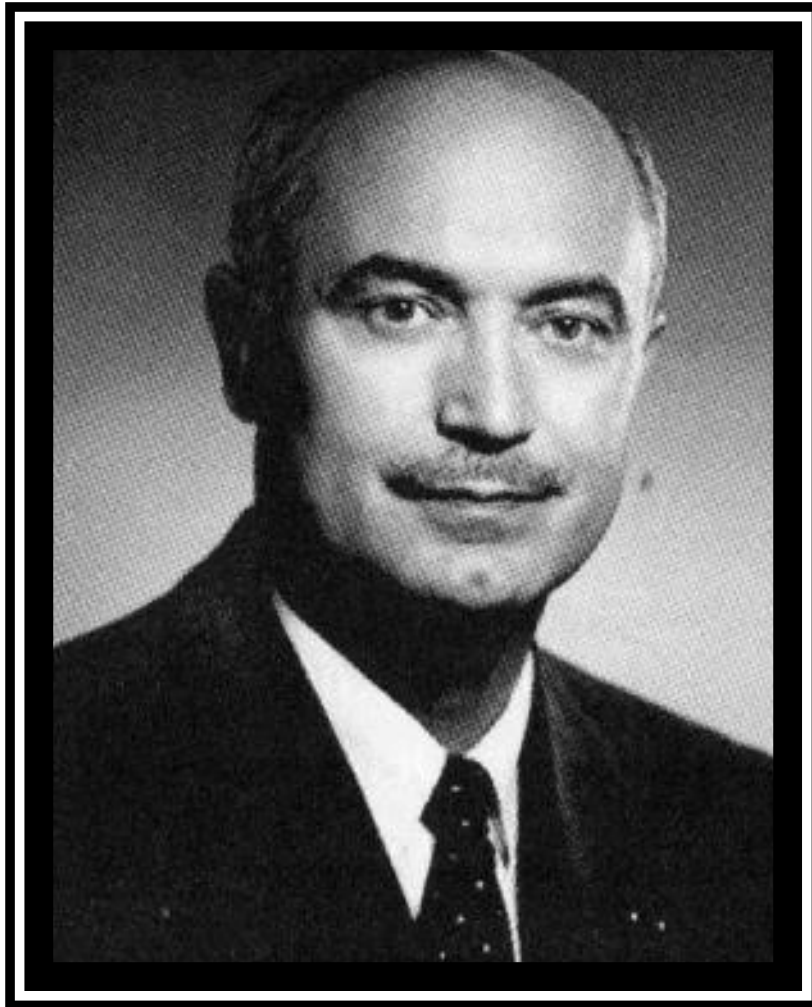


JOSEPH R. MCMICKING
1908 - 1990



LEYTE LANDING

OCTOBER, 20, 1944

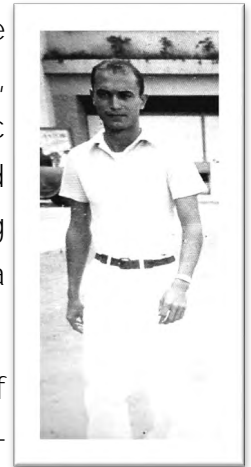
THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

OCTOBER 23 TO 26, 1944

JOSEPH RALPH MCMICKING

Joseph Ralph McMicking is known as a business maverick in three continents - his native Philippines, the United States and Spain. And yet, little is known about his service before and during World War II in the Pacific and even in the years following the war. A time filled with complete and utter service to the Philippine Commonwealth and the United States using his unique skills that would later on guide him in business. It was also a period of great personal sacrifice.

He was born Jose Rafael McMicking in Manila on March 23, 1908, of Scottish-Spanish-Filipino descent. His father, lawyer Jose La Madrid McMicking, was the first Filipino Sheriff and Clerk of Court in American Manila, thereafter becoming the General Manager of the Insular Life Assurance Company until his demise in early 1942. His mother was Angelina



Joe at 23 years old



Ynchausti, McMicking, Ortigas Family
Joe is standing in the back row, 3rd from Right

Ynchausti Rico from the Filipino business conglomerate of Ynchausti & Co. His early education started in Manila at the Catholic De la Salle School. He was sent to California for high school at the San Rafael Military Academy and went to Stanford University but chose to return to the Philippines before graduation. He married Mercedes Zobel in 1931 and became a General Manager of Ayala Cia, his wife's family business. He became a licensed

pilot in 1932 and a part-time flight instructor with the newly-formed Philippine Army Air Corps in 1936.

During the outbreak of WWII he became the youngest and only Filipino in General Douglas MacArthur's staff. He left the Philippines with General MacArthur on March 12, 1942, to set up the Southwest Pacific Command in Australia. He served under General Charles Willoughby of the Allied Intelligence Bureau, where he developed preliminary plans for the Philippine intelligence network used by the Allied Forces. He was appointed by the Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon on April 20, 1942,



Joe with Brig. Generals William Marquat and Charles Willoughby, March 1942, Del Monte Plantation, Mindanao



General Douglas MacArthur & his Staff in Corregidor in 1945. Joe is seen on the extreme right wearing a helmet.

as disbursing officer of the Philippine government and developed complex policies on guerrilla currency exchange. He became an emissary to the Philippine Commonwealth Government in Exile in Washington, D.C., to help plan the civilian relief and reconstruction of post WWII Philippines. He returned to the Philippines with General MacArthur on October 20, 1944, during the Leyte Landing.

Upon his return to Manila with the 11th Airborne Division, where he served under Commanding Officer General Joseph Swing, he discovered that his mother Angelina, his sisters Consuelo and Helen and his brother Alfred (a

survivor of the Bataan Death March) were executed by the Japanese Kempei Tai at the Masonic Temple. They were among the 100,000 civilians killed during the month-long Battle of Manila, whose destruction was only second to Warsaw during WWII.



Through McMicking's personal financial resources and business acumen, he paid off the obligations that Insular Life Assurance Company incurred during the

Angelina McMicking Consuelo McMicking Hall Helen & Alfred McMicking

war and revived the near bankrupt Ayala & Company, laying down

the foundations of the modern-day city of Makati, the financial center of the Philippines. He went on to become a pioneer in business circles in California and Spain but his greatest achievement was his service during World War II and in the ensuing years when he helped his native country rise from the ashes. He did all of that without fanfare and attention to himself.

In the words of the great Philippine statesman Carlos P. Romulo (the first Asian President of the United Nations General Assembly from 1949 to 1950), "McMicking's work was done inconspicuously, selflessly and anonymously. Indeed, it is a rare virtue in our time to achieve anonymity, so that to come upon it in a man one admires is a privilege."



Joseph & Mercedes McMicking

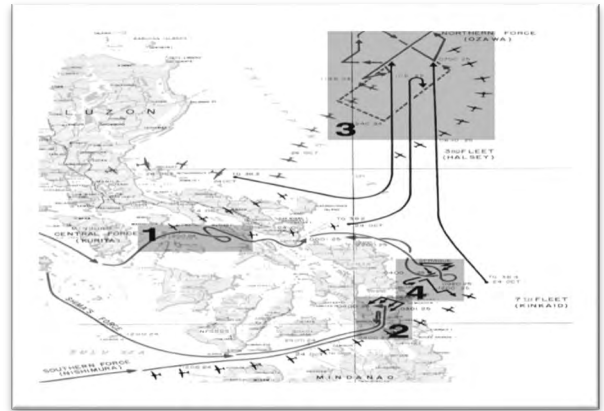
Joseph R. McMicking passed away in Sotogrande, Spain on October 5, 1990 and Mercedes McMicking passed away on December 5, 2005 also in Sotogrande. Although they lived in Spain, it was both their wish to be buried in the Santuario de San Antonio in Makati, Philippines, the country they both loved and always considered their home.

LEYTE LANDING & THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF

(From a Speech delivered by Col. Joseph R. McMicking at a Banquet given by the Insular Life Assurance Co., Ltd. And the Tacloban Lions Club in honor of the City and Municipality Mayors in Convention in Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines on October 19, 1956.)

Tonight, with your permission, I will speak about two things that have been very important in my life: Leyte and Insurance. Insurance, if you wish, has been the pattern of my life, my daily bread, my work and my achievement, such as it be.

Leyte was something else in my life, a climax, an unforgettable moment, a privilege---the rare privilege of being part of history in the making. I was not one of the principal actors in that moment, in fact, I didn't even have a speaking part, but I can say with pride that while it all happened, I was on the stage.



Map of Battle of Leyte Gulf (Oct. 23-26, 1944)

Leyte and Insurance. There is a connection between these two things for me---a valuable connection. This is what I want to tell you about. Let me begin with Insurance, then set the scene.

Insurance is an everyday thing. This is because hazards and dangers are also, unfortunately, everyday things. The wise man accepts both, and protects himself from one by the use of the other. Insurance is not a luxury. It is a basic technique of business, just as much as banking. I'll go even further, it is a tool of everyday life.

There are many types of insurance besides life --- marine, fire, third-Party liability. But all of them exist to accomplish a single purpose: to make the future---the mysterious, the unpredictable future---something that you can face with confidence and with a clear conscience.



Leyte Landing, October 20, 1944

Even though I hate to admit it, insurance does not answer every problem. It answers a lot of problems, but not all. Some risks are not insurable, and these unfortunately are the ones that have the greatest effect on the entire world. These are the risks of war and peace. This is the risk of the outcome of battle. Such a battle was the Battle for Leyte Gulf, the memory of which we celebrate today.

Within two hundred miles of this spot where I am standing, twelve years ago, a tremendous drama took place over a period of seven days.

Let me tell you about it through the eyes of a staff officer present during much of the developing action.

The plans for the landings in the Philippines were grouped together under the code word "King." King One was Sarangani Bay. King Two and Three --- Leyte Gulf. Four – Mindoro, Five -- Lingayen. Six---Nasugbu, Seven --- Subic. To undertake King One, Biak had to be taken because Biak would be the airfield for land based planes supporting Sarangani which had to be taken to provide fighter cover for Leyte.



Ships during the Battle of Leyte Gulf

By the same token, Mindoro was within fighter range of Central Luzon and Lingayen. This planning started energetically about March 1944 on the dual assumption that war in Europe would still be on. And that full support would be given by the forces under Admiral Nimitz of the Central Pacific. It was possible to go ahead with these plans because Finshaven, Hollandia and Wadki had been successfully occupied.



Admiral Chester Nimitz

In late June 1944, I went to Washington to find out if the Philippine Government-in-Exile was as far along in its civil planning for the Philippine operations, as we were on the military side. A little prodding here and there, the polishing of the proclamations of the President, some details regarding the transfer from military to civil government, the availability of money and coinage (for instance, should there be more subsidiary silver coins percentage-wise than existed before the war? The answer to that was, "Yes," we should double the percentage), the establishment of the PCAU units to feed the civil population. In what amounts should this food be provided? Should we use California rice which is very glutinous, or use Chilean rice because it was more palatable to the Filipinos?

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President Quezon with Staff in Washington, DC

The second week of July, I went up to Saranac Lake and called on the President. There I found delightful Doña Aurora, General Valdes, Fr. Ortiz and Manuel Nieto, who is now the Philippine Ambassador to Madrid. Mr. Quezon was in bed, but his mind was working brilliantly as usual, and he was in rare good form.



President Manuel Quezon & Family in Leesburg, Virginia

Reminiscing about old times, of school days with my father and my father-in-law. A couple of Martini cocktails before dinner, loosening his tongue to tell about his running battles with Secretary Harold Ickes. His dreams and plans, what he would do when he returned to these shores with the Army of Liberation. These were two very happy impressive days for me. I left President Quezon, bringing with me to Brisbane and Hollandia the different signed papers of what had

been developed. Then, less than two weeks later, we received the shocking news of the death of this patriot, this giant of a Filipino who had labored all his life for his people. His great heart had burst. He now lived in history.

The reins of the government passed quickly to the hands of Don Sergio Osmeña, gallant, distinguished, experienced, able. He and his staff, which included General Valdes and General Romulo, came to Hollandia in mid-September for the final phases of the planning of King One.



President Sergio Osmeña & Cabinet



While all this was going on, the war in the Pacific continued at high pitch. In August, Admiral Raymond Spruance, who later became the American Ambassador in Manila, turned his command over to Admiral William Halsey.

Admiral Raymond Spruance During the first three weeks of September, Halsey's fighters strike up and down the Philippine Archipelago, destroyed many Japanese planes and broke the back of the Japanese Air Force. Finding so little opposition, he sent a dispatch to Admiral Nimitz, who in turn passed it on to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recommending that the landing be made in Central Philippines, in Leyte, abandoning the plans for Sarangani. This would be possible because with little Japanese



Admiral William Halsey

opposition in the air, the small CVEs, the baby carriers, could give the air cover for the troops on shore during the first ten days without having to depend on land-based aviation.



2nd Quadrant Conference, Quebec September 1944

By good fortune, the Quadrant Conference was taking place in Quebec. Roosevelt, Churchill, and all their principal staff, including the Joint Chiefs were there. When Admiral King presented Halsey's recommendation, the Quadrant conferees immediately decided that, if MacArthur accepted the suggestion of advancing the landing in Central Visayas by two months, it would be approved by the Combined Chiefs-of-Staff.

By a whim of fate, I was sitting in the office of General Sutherland, MacArthur's Chief-of-Staff, when that urgent dispatch arrived. There was no reason for me to hear about it, but because Sutherland knew of my deep interest in the Philippines, he handed me the message right after he read it. General MacArthur was away, on the cruiser Louiseville en route to Biak, under radio silence. He could not communicate with GHQ, so Sutherland, capable soldier that he was, after consulting with the other senior commanders, accepted the change of schedule in MacArthur's name. This decision was heartily approved by the Commander-in-Chief when he returned. The machinery for the Operations were set in motion.

A general revision of plans had to be sent out. Concentration of forces from Hawaii, the Admiralties, New Guinea and the Solomons had to be arranged. About the 10th of October the most distant of the forces started to move. On the 17th, Frogmen and Rangers were landed on Dinagat Island. On the same day, I boarded the destroyer "Bush" at Hollandia, which provided part of the screen for the Louiseville, on which the Commander-in-Chief was sailing. Three uneventful, wonderful days at sea. Beautiful weather. On the second day we caught up and started passing the convoys, which covered the whole ocean area, as far as the eye could see, ships and more ships. Airplane cover above at all times from the Navy's baby carriers.



Generals Richard Sutherland, George Kenney, President Sergio Osmeña & General Douglas MacArthur. Dr. Basilio J. Valdes on foreground.



Leyte Landing, October 20, 1944

Still with beautiful weather, at first light of the 20th, the bombardment by the six old battleships that had been raised from the mud at Pearl Harbor commenced. About 07:00, the first wave hit the beaches, and at 09:00, on a small landing barge, General MacArthur and President Osmeña, with Sutherland, Kenney, Romulo, Valdes and a dozen more, myself included, waded ashore.

Friendly heavy firing still going on, but negligible Japanese opposition. I could not resist falling on my knees upon touching the land of my birth, and that of my father before me. Close by, MacArthur made his now famous "I have returned" speech from a radio van set up among the coconut trees.

For the next three days, the sun continued to shine. The Japanese didn't seem to exist. Something like a hundred and three thousand American troops, with their supplies and ammunition, were put ashore.



Leyte Landing, October 20, 1944

On the afternoon of the 24th, on the steps of the Capitol here in Tacloban, in a simple but dignified ceremony, General MacArthur turned the reins of government over to President Osmeña. On those steps all the principal commanders were present, Kinkaid, Krueger, Kenney, Kangleon---it is curious that all their names begin with "K." Every thing seemed serene and peaceful.



Steps of Tacloban Capitol in Leyte



General Krueger & Col. Ruperto Kangleon



Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid

Immediately following this ceremony, I was delayed a few moments talking to friends like Ramon Zosa, missed my immediate boat transportation and had to wait for a landing craft to take me back to the Bush,

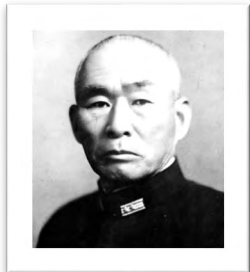
where I had been sleeping at night those first four days. But having been delayed, I saw the Bush weigh anchor and pull out with all my gear except the musette bag that I was carrying. I took temporary accommodations on board the PCE-218 that night at the invitation of my friend, General Aiken, the Chief Signal Officer. But why had the Bush sailed away?

During the quiet ceremony on the Capitol steps, only about a dozen present knew of the impending naval battle that was to develop that night. It turned out to be one of the great naval battles of history: certainly the decisive battle of the Philippine campaign.

The enemy realized that, sooner or later, a major naval engagement with the American fleet was inevitable. It would have to be fought in the Philippine Seas or around Formosa, depending where the American forces were committed. This was the Sho Plan, "To Conquer." It was bold and imaginative in concept. It was also a desperate last effort, to stem the tide of Allied victory. It called for Admiral Ozawa, with the remaining carriers

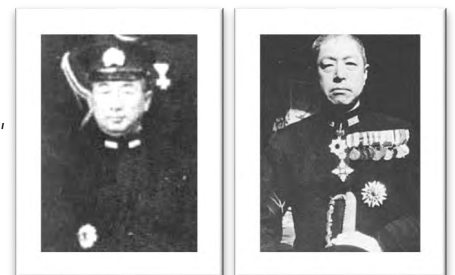


Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa



Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita

but with just a hundred planes (the rest had been lost in combat) acting as a decoy, to come from Empire waters in the North. The main thrust, The First Diversion Attack Force, under Admiral Kurita would leave from Singapore, refuel at Brunei Bay in Borneo, arrive at Leyte Gulf at 0700 hours in the morning of October 25th. From the south and



Vice Admirals Shoji Nishimura and Kiyohide Shima

Formosa, two other forces – Admiral Nishimura and Admiral Shima would fight their way through Suri-gao Straits.

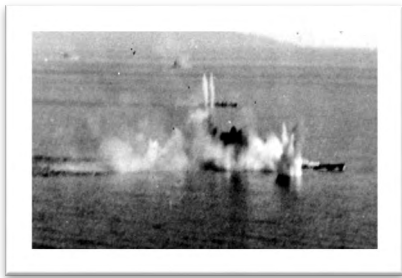
The Japanese plan was set in motion on the 17th October, the same date the Rangers landed on Dinagat. The different forces were tracked by submarines and by patrol planes, all, that is, except the forces of Admiral Ozawa in the North.

When Kurita was passing Palawan, he was attacked by the submarines Dace and Darter which compelled Kurita to leave his sinking flagship, the Atago. He moved to the Kishanani and later to the Yamato. With these transfers, he was separated from most of his communications personnel. This would have a very important bearing on the coming battle. In his force were the Yamato and the Musashi, the two biggest battleships in the world -- 68,000 tons and 18-inch guns. As Kurita entered the seas within the Archipelago, he was subjected to heavy attack by Halsey's flyers of Task Force 38. He lost the Musashi, and more were severely damaged.



USS Darter

We were plotting these movements on a war map, here in Tacloban in the house of Mr. Price. Kurita turned west while we were having the ceremony on the Capitol steps and, this we did not know, shortly after dark, again made for San Bernardino Straits.



Sinking of Battleship Musashi

Nishimura and Shima had other problems to contend with. Shima was senior but he had the smaller force. He and Nishimura were not on speaking terms nor in communications with each other. Furthermore, Nishimura, to preempt glory, did not enter Surigao together with Shima. He advanced his time and entered Surigao ahead of schedule.

Admiral Oldendorf, the Officer in Tactical Command under Kincaid, was waiting for him. He classically crossed the T, and with the exception of one destroyer, completely demolished the Japanese force. Shima did not know of this disaster and followed an hour later. When he was caught, realizing that prudence is sometimes the better part of valor, he turned, partially escaped, and his fame rests in oblivion. By 04:00 on October 25th, we had knowledge of the great victory. Everything now seemed secure. The night of the 24th, a couple of hun-



Rear Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf

dred miles northeast of Tacloban, Admiral Halsey, with the enormous Third Fleet, the largest concentration of Naval power the world has ever seen, was evaluating the information that was coming in from contact reports.

A dispatch came in from a contact made by a plane of the Enterprise that several Japanese carriers had been sighted off Cape Engaño, near Aparri. They had a staff meeting and Halsey's Chief-of-Staff (who later became Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Carney) and a good friend of mine, Capt. Mike Cheek, The Fleet Intelligence Officer



Rear Admiral Robert Carney

(who, by the way used to be in the insurance business in Manila before the war) arrived at the conclusion and recommended to Halsey that the force in the North was the main force of the enemy, and that Kurita was in retreat towards the West. Halsey had given consideration to leave Admiral Lee with the fast new battleships to guard San Bernardino, and he passed this intended plan to his Fleet. These were temporary instructions and notification of intention, but they were also read by Nimitz in Pearl Harbor, and Kincaid on the Watsch in Leyte Gulf. Halsey's message was loosely worded, and led all to believe that Lee was remaining behind. Actually, Halsey sailed North with everything he had, a force five times bigger than the most that Ozawa could put up against him, even if he had planes. On such misunderstandings and errors rest the course of history - and the fate of nations.



Rear Admiral Clifton Sprague receiving Navy Cross from Rear Admiral Calvin T. Durgin aboard USS FANSHAW BAY

The following morning, shortly after daybreak, a reconnaissance plane reported to Admiral Sprague, in command of the Seventh Fleet baby carriers, that an enemy task force of battleships was emerging from the San Bernardino Straits. This seemed improbable. He was asked to check again because it was felt that those battleships must be Admiral Lee's Task Force 34. The reply was conclusive: "Battleships have pagoda masts." It did not take long for the Yamato, with Kurita's cruisers and destroyers, to overtake the relatively slow baby carriers. In quick order, despite maneuvers, smoke screens and tremendously heroic action by American destroyers, two carriers were sunk and many of the remainder damaged.

Those of you who were here on that morning will recall the arrival of many Navy planes on the still unfinished Tacloban strip, planes that could not return to their carriers because they were at the bottom of the sea. Admiral Sprague - who is one of the negotiators for the bases agreement going on in Manila just now - sailed South and East and hid out behind rain squalls. Halsey was 300 miles to the North, going North at break neck speed for Ozawa's decoy formation. The only part of the Third Fleet, detached the previous day to fuel and refurnish at Ulithi, was the Task Force 38.4 under Admiral McCain.



Sinking of Zuikaku, Admiral Ozawa's Flagship at Cape Engaño

Kurita was alone. Six old U.S. battleships inadequately armed because of the previous night's battle, were in Leyte Gulf. The hawk could now swoop down among the chickens and pick them off, one by one. Here were a hundred of thin-skinned transports and supply ships. There, a few yards from the beach, the temporary headquarters of the Army commanders, and stock piles of food and ammunition supplies.

Here was the whole purpose of the Sho Plan to put Kurita in the position to destroy from the sea, the American landing. Here was the opportunity for a Naval Commander to reach the pinnacle of fame. But Kurita mills around. He gathers his force. He goes in this direction and then that, trying to estimate the naval force facing him. He is being hit by Sprague's planes.



Yamato, Admiral Kurita's flagship,
hit by bombs

You will recall that he lost the greater portion of his communications personnel, and now he did not have effective communications. He knew Nishimura had been defeated. He had no news of Shima. He did not know that Ozawa had been sighted by Halsey. Were these planes hitting him from ask Force 38?

From 07:00 until 09:30, Kurita enjoyed the luxury of indecision. He finally decided on retreat, and turned back to San Bernardino. The crown of victory, which would have been his, was

flung into the sea. Halsey on the other hand, having made this tactical error in sailing North with all his force now within 40 miles of Ozawa's force in the North, turns around and comes running back because of the hurried pleadings of Kincaid in Leyte Gulf. Six hundred miles up and down the Eastern Coast of the Philippines, and not a shot was fired. Because of an incorrect decision, he risked the whole success of the landing in Leyte.

What would have happened if Kurita had entered Leyte Gulf? Let us speculate. All shipping and all supplies ashore would probably have been destroyed. The army troops that in November and December had such difficult trouble with the Japanese troops that Yamashita dribbled into Ormoc, would probably have been pushed into the sea. Halsey would have lost his command. The pattern for the liberation of the Philippines would have been completely different. For one thing, we would not be here tonight because victories are celebrated, not defeats.

With the destruction of MacArthur's force, the alternative plan, bypassing the Philippines to hit Formosa under Nimitz, would probably have been adopted. And until the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Philippines would have remained under Japan just as Hong Kong did. The Japanese lost because of the irresolution and blundering ineptitude of three of their four principal commanders. Only Ozawa, the bait, really carried out his mission. In his report,

Admiral Sprague said that the Japanese failure to wipe out the Seventh Fleet was "a definite partiality of Almighty God." We must remain forever thankful for that break.

It has been an honor to have been invited to address this distinguished group on the eve of so historic a date. I thank you all for the opportunity to live again those decisive moments of 1944. Although many years have passed and many changes have taken place, I think it most worthwhile to pause a moment and remember the ideals that brought Kangleon and MacArthur to meet on these shores---to remember those ideals, and to keep them fresh in our daily life. To humbly thank the many thousands who paid for our future with their lives. And to thank the Good Lord above for having been so kind to all of us at that moment of crisis.



Japanese Surrender Aboard the USS
Missouri in Tokyo Bay, September 3, 1945

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Biography of Joseph Ralph McMicking

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Photos

Jessie T. Huberty (From Photo Collection of Gen. Basilio J. Valdes, MD)

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