

RESEARCH & DEBATE

PARSHALL'S "WHOPPERS" EXAMINED FACT-CHECKING THE VARIOUS CLAIMS AND CONCLUSIONS OF JONATHAN PARSHALL

Martin Bennett

This was written in response to an article by Jon Parshall that appeared in the Spring 2010 *Naval War College Review*.¹ When I first came across Parshall's article I was interested and even intrigued, but the more I read, the more apparent it became that his work was not sound.

One element, I believe, that may have colored what otherwise might have been an objective analysis was Parshall's clearly stated goal to "bury Fuchida." Generally, a biased, set conclusion is not a good starting point for a historical analysis.

Good research begins with questions and ends with conclusions, when facts permit. Parshall attempts to make the facts fit his conclusions, and when he cannot, he uses conjecture and assumptions to try to bridge the gap. Throughout his article, Parshall employs a wide variety of euphemisms accusing Fuchida of "lies." One would expect a less snarky, cynical analysis from a historian.

On my first reading I knew that Parshall had made some mistakes, but I never realized just how many until I actually started checking. There is no doubt that Jon Parshall is a smart and knowledgeable historian who has done some great work. Yet instead of overturning the record on Fuchida, he has instead turned a light onto his own methods and thereby called into question the trustworthiness of the entire body of research underpinning his coauthored book, *Shattered Sword*.

Since most of the arguments come down to the credibility of four individuals, here is a look at who they are.

After serving eight years as vice president of a non-profit company and cofounding a manufacturing company (which won the 2003 award for Small Business Administration Entrepreneur of the Year), Martin Bennett now devotes his time to historical research and scriptwriting. His second script is for a feature film about the lives of Mitsuo Fuchida, Jacob "Jake" DeShazer, and the Covell family, entitled Wounded Tiger: The True Story of the Pilot Who Led the Attack on Pearl Harbor. While developing the film project, Bennett converted the script into a historical novel, to be published under the same title in 2013.

Jon Parshall's biographical note for his article in the *Review* describes him as the "coauthor of *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* and the owner of a website on the Imperial Japanese Navy, www.combinedfleet.com. Mr. Parshall has been published in such periodicals as the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, *World War II*, and this journal, and he has made frequent television and guest lecture appearances on the topic of the Imperial Navy in World War II. He is also an adjunct lecturer for the Naval War College. Mr. Parshall is currently in the software industry."

Gordon W. Prange received his PhD in history in 1937 from the University of Iowa and began his teaching career the same year as a professor of history at the University of Maryland. In 1942 he was granted a leave of absence to embark on a wartime career as an officer in the U.S. Navy. Sent to Japan in 1945 as a member of the American Occupation Forces, Prange completed his naval service soon thereafter, continuing in Japan as a civilian from 1946 to 1951, as the chief of General Douglas MacArthur's hundred-person historical staff. Shortly after the war, he began a series of interviews with Mitsuo Fuchida that extended for hundreds of hours over a period of years. He was the author of six books, some prepared for publication after his death in 1980 by Katherine V. Dillon and Donald Goldstein. Among the most prominent is *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*, the culmination of thirty-seven years of research. He was arguably the most knowledgeable person on Pearl Harbor.

Donald Goldstein is professor emeritus at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh. In addition to his contributions to Prange's *At Dawn We Slept*, *Miracle at Midway*, and *God's Samurai*, he also collaborated with historian J. Michael Wenger on several books, including *The Way It Was: Pearl Harbor—the Original Photographs* (1995); *Rain of Ruin: A Photographic History of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1995); and *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (1993). He is today the most prominent living historian on Pearl Harbor and Mitsuo Fuchida.

Mitsuo Fuchida was the senior flight commander of the First Air Fleet, First Carrier Division. He led the attack on Pearl Harbor, ending the war as a captain. After the war, Fuchida and Masatake Okumiya coauthored *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan, the Japanese Navy's Story*.² Regarding the overall credibility of their book, the historian Thomas B. Buell explains in the introduction to its 1992 edition:

[*Midway*] is a story written by two Japanese naval officers who were in a position to know about the details of that battle, but much of what they have to say is personal opinion, which may not necessarily have been shared by colleagues. Although the book does not have a bibliography, the editors' preface states that they researched

and authenticated the data to the extent possible using both Japanese and American records. As one of the editors was Roger Pineau, the premier American expert on the Japanese navy in the war, there is good reason to believe that the data as to events is accurate. I am not aware of any challenges to its assertions since this book was first published in 1955.³

Fuchida also wrote his memoirs, which were published posthumously in Japanese, later in English under the title *For That One Day: The Memoirs of Mitsuo Fuchida, Commander of the Attack on Pearl Harbor*.⁴

So let's break it down.



Naval History & Heritage Command (NHHC) Photo no. NH 50930

PARSHALL'S FIRST SET OF ASSERTIONS IS THREEFOLD

Parshall states that Fuchida would never have mentally earmarked fuel tank farms for destruction, that Fuchida never entered into a heated argument on the bridge of *Akagi* demanding a third-wave attack, and that a “mere air group commander” like Fuchida would never have been privy to such information regarding the details of a possible land invasion. Let's look at each of Parshall's charges.

Fuchida Never Made a Mental Earmark to Target the Tank Farms

Parshall believes he knows what was in Fuchida's mind as he circled Pearl Harbor and looked down at massive fuel storage tanks. He finds it unbelievable that Fuchida thought they would make opportune targets. Parshall believes that Fuchida added this statement only in 1963 to make himself appear more clever.

What would be truly remarkable is if the Imperial Japanese Navy's top pilot had not had such thoughts. Of course, Fuchida knew the list of target priorities, carefully outlined during the meetings in Yokosuka and on board *Akagi*, but he had also spent the morning circling Pearl Harbor with binoculars in one hand, a map in the other, and a notepad strapped to his leg, assessing the scene. The Japanese had been spurred to war in part by the precious commodity of oil, and they knew its strategic value to the Americans. Parshall's argument is that no independent confirmation exists of Fuchida's mental notes. This is an absurd claim.

Parshall also believes that no one thought of bombing the tank farms until the Americans later pointed them out, and he refers to an interrogation in 1945 by the Americans who asked Fuchida why there had not been a follow-up attack on Pearl Harbor. Fuchida answered but made no comment about possible targets in the event of such an attack (which was not germane to the question). This is Parshall's smoking gun.

There are two problems with this argument. First, postwar military inquiries are not free-flowing conversations but more like legal depositions—question and answer. Also, Fuchida did in fact mention the tank farms to Gordon Prange on 4 March 1948.⁵ Was Fuchida making himself out to be some kind of genius (supposedly in retrospect) by saying he thought about bombing the fuel tanks? Not at all—a Japanese captain on another fleet carrier had exactly the same idea:

On board the carrier *Soryu*, Adm. Tamon Yamaguchi reported that his ship and the carrier *Hiryu* and their aircraft were ready to launch the third wave attack. Capt. Jisaku Okada of the carrier *Kaga*, the second carrier accompanying the *Akagi*, recommended that the fuel tanks and dock facilities be included in the list of targets, even if the attack sorties were flown the next day. The remaining two carriers—*Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*—reported that they were ready to return for another attack on Pearl Harbor.⁶

Also, from interviews with Fuchida found in *God's Samurai* and in his *Memoirs*, it is clear that he vigorously disagreed with the recommendation of Kusaka (rear admiral and chief of staff of the First Air Fleet during the attacks, whom Fuchida did not care for as an officer) to retreat after the successful attack on Pearl Harbor. He refers to Kusaka's philosophy as "lions retreat once they have accomplished their attack." Yet at the same time he quotes Kusaka as saying, "We have now accomplished the purpose of our operation by attacking Pearl Harbor and annihilating the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Any further attempt to attack oil tanks or repair facilities at the naval shipyard is nothing but the hindsight of fools."⁷ If Fuchida was supposedly trying to make himself appear clever, in retrospect, would it be logical for him to want Kusaka to appear equally clever?

There Was No Heated Argument on the Bridge of Akagi Following the Successful Two Waves against Pearl Harbor



Twentieth Century Fox publicity photo

Parshall is arguing with himself here. First he alleges that Fuchida "pressed vigorously for a follow-up attack," saying that the scene of an argument on the bridge was mirrored in the movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (a Hollywood film really should not be used as evidence of historical accuracy), and then shows how it never happened. This section would be better named "Parshall's Tale of the Missing Argument," as neither Fuchida, Commander Minoru Genda, nor anyone else testified that Fuchida had "pressed vigorously" or argued for a follow-up attack. However, for this Parshall relies primarily on Haruo Tohmatsu, who repeatedly states that Fuchida "demanded" a third wave.

Interestingly, Tohmatsu referred to the incident in his book *A Gathering Darkness* by citing another of his books, *Pearl Harbor*, which does not contain notes—a strange method for a serious nonfiction writer.⁸ Therefore, Parshall depends on a secondary, undocumented source for his historical data.

Two points—one, there was no argument, and two, no proposal was put forth. I agree that no argument took place, but Fuchida never said it did. Regarding the second point, the best that Genda could possibly have said was that he did not hear the proposal, which would easily have been missed by Genda if he simply was not there at the time.

Neither Fuchida nor Genda argued for the proposal, and, ironically, Genda affirmed that in Parshall's own article, so again, we find Parshall mistaken. In his book *Midway*, Fuchida said that he "strongly recommended" to Nagumo a further attack on Oahu.⁹ He did, along with many others, want a further strike; as did Lieutenant Jinichi Goto, commander of the Japanese torpedo bombers, who said, "Most of the young flying officers were eager to attack Pearl Harbor again because they wished to inflict as much damage as possible."¹⁰ Parshall seems to want it both ways: on one hand, he admits that Fuchida adamantly wanted another strike, while on the other he proposes that Fuchida never mentioned a word of this to any of his leaders.

Prior to this, Fuchida had been debriefed by Nagumo and Kusaka in Genda's presence on the bridge, where they carefully assessed the total situation.¹¹ Having imagined losing up to half their ships and half their aircraft, all were contemplating some way to exploit the overwhelmingly favorable circumstances, but in the end Nagumo went with Kusaka's advice to cash in their chips and head home. There is no indication throughout this section of any heated argument, fist pounding, or histrionics. Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Japanese culture and protocol within the Imperial Japanese Navy would immediately know that it would never occur to a subordinate officer to demand anything of a superior officer.

A careful reading of Tohmatsu and Willmott's *Pearl Harbor* shows that they were primarily upset about Nagumo and Kusaka's being ostracized or scapegoated, made to look like cowards, for turning back after the Pearl Harbor attack and missing what appeared to be an opportune time to finish off the Americans.¹² They make a good case—and I tend to agree with them—that Nagumo made the best choice possible. Still, neither he nor Kusaka ever lived it down. The fictional scene from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* certainly does not help.

A Mere Air Group Commander like Fuchida Would Never Be Privy to Such Information

This is Parshall's last attempt to try to "bury" Fuchida. He states regarding a plan to invade Oahu: "Finally, of course, even if there had been such plans on the grand strategic level, a mere air group commander like Fuchida almost certainly would not have been privy to their details on 7 December. Yet Fuchida's 'privileged' statements to this retired American captain played nicely to the whole American psychology relating to this battle."

Gordon Prange wrote the following in *At Dawn We Slept*, regarding the highest-ranking Japanese officers in this attack and their conversations on the way to Pearl Harbor:

Immediately after lunch Nagumo held another meeting in *Akagi's* ward-room. His own staff attended, as did Yamaguchi and Hara, with their staffs, and all the flying officers, headed by Fuchida. Nagumo opened this meeting by reading the instructions which Genda and Fuchida had prepared for him en route to Hitokappu Bay. When the young flying officers discovered that they would attack Pearl Harbor, "their joy was beyond description."

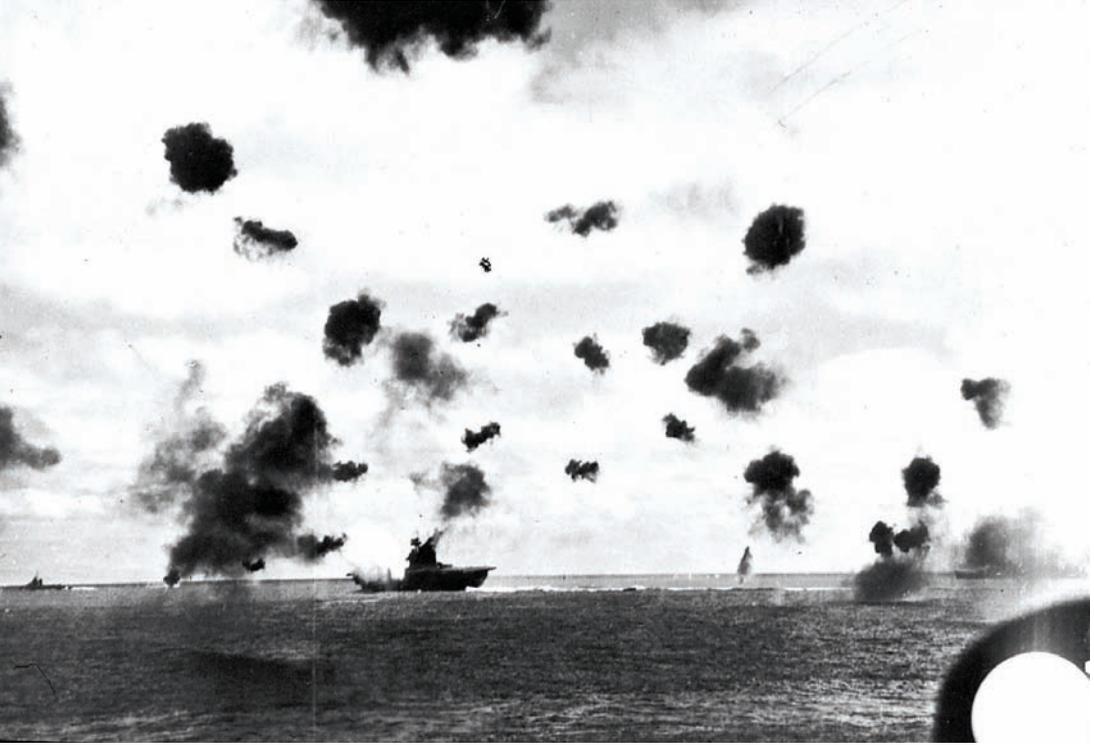
Then the airmen took over. Genda spoke for almost an hour. For the benefit of those who had not attended the first session, he repeated what he had said that morning. Then he analyzed the five major attack plans which he and Fuchida had prepared. They had worked out the plans with their flight commanders in Kyushu during September and October, so they were not pulling any major surprise. But they took full advantage of this last chance to rehearse, to coordinate group thinking, and to improve upon the design.¹³

Fuchida would have definitely known about a follow-up invasion, because he and Genda would have been instructed what not to strike. First, Fuchida had been personally appointed by Rear Admiral Nagumo as the senior flight commander, First Air Fleet, First Carrier Division. He had trained and commanded the Kidô Butai's combined air forces for the six aircraft carriers, roughly four hundred aircraft and eight hundred fliers—hardly a "mere" commander. Second, Fuchida and Genda were best friends from the Eta Jima Naval Academy and continued so throughout the war. They worked closely together in the months leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Fuchida easily knew more details about this attack than did Nagumo and Yamamoto combined, and he proved it in his many interviews. Had there been any serious plans to invade Oahu, Fuchida would certainly have been among the first to know. Parshall's speculation has no foundation here.

PARSHALL'S SECOND ARGUMENT: A FIVE-MINUTE DISPARITY IN THE FOG OF WAR

Parshall's second indictment against Fuchida concerns his claim that at Midway the Japanese were five minutes away from launching a counterattack. He states that "Fuchida's entire rendition of the climax of the most important naval battle in American history was a lie. The Japanese were nowhere near ready to counter-attack at this time."

Let us begin with a fact I expect everyone will agree on, especially the best-informed experts—that there is a tremendous amount of conflicting information, records, and testimonies on all sides about the events leading up to and including the turning point of the battle of Midway. Every book on Midway that



U.S. Navy Photoprint no. W-MI-7-11957

I have studied (including Parshall's book) says the same thing—it was an incredibly chaotic day, when looking at your watch or making log entries was the last order of business for men on both sides. Nagumo's communications log in his battle report was compiled from the records of escort vessels, not from the actual *Akagi* log, which, understandably, was lost when the carrier went down.¹⁴

Here is a taste from Dallas Isom's *Midway Inquest*: "*Senshi Sōsho* fudges this . . .," and "the entries in Nagumo's battle report showing that the rearming operation was ordered at 0715 and countermanded at 0745 were fabrications to put Nagumo in a better light."¹⁵ Isom notes that the *Senshi Sōsho* is fragmentary, often inconsistent, and inaccurate. Shortly after its release, the *Senshi Sōsho* came under fire for being an "overall explanation" of events with missing or vague details, for being too military friendly, for being written by staff members who had not been involved in the operations, and for many other shortcomings.¹⁶ That is just the Japanese side. Parshall's book is loaded with American reports of contradictions of every kind, from records to accounts of pilots (page 231 of his book is full of them), but he rejects accounts that do not agree with his conclusions and accepts those that do. Also, keep in mind that the Japanese lost four carriers in the battle and many logbooks. Much of their information had to be re-created after the events.

Parshall says, “During the course of the morning’s operations the Japanese carriers came under attack no fewer than five times by nine separate groups of American aircraft. Not surprisingly, Japanese flight decks were quite busy with combat air patrol (CAP) requirements. These activities, as well as the interspersed American attacks, made it nearly impossible for the reserve strike force to be readied on the Japanese flight decks.”

Did he say “nearly impossible”? So, then, it *was* possible. He goes on to say that according to air group records, planes were landing on *Akagi* just fifteen minutes before the attack, which would require that the after deck be totally clear. Were these records accurate? No one knows. Parshall then states, “The official Japanese war history on the battle, *Senshi Sōsho*, explicitly states that at the time of the American attack there were no attack aircraft on the Japanese flight decks, only combat air patrol fighters.” Isom clearly states that the *Senshi Sōsho* “fudged” entries, and even Japanese historians admit that these compiled records are not reliable. Primary sources are best—that is, eyewitnesses (preferably ones who were not shooting or being shot at), not postbattle writers who were not there, as is often the case in the *Senshi Sōsho*.

Parshall also says in his book that the idea that there were only a few fighters on the deck of *Akagi* “stands in apparent conflict with certain eyewitness accounts made by American pilots, which often painted lurid portraits of bombs exploding among packed enemy squadrons, and Japanese planes being catapulted around the flight decks or enveloped in sheets of flame.”¹⁷ These “eyewitness accounts” match exactly with Fuchida’s statements.

Yet there is another eyewitness source I have never seen referenced, that of Minoru Genda. Parshall quotes Genda in his article and obviously considers him a credible source. So do I. His testimony in 1948 was that *Akagi* was fifteen minutes away from launching its attack.¹⁸ Was he telling “whoppers” too? Fuchida’s book had yet to be published, so he had no idea what Fuchida was going to write, and certainly Genda had no idea that someone was going to compare his obscure answers to Fuchida’s book seventy years later.

So let me make clear what is being compared. On one side we have the calculations of a historian who has never seen a Japanese carrier, let alone been on one—calculations seventy years after the fact based on records that are frequently contradictory, often made by unknown third parties, incomplete, and sometimes clearly altered. On the other hand, we have two eyewitnesses, career officers who lived on Japanese carriers for years, knew *Akagi* from stem to stern, trained and instructed its crews, witnessed the daily routines of mechanics attaching and detaching torpedoes, had personally taken off and landed aircraft on carriers hundreds of times, and thoroughly understood the operations for preparing an attack on a firsthand basis—and who were actually there!

Parshall says it was “nearly impossible” for them to have been prepared for a counterattack. Fuchida’s estimate of five minutes and Genda’s of fifteen are the most reliable sources of information on the timing of their counterattack. Historians like Parshall have made estimates based on information as to how long it might normally take engineers to switch from land bombs to torpedoes, raise aircraft to the flight deck, etc., and factoring in how attacks by Americans might have slowed down the operation. This is fine and makes good sense, but at the end of the day it has nothing to do with what took place. Fuchida and Genda were actually there and knew what took place, like dozens of other witnesses. Fuchida and Genda’s testimonies are consistent, and when Fuchida’s record was published no one in Japan approached him or his publishers to contest the record. Now, seventy years later, Parshall calls him a liar, on the basis of unreliable and clearly contradictory information. Parshall has no case.

PARSHALL’S THIRD ARGUMENT: FUCHIDA WAS NEVER ON USS MISSOURI DURING THE SURRENDER CEREMONIES



NHHC Photo no. SC 213700

In *God’s Samurai*, Fuchida recounts the events leading up to and including the surrender ceremonies on the deck of USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945, how he was called on to help ferry Japanese personnel that day and remained on board during the ceremonies. Parshall considers this an “egregious” claim and does his best to discredit Fuchida with disparaging remarks and insults, but with no backup evidence whatsoever.

Here are the exact references. The first is from *God’s Samurai*:

These preliminaries led up to the climax on the morning of 2 September, the formal surrender aboard the *Missouri*. Fuchida prepared transportation for the Japanese delegation, but the launches he secured proved unnecessary. An American destroyer carried the official party to the battleship. Several liaison officers, army and navy, went out in a “big, beautiful launch” assigned to the Yokosuka commander. Fuchida was among them. These men ranked too far down the echelon to rate a position on the surrender deck, but he could see the ceremony clearly from an upper deck.¹⁹

A second reference comes from the translated *For That One Day*: “In my role as Staff of General Navy Headquarters, I was assigned miscellaneous tasks to help the Japanese side’s preparations. Since I was not an official attaché, I was watching the signing ceremony from the upper deck along with the crews of the USS *Missouri*.”²⁰

Fuchida on Board Missouri

When I first heard Parshall's charges, they seemed a little far-fetched. Fuchida had nothing to gain by mysteriously placing himself there, and he did not make himself look good while he was there. The more I examined the facts, the more the idea of Fuchida on board *Missouri* had the ring of authenticity.

Here is a breakdown of Parshall's last set of questions and charges.

Why Would Fuchida Have Been on Board Missouri? What Possible Business Did He Have There? There were many liaisons and delegates from many nations on board that day besides Fuchida. It would be foolish to think that all the Japanese dignitaries made their own arrangements for transportation. Fuchida's simple statements are completely reasonable. If anything, they were a bit humiliating for him, as he was relegated to the role of taxi driver.

Parshall assumes that Fuchida said he was there to make himself look more important than he was, when in fact Fuchida's account of the story does quite the opposite. He had despised MacArthur and considered him arrogant, but after watching the ceremony he changed his opinion and admitted that MacArthur was actually quite gracious to the Japanese, far more gracious than the Japanese would have been to the Americans. This does not elevate Fuchida; it humbles him.

Why Would an American Sailor Give Up His Place at This Historic Event to an Unknown Japanese Officer? The war was over in every sense; in addition to an end of physical hostilities, there was also an end to social hostilities. In *Genda's Blade: Japan's Squadron of Aces; 343 Kokutai*, Henry Sakaida and Koji Takaki show how after the war American pilots wanted a closer look at the modified *Shiden-Kai*, while the Japanese wanted to see how American high-octane fuel would give them the boost they had always dreamed of. After a Japanese pilot put his fighter through its paces, dozens of American airmen surrounded the plane and pilot taking photos and seeking autographs.²¹ Parshall knows full well when the emperor gave his surrender speech, by and large the Japanese became shockingly submissive and compliant to the American occupation, despite the extreme bitterness of that pill. They had submitted to their emperor in war, and they did likewise in peace. It therefore is not surprising that this camaraderie existed on board USS *Missouri*.

Why Would Fuchida Be Allowed to Wander into the Command Spaces of the Flagship of the U.S. Fleet? There was certainly concern among top Navy brass that extreme nationalists might try to sabotage the ceremony, especially with a kamikaze plane, and they took many precautions. All air bases in the greater Tokyo and Yokohama area were evacuated, the planes disarmed and disabled. The man entrusted with this high-security detail was Mitsuo Fuchida, Group

Commander, Aviation Staff of the General Navy Headquarters, Aviation Staff of the Southern Naval Headquarters.

Fuchida also helped head off a coup, personally brought in Japanese officers holding out against surrender, and authored a widely distributed pamphlet, entitled *We Believe This!*, to encourage those in the Japanese military to submit to the emperor in peace, as they had in war, and fully comply and cooperate with all the terms of surrender to the United States and allied powers.

If any Japanese officer was to be trusted for security reasons on *Missouri* that day, it would have been Mitsuo Fuchida. There is no indication that he wandered all over the ship, as Parshall implies. He certainly knew better. As for the unknown photographers who were a part of the press corps, yes, they were closely watched, as the record shows.

Why Were There No Photographs of Him, When We Have Photos of the Surrender Delegation? This sounds like a reasonable question at first, but on consideration, it is a weak argument. Fuchida was not a part of the surrender delegation, nor did he ever claim to be. Also, this was the most humiliating day in the history of the Japanese people. No self-respecting Japanese officer would be leaning into any photos that day. This is something Fuchida would more likely avoid.

Photographers took pictures of all the key people, and as Parshall correctly points out, Fuchida simply was not one of them. Even the commanding officer of USS *Missouri*, Stuart S. Murray, stated that apart from a few formal shots in which he was in the background, “I’m not generally visible anywhere.”²² If that is how the commander of USS *Missouri* was photographed that day, why would Fuchida be treated differently?

On the affirmative side, there are some pretty clear photos of those on the decks of the ship that day, like the one reproduced here, which can be found on the World War II database.²³

Here also is a high-resolution photograph that allows the reader to zoom into the third level, to the upper left of the Japanese flags, where there is an Asian man without a hat with a short mustache.

Inset is a photo of Fuchida taken during the war.²⁴ It looks very similar to the man in the close-up of the larger image.

Although I am not an expert on the U.S. Navy of World War II, I do not believe that “Hitler-style” mustaches were popular then, but we know that Fuchida kept his mustache after the war—he was photographed giving testimony at the war crimes trials.²⁵ So, just as Fuchida described, here on board USS *Missouri*, right before the surrender ceremonies, on an upper deck, we find a round-headed, Asian-looking man with a Hitler-style mustache among the American sailors. Is this Fuchida? It certainly could be.



National Archives Inter-agency Working Group File no. AC856786

NHHC Photo no. SC 210644

Michael Weidenbach Verified Fuchida's Absence from Missouri

Parshall correctly credits me with obtaining information from Michael Weidenbach, curator and archivist of the collections department for the Battleship Missouri Memorial, Pearl Harbor. Parshall states it this way when he quotes Weidenbach:

If Fuchida had been aboard the *Missouri* in any capacity whatsoever, "his presence would have been noted, and his placement would have been noted in the official records . . . and would have been strictly monitored and recorded."

[This] is yet another reminder (if any were needed) that proving a negative is oftentimes a lot harder than proving a positive. However, it is the historian's job to produce positive evidence to support the claims that are made by the participants in

our narratives. In this case, the onus was on Fuchida to support his rather incredible claims. His story, while superficially plausible, failed when subjected to the weight of the other positive evidence we have on this highly documented ceremony.

Weidenbach “verified Fuchida’s absence”? That is actually quite difficult to do. Yes, he verified that Fuchida was not a part of the official boarding party, but then Fuchida never said he was, and he also stated that there is no record of him being on board that day—so case closed, right? No. I contacted Michael Weidenbach again and asked for a full roster of personnel on board USS *Missouri* that day, and this is what he said:

There is no single roster of all the individuals that were aboard that day. There are records scattered around in various records depositories that we are still seeking out and gradually gathering. There are rosters of the dignitaries and key officers that were invited to participate or witness the ceremony, but there appears to be no record made of their accompanying staff members or others who may also have arrived aboard.

We’ve tracked down a listing of war correspondents, but it may or may not be complete or entirely accurate. We have a copy of the *Missouri* crew roster from the National Archives, but it is dated July, 1945; so it is very likely not accurate for September. In short, we have records and we are continuing to search and gather, but we don’t yet have a complete or clear record of all those who were aboard that day.²⁶

No single roster? No official records of accompanying staff? No complete or clear records? Then there certainly is no way to verify that Fuchida was not on board. In this entire section, Parshall provides nothing to show that Fuchida was not on board USS *Missouri* that day.

Some Final Notes on the Missouri Surrender Ceremony

Over time, as I have thought about this event, more and more things have always pointed in the same direction, bearing out the idea that Fuchida’s consistent testimony was true from the beginning. Here is more information that supports him.

I noticed this section in *God’s Samurai* regarding the signing ceremony: “Umezu, who had fought surrender to the last ditch, signed for both the Japanese armed forces. As he did so one of the Chinese delegates hissed loudly and triumphantly. ‘The U.S. delegates didn’t like this impolite gesture, from the expression on their faces,’ Fuchida recalled.”²⁷

No one would have cared about such a minor footnote of the ceremony or noted it—no one, that is, but a Japanese national. Fuchida did. Gordon Prange and Donald Goldstein, experts on the Pacific War and military protocol, had no issue with Fuchida’s description of his being at the ceremonies. Prange was a naval officer who had worked with MacArthur and would have understood U.S. Navy protocol at the time extremely well.

The following information only reached me recently, from the journals of Glen Wagner: On 7 December 1949, General Douglas MacArthur met with Glenn Wagner, foreign secretary for the Pocket Testament League, who asked about the general's thoughts on bringing one million copies of the New Testament into Japan. MacArthur said, "Make it 10 million." Fuchida was one of the many Japanese who received a copy of the over eleven million scriptures eventually distributed by the Pocket Testament League. On 14 April 1950, Fuchida met with Glenn Wagner and several others and recounted many of his experiences during the war. That evening, Wagner noted in his personal journal that Fuchida said, "First to step on Battleship *Missouri*—Lit cigarette and was grabbed by a US Marine."²⁸

This was among a long list of other details Fuchida communicated, none of which are disputed.

Parshall also states that "there were literally thousands of potential American witnesses to this particular story, who might have come forward to debunk it." Maybe no one did because no one could.

If one connects all the dots, they point to one thing—that Fuchida was indeed on USS *Missouri*, just as he has always maintained, and there is no evidence of any kind to contradict it.

Why Would Fuchida Make This Up? What Would Be His Motive?

Perhaps this is where the roots of Parshall's judgment of Fuchida come to light. After making a host of sweeping judgments based on speculation and conjecture, he paints Fuchida as a cocky, religious phony. Here is how Parshall begins his final section:

A glimpse into the inner character of the man is revealed in the movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* for which both Prange and Fuchida were technical advisers. During one scene, near the beginning of the movie, Fuchida lands his plane on the carrier *Akagi*. Dis-mounting, he is immediately surrounded by other aviators. Fuchida tells them they'd better treat him well, because he is their new air group commander. Surprised by this news, one of the pilots asks how he rated another promotion. Fuchida responds, to the general hilarity of all assembled, "Well, exceptional people get exceptional treatment!" I believe this illustrates something central about the man.

Is Parshall going back to Hollywood *again*? In fact, Fuchida was not a consultant for the film; Genda and Prange were, but even as consultants they did not have any control over the script. This scene is totally fictional. Fuchida never said such a thing. Was Fuchida a cocky pilot? I think the record shows that he was. Most attack pilots on the front line of battle are. They have to have an element of confidence far above that of the rank and file to take the risks they do and make it back alive. However, that is not the person Fuchida was after the war.

Parshall goes on to state—erroneously—that Fuchida was ordained and that he loved the accolades and attention it brought him. Where are the facts to

support any of this? He was never ordained, so Parshall's ideas surrounding that notion are false. I traveled to meet a man who after the war had worked beside Fuchida for many months, and he described Fuchida as a humble, gentle man who never bragged about his part in the war but rather profusely apologized at every opportunity—the exact opposite of Parshall's picture.²⁹ Over my years of research on Fuchida I have come into contact with many who knew him, worked with him, or met with him, and all say the same thing. I have never known or heard of anyone who painted the kind of picture of Fuchida that Parshall does.

Parshall has told me directly that he never actually read Fuchida's full story, either in his biography or his published memoirs, and that he has had no interest in them. Had he done so, he may have had a clearer and more accurate picture of who Fuchida really was. Half of Fuchida's story found in *God's Samurai* is about his postwar years and who he became—a man once filled with hatred toward Americans, with an inflated pride in his country and in himself, who in the end was humble and loved his former enemies. Some people can and do change. Fuchida did.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Parshall, "Reflecting on Fuchida, or 'A Tale of Three Whoppers,'" *Naval War College Review* 63, no. 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 127–38. All quotes of Jon Parshall are from this article unless otherwise stated.
2. Mitsuo Fuchida and Masatake Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle That Doomed Japan, the Japanese Navy's Story* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1992).
3. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
4. Mitsuo Fuchida, *For That One Day: The Memoirs of Mitsuo Fuchida, Commander of the Attack on Pearl Harbor*, trans. Douglas Shinsato and Tadanori Urabe (Kamuela, Hawaii: eXperience, 2011).
5. Gordon Prange, with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *God's Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2003), p. 38, footnoted as "Interviews with Fuchida, 4 March 1948 and 11 December 1963."
6. Steve Horn, *The Second Attack on Pearl Harbor: Operation K and Other Japanese Attempts to Bomb America in World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), p. 16.
7. Fuchida, *For That One Day*, chap. 21.
8. Tohmatsu Haruo and H. P. Willmott, *A Gathering Darkness: The Coming of War to the Far East and the Pacific, 1921–1942* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 98; H. P. Willmott, Tohmatsu Haruo, and W. Spencer Johnson, *Pearl Harbor* (Havertown, Pa.: Casemate, 2001), pp. 142–57.
9. Fuchida and Okumiya, *Midway*, p. 57.
10. Gordon W. Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 545.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 542–45.
12. Willmott, Haruo, and Johnson, *Pearl Harbor*, pp. 142–57.
13. Prange, Goldstein, and Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 377.
14. Dallas W. Isom, *Midway Inquest: Why the Japanese Lost the Battle of Midway* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2007), p. 133.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
16. Akira Fujiwara, "The Nature of Military History" [in Japanese], *Study of History* (December 1977), pp. 74–75, 81.

17. Jonathan Parshall and Anthony Tully, *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2005), p. 231.
18. Cdr. Minoru Genda, U.S. military interview, 1948, UA 90/F-78, Univ. of Pittsburgh archives.
19. Prange, *God's Samurai*, p. 174.
20. Fuchida, *For That One Day*, chap. 41.
21. Henry Sakaida and Koji Takaki, *Genda's Blade: Japan's Squadron of Aces; 343 Kokutai* (Hersham, Surrey, U.K.: Classic, 2003), p. 181.
22. "Admiral Stuart S. Murray Oral History," *Battleship Missouri Memorial*, 21 August 2007, Internet Archive Wayback Machine, web.archive.org/web/20070821191456/http://www.usmissouri.org/coll_MurryHistory.htm.
23. *World War II Multimedia Database*, worldwar2database.com.
24. *Wikipedia*, s.v. "Mitsuo Fuchida," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitsuo_Fuchida.
25. Fuchida, *For That One Day*, photo 19.
26. Michael Weidenbach, personal e-mail to the author, January 2012.
27. Prange, *God's Samurai*, pp. 175–76.
28. Glenn Wagner, personal journals, 1950, courtesy of Sam Wagner.
29. John Jessberg, personal interview with the author, Kirkwood, Pa., 24 July 2009.