolis and led to the reversal of the wrongful court martial of the ship's captain. A full-color photographic inset and a preface by the now 17-year-old Scott round out the volume.

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#### *From School Library Journal*

Grade 6-9-World War II aficionados will find this title both interesting and, at times, appalling. Nelson essentially relates two stories at the same time. One is of the sinking of the U.S.S. Indianapolis. Alternately, he tells of a junior high student's crusade to exonerate the wrongfully court-martialed captain of the ship. In the preface, Hunter Scott relates how, as an 11-year-old, his curiosity about the Indy was piqued by a shark story in the movie *Jaws*. While seeking more information about it, he learned of the gross errors and oversights that effectively doomed the ship by sending it directly into the path of a Japanese submarine. The U.S. Navy was not willing to admit that anyone except Captain McVay made any errors. The author describes the horrors the survivors endured as they waited for four and a half days to be rescued, which came about only because of an accidental sighting. The text also describes how the combined efforts of Scott, several of the survivors, national media attention, and several members of Congress posthumously exonerated McVay of any charges. The text is well written and well documented. Navy portraits and present-day photos of the survivors are included, as is a second section that shows the Indy, a map of the Pacific and the scene of the attack, and people who helped Scott. This excellent presentation fills a void in most World War II collections.

*Eldon Younce, Harper Elementary School, KS*

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#### **Elinor Russell:**

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