

The subject of numerous biographies, articles — and most notably Angelina Jolie's 2014 film *Unbroken* — former national sports hero and USAAF Pacific War veteran Louis Zamperini always maintained that the two B-24s that nearly cost him his life were named *Super Man* and *Green Hornet*; B-24 specialist BOB LIVINGSTONE digs deep into the archives to reveal that neither is in fact correct, and finally sets the record straight



UNBROKEN

THE MYTH OF LOUIS ZAMPERINI'S CONSOLIDATED B-24s



ALTHOUGH THE story of USAAF Bombardier 1st Lt Louis Zamperini has been told in at least eight books, several DVDs and innumerable magazine and newspaper articles and web pages — and not least in Angelina Jolie’s Hollywood movie *Unbroken* — there is one constant: the names of the two Consolidated B-24s which featured most prominently in his life — those which almost took his life during two missions in the Pacific War.

Accepted lore has it that these two aircraft were named *Super Man* and *Green Hornet*. It must be so. Zamperini said so. Book after book says so. The movie of his life features these names. Without diminishing the legacy of Zamperini’s life story, the historical record reveals that, while the incidents are true, the aircraft names Zamperini remembered are not.

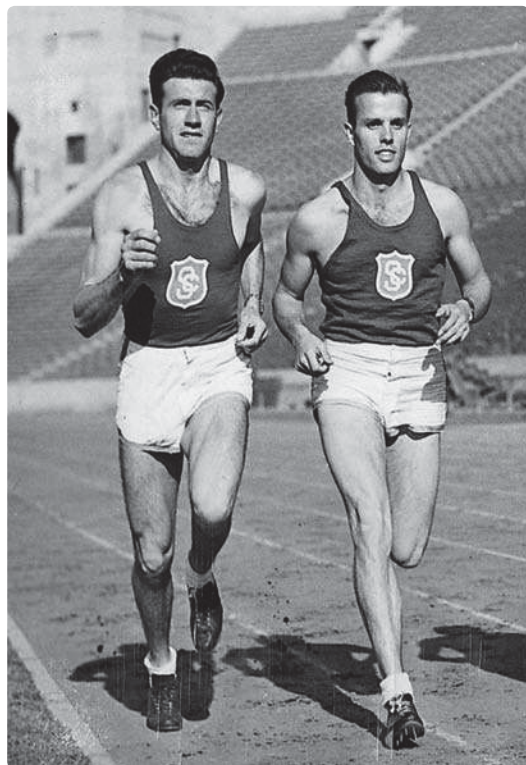
There is no doubt that, as he was consulted and interviewed for the majority of these books, the names of the aircraft were provided by Zamperini himself, and that these were accepted by the authors in good faith. The names are certainly those of B-24s assigned to his squadron; furthermore, it is more than likely he flew in them at some time — but recent research points conclusively to the fact that neither matches the aircraft involved in the incidents for which they have become famous.

EARLY DAYS

Louis Silvie Zamperini’s early life gave no intimation of his later celebrity; indeed, notoriety seemed more likely. Untameable as a small child, Louis grew into a brawler, house-breaker, petty thief, mischief-maker and general nuisance to his community as a pre-teen, never far from juvenile hall or jail. As author Laura Hillenbrand put it in her book *Unbroken* (Random House, 2010): “He shaped who he would be in manhood. Confident that he was clever, resourceful and bold enough to escape any predicament, he was almost incapable of discouragement. When history carried him into war, this resilient optimism would define him”.

Louis turned his life around in high school on the athletics field, earning varsity letters in basketball and baseball. But it was on the track that he shone, setting the school mile-record at 5min 6sec. He ran and ran, finally running himself into selection for the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics. His *forté* was the mile, the 1,500m being the Olympic equivalent; but circumstances caused him to run the 5,000m instead, in which he placed only eighth.

Setting his sights on the 1940 Summer Olympics,



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS VIA AUTHOR

to be held in Tokyo, Louis trained exhaustively for the 1,500m, and by 1939 he was a household name in America. However, international events conspired against him with the outbreak of war in Europe. The 1940 Summer Olympics were cancelled in April that year and by September Congress had passed the draft bill.

In early 1941 Louis joined the US Army Air Corps (US Army Air Forces — USAAF — after June 20, 1941) for pilot training, but was “washed out”. By September 1941 he had been sent for training as a bombardier, graduating as a 2nd Lt in August 1942. He was posted to dusty Ephrata, Washington, where the 372nd Bomb Squadron (BS) of the 307th Bomb Group (BG) was forming up and training. Zamperini joined a B-24 crew commanded by 2nd Lt Russell “Phil” Phillips. By mid-October their training had been cut short, however, and they were issued with a new B-24D and despatched to the Pacific staging post of Hamilton Field, California, where they prepared themselves and their aircraft to join the war.

During these preparations many aircraft were given names. Most crewmen referred to their aircraft as “she”, but Phillips insisted that theirs

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM *Consolidated B-24D serial 41-24253 Green Hornet of the 372nd Bomb Squadron in early November 1942 at Kahuku, Hawaii. Zamperini maintained it was this aircraft in which he crashed while on a search mission in May 1943 — but was it? ABOVE* Zamperini (left) with a two-mile relay race running mate in 1939.



ABOVE LEFT An extremely rare photograph of the “Super Man” nose art of B-24D serial 41-23938, in which Louis Zamperini flew on the mission to Wake on the night of December 23–24, 1942. **ABOVE RIGHT** Although Zamperini recalled flying in Super Man on the Nauru mission of April 20, 1943, he actually flew it in Take Off!, serial 41-24149.

was “all man”, and a rather crudely painted Superman comic-strip figure appeared on the nose. This was B-24D-13-CO serial 41-23938, in which Phillips and his crew flew from Hamilton to Kahuku, Hawaii, on November 2, 1942, to join the US Seventh Air Force, and from where the crew flew training flights and sea patrols. During this time a number of the original crew members were transferred to other crews and replaced.

SUPER MAN INTO COMBAT

It was not until December 21, 1942, that Phillips and crew embarked on a bombing mission, flying *Super Man* alongside 25 other 307th BG B-24Ds to Midway as a refuelling and stopover point. Their target was to be Wake, then being occupied by the Japanese, as part of the first American attack on the atoll on the night of December 23–24, recorded as “The Christmas Eve Attack on Wake”.

The mission had been made possible only by

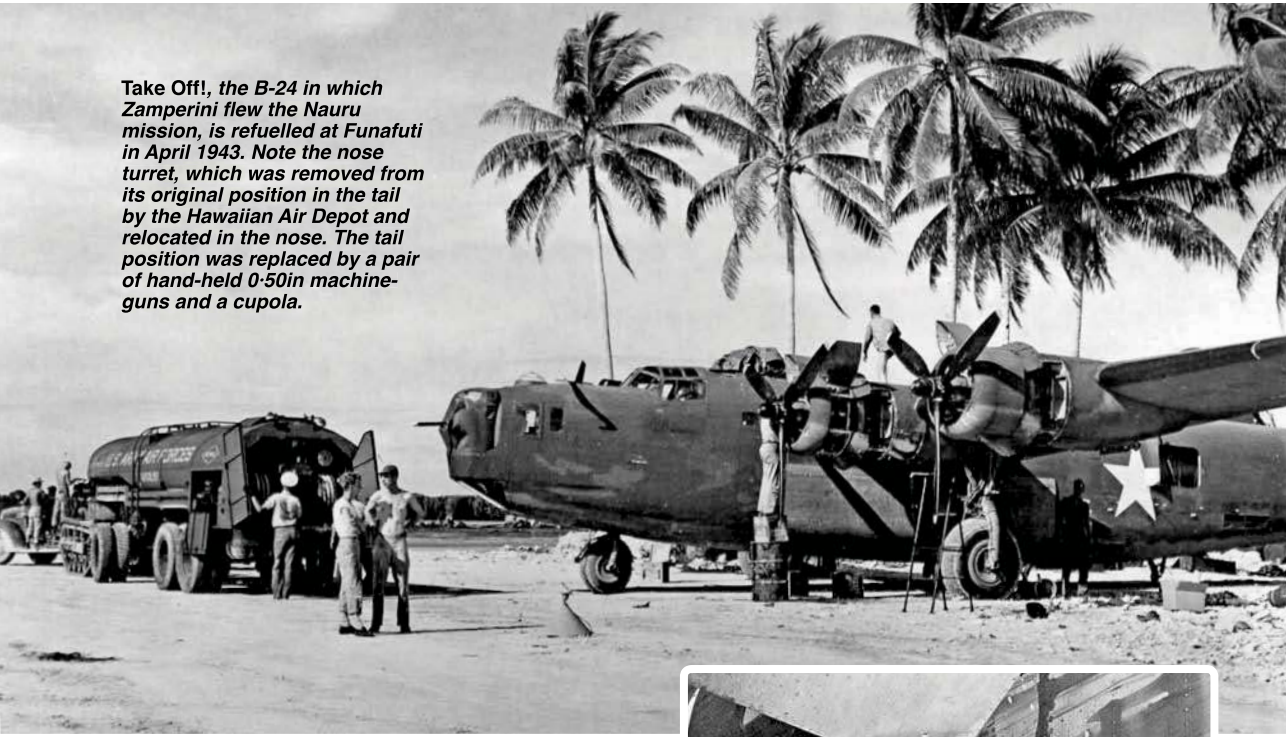
filling one of the B-24s’ two bomb bays with an auxiliary fuel tank. The latter fitted to *Super Man* shifted when the aircraft’s descent was arrested at 2,500ft (760m) to bomb, interfering with the bomb-bay doors, which would no longer close. This slowed the aircraft and increased its drag and fuel consumption, the engines shutting down as they landed back at Midway owing to lack of fuel. No aircraft were lost on the mission and only superficial damage was reported to a small number of B-24s. By the time the 307th BG returned to Hawaii each aircraft had flown more than 4,300 miles (6,900km), and the crews were back in time to celebrate the new year.

At this time B-24Ds were manufactured with a “glasshouse” nose incorporating a single 0.30in machine-gun pointing forward. This was one of the most vulnerable parts of the aircraft, and Japanese fighter pilots quickly altered their tactics to concentrate on head-on attacks against USAAF

BELOW The first B-24 to be fitted with a modification designed by the Hawaiian Air Depot to support a nose turret was B-24D serial 41-23657. It is seen here being refuelled on Midway for its ill-fated reconnaissance flight to Wake on December 28, 1942, to assess bomb damage following the 307th BG’s raid on the atoll four days previously.



Take Off!, the B-24 in which Zamperini flew the Nauru mission, is refueled at Funafuti in April 1943. Note the nose turret, which was removed from its original position in the tail by the Hawaiian Air Depot and relocated in the nose. The tail position was replaced by a pair of hand-held 0-50in machine-guns and a cupola.



bombers; an accurate burst of cannon fire could kill everyone forward of the bomber's waist.

Entrepreneurial USAAF officers such as Marion Unruh, the 90th BG's Engineering Officer and later the 5th BG's Commanding Officer, were working with the Hawaiian Air Depot (HAD) to modify a B-24 tail gun turret and fit it into the nose. Their prototype, serial 41-23657 from the 370th BS, had been part of the outbound group on December 21 to Midway, and was sent from the latter on the 28th on a reconnaissance mission to Wake to assess the bombing damage. About 200 miles (300km) from Midway an emergency caused the B-24 to ditch; neither the aircraft nor any survivors were ever found.

The modification was a success, however, and a production line of used aircraft began in earnest at the HAD on March 29, 1943; all new B-24Ds passing through Hawaii on their way to Pacific BGs were subsequently fitted with a nose turret.

THE NAURU MISSION

The need to replace the shorter-ranged Boeing B-17 with the B-24 in the Pacific split the 307th BG in two. The 371st and 372nd BSs remained at Kahuku flying sea-search missions, while the 370th and 424th departed for Guadalcanal and the Thirteenth Air Force on February 11, 1943, replacing the 11th BG, which returned to Hawaii to re-equip with the B-24.

Zamperini's next major mission was to be a raid on the phosphate works on Nauru in the central Pacific. On April 17, 1943, 24 B-24s of the 371st and 372nd BSs staged through Canton Island and arrived at Funafuti Atoll in the Ellice Islands (now part of Tuvalu) the next day. They were to fly three specific missions devised by the



ABOVE Louis Zamperini inspects just one of the many holes in Take Off! after the Nauru raid, the result of anti-aircraft cannon fire. Other photographs taken at this time prove that it was Take Off! and not Super Man that Zamperini and his crewmates flew in for the April 20 raid on Nauru. Super Man was almost certainly still in Hawaii being fitted with its nose turret at this point.

Seventh Air Force's commander, Gen Willis H. Hale. Funafuti is a typical "South Seas tropical paradise" of sand and palm trees and a crushed-coral runway, which now serves as the airport for Tuvalu. Accommodation was in tents, with grass huts in the native village for the more important administration services.

The aircraft selected for the Funafuti detachment were the total output of the HAD nose-turret modification line by this date, which meant that *Super Man* remained at Kualoa Point on Oahu in Hawaii. Among the more seasoned crews were a few "unblooded" crews who had ferried



ABOVE Covering only eight square miles (21km²), Nauru is rich in phosphate and was thus of interest to the Japanese, who occupied the tiny island on August 25, 1942. Here, Seventh Air Force B-24 Sad Sack (serial unknown) flies over the burning phosphate works and airfield during the raid of April 20, on which Zamperini flew.

new aircraft from the USA to Hawaii and gone on almost immediately to Canton and Funafuti, including one 371st BS crew captained by 2nd Lt Herbert Kurz, flying B-24D serial 42-40101, which the crew had named *The Green Hornet*. Only 22 of the 24 B-24s flew the first of Hale's special missions, to Nauru on April 20, two having returned with mechanical problems, including Kurz's *The Green Hornet*.

Zamperini's aircraft, identified by him as *Super Man*, was badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire on the bomb run, and was subsequently further damaged by cannon fire from attacking Zeroes. The aircraft crash-landed with a flat tyre on its return to Funafuti, with four wounded crew, one of whom later died. The ground crew counted 594 holes in the aircraft.

This is where we deviate from the popularly held story. Photographs of the aircraft at Funafuti showing the damage to the tail and fuselage, with Zamperini and copilot "Cup" Cuppernell examining a large hole in the bomb bay, clearly show the serial to be 41-24149 — an aircraft named *Take Off!*, not *Super Man*. *Take Off!* was subsequently repaired and transferred to the 11th BG's 42nd BS and survived until at least October 24, 1943, after which it disappears from the records. As it was unserviceable on this date, it was probably retired as "war weary".

Meanwhile, *Super Man* was fitted with a nose turret in Hawaii, remained in combat condition and was transferred to the 11th BG's 98th BS in June 1943, with which it was later renamed *Sexy Sue-IV Mother of Ten*. It was lost on the early morning of January 20, 1944, in the vicinity of Wotje Atoll in the Marshall Islands, with Lt Charles "Hoppy" Hopkins and crew aboard.

The Japanese clearly had excellent intelligence and knew exactly where the Nauru bombers had come from, because on the next night (April 21–22), 14 Japanese bombers attacked the airfield at Funafuti, destroying two B-24s (42-40072 and 42-40089, *Flying 8 Ball Jr*) and damaging five others; US Marine Corps unit VF-41 lost a Grumman F4F with another eight damaged.

TWO GREEN HORNETS

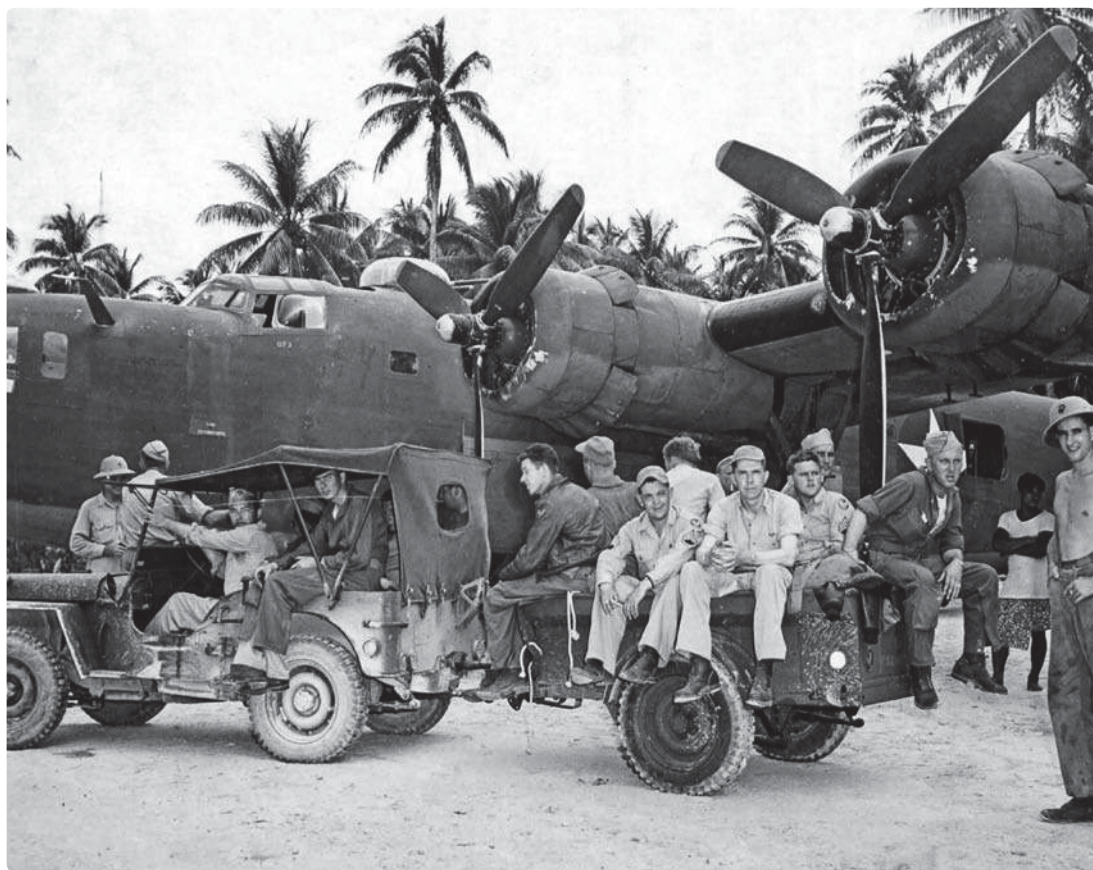
On April 23 the 371st and 372nd BSs flew a mission to Tarawa Atoll (now the capital of the Republic of Kiribati) from Funafuti, in which Kurz's *The Green Hornet* participated, despite having to fly with a scratch crew after four of the original crew had been killed or injured in the Japanese bombing raid. Zamperini did not fly this mission; the Phillips crew was granted a recovery day after the ordeal over Nauru. The wounded from the Nauru mission and those, including Marines, wounded during the Japanese attack had to wait



LEFT General Willis H. Hale (far left), commander of the Seventh Air Force, who masterminded the Funafuti missions in April 1943, points out the message scrawled on a 1,000lb (450kg) bomb – “From Nimitz to Hale to Tojo” – to some of the airmen he expects to deliver it. Hale’s resources were limited, and the press back home labelled the Seventh “Hale’s Handful”.

BELOW On the night of April 21–22 the Japanese retaliated for the attack on Nauru, a force of 14 bombers destroying two B-24s, including 42-40089, named Flying 8 Ball Jr, the wreckage of which is seen here the morning after.





ABOVE The crew of B-24D 42-40073 Thumper boards the “bus” to the tented accommodation outside the village soon after their arrival on Funafuti in April 1943. The Japanese had intended to occupy Funafuti as part of their defensive perimeter but losses at Midway in June 1942 delayed the plan and the Americans arrived in October.

until the 23rd, when Consolidated LB-30 AL633, *Old Faithful*, from the Seventh Air Force’s 19th Troop Carrier Squadron, aka Southern Cross Airways, flew in from Hickam Field, Hawaii, to transport them to hospital in Samoa.

The co-existence of the 371st BS’s *The Green Hornet* (42-40101) and the 372nd BS’s *Green Hornet* (41-24253) has caused further confusion over the years, Zamperini himself having signed copies of photographs of the wrong aircraft.

Because of the Japanese attack on the atoll, Hales’s third special mission, which had been planned from Funafuti to Ocean Island (now Banaba) was cancelled, and the day following the Tarawa mission the two 307th BG squadrons returned to Hawaii via Canton Island, to prepare for further offensive operations. The Phillips crew received six replacements before being posted on May 24 to the 11th BG’s 42nd BS at Kualoa Point, along with some of the 307th’s older B-24s, including *Super Man* and both *Green Hornets*.

THE FATEFUL SEARCH MISSION

The Pacific Wing of the USAAF’s Air Transport Command controlled the ferrying of aircraft from Hamilton Field in California all the way to

Australia, the initial leg being to Hickam Field on Hawaii. The route from there depended on weather and the endurance of the aircraft type, but the typical route for a B-24 was Canton Island—Nandi (now Nadi, Fiji)—Plaine des Gaiacs (New Caledonia)—Brisbane or Townsville in Queensland. The crew of 2nd Lt Clarence C. Corpening, which had begun its flight to Australia from Hamilton, departed Hickam in B-24D serial 42-40519 on May 26, 1943, for Canton Island, to ferry the aircraft to Brisbane. There the crew would have received their assignment as replacements for the 380th BG’s 530th BS in Darwin, Northern Territory. They never arrived at Canton Island.

The aircraft was believed to have gone down about 200 miles (300km) north of Palmyra Island. Aircraft from the 42nd BS were alerted for a search mission on May 27. The 42nd BS Mission Report for the 27th states: “Special (sea search missing B-24); two sorties; destination Palmyra: Ship #219, Lt Phillips, TO [take-off] 1830; Ship #983, Lt Deasy, TO 1830; distance 800nm [1,280km]”.

Deasy’s aircraft was serial 41-23983 *Daisy Mae*, previously with the 307th BG’s 372nd BS. The aircraft the Phillips crew was assigned was forever



ABOVE Some confusion has arisen about which aircraft Zamperini (ABOVE RIGHT in full flying kit) flew in for the ill-fated search mission of May 27, 1943. Was it Green Hornet, serial 41-24253 (LEFT, TOP seen before the fitting of the nose turret) or The Green Hornet, serial 42-40101 (LEFT, BOTTOM)? *The Mission Report* reveals it was neither.

etched in Zamperini's mind as *Green Hornet* (41-24253). Zamperini claimed that the crew objected strongly to their assignment, complaining that the bomber was dangerous and barely airworthy. Eventually, however, Phillips reluctantly accepted it. The Mission Report — written after the loss of the aircraft — proves, however, that it was not *Green Hornet*. "Ship #219" was in fact B-24D serial 42-40219, known to have been named *Four Roses*. A new aircraft, it had been delivered to Hickam only on May 3, and had completed its nose-turret modification on the 10th. It had been with the squadron for approximately two weeks and no photographs are known to exist. Zamperini's own book, *Devil At My Heels* (Peter Davies Ltd, 1956), indicates that he noted in his diary that he was flying in his assigned aircraft, so the change must have been at short notice.

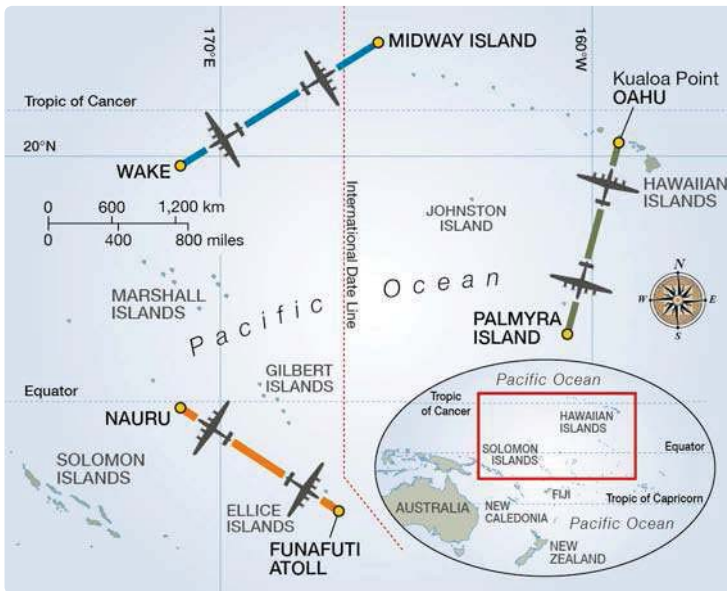
Green Hornet was B-24D-25-CO serial 41-24253, one of those rogue "Monday morning" aircraft which just never flew right, no matter what the engineers tried, and was often unserviceable. It flew tail-low, was a notorious "gas-leaker" and was the first aircraft to be stripped when a part was urgently needed to keep another aircraft in combat. It did not fly combat missions, as

it was almost impossible to get into the air on take-off with a bomb load, so it was limited to the occasional search mission, employed mostly on the "cabbage run", becoming a "fat cat" for collecting fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

On May 27 *Green Hornet* had just returned to the squadron after having completed the nose-turret modification, probably in the hope that the extra weight would move the aircraft's centre of gravity forward and improve its flight characteristics.

In *Unbroken*, Hillenbrand accepts Zamperini's version and, throughout the book, the aircraft in which he and his crewmates ditched is referred to as *Green Hornet*. It seems that time obliterated the change from Louis' mind, leaving only the deeper memory of how frightened they were at the prospect of having to fly 800 miles (1,300km) over water in a notoriously worn-out aircraft.

Confirmation that Zamperini's aircraft on the May 27 mission could not have been *Green Hornet* comes from the USAAF record card for the aircraft, which states that 41-24253 was returned to the USA and converted to a CB-24 (approximate C-87 transport standard) by United Air Lines. The latter must have sorted out most of its foibles as it was used by the airline on its Pacific transport



LOUIS ZAMPERINI'S COMBAT MISSIONS

Louis Zamperini and his crewmates arrived in Hawaii on November 2, 1942, and soon began undertaking training flights and sea patrols. The map at left shows the three most significant of Zamperini's combat missions; key to mission colours below. Map by MAGGIE NELSON

- December 21, 1942; B-24 Super Man; Midway—Wake—Midway

- April 20, 1943; B-24 Take Off!; Funafuti—Nauru—Funafuti

- May 27, 1943; B-24 Four Roses; Oahu—Palmyra Island (crash)

routes until it was salvaged in January 1945. Interestingly, *The Green Hornet* (42-40101) was also retired from combat, to become a transport for the 494th BG and renamed *Ruptured Duck*, the salvage of which is recorded in December 1945.

In July 1943 the USAAF developed a requirement for a report to be raised for any crew member of an aircraft who was missing/unreported after 24hr had elapsed since the last known information on them. These Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) went to USAAF HQ in the USA, where they were issued a number in sequential order of receipt. Generally, individuals reported as missing before this date do not have a MACR raised for them, but on April 10, 1946, the USAAF raised MACR #16375 (later altered to #16163) for the loss of the Phillips crew. All crew are listed and the date and unit are correct — but the aircraft is misidentified as a B-17 and no serial is quoted. The last words on the MACR are as follows: "The fact that Louis S. Zamperini survived imprisonment is already a matter of press record", leading me to suspect that this MACR was raised owing to multiple enquiries to the USAAF for information which was not initially available. The MACRs became readily available to researchers when they were digitised and uploaded to the internet, but the lack of a serial number meant that Louis' statements were not able to be checked, and researchers came to a dead end for many years.

LOST AT SEA

The Phillips crew took off from Kualoa Point directly after Lt Deasy and crew had departed in *Daisy Mae*, both heading for separate search areas near Palmyra Island, where it was intended that they would land and refuel for the return flight. In the search area allocated to *Four Roses*, cloud

was building and the aircraft was down to 800ft (250m) for Phillips to maintain visual contact with the water. Engines Nos 1 and 2 were using more fuel than those on the starboard wing and the fuel tanks were becoming unbalanced, affecting the flying characteristics of the aircraft. Transferring fuel to balance the tanks had just begun when No 1 began to shake badly; its revs fell dramatically, before the engine stopped altogether.

The aircraft immediately rolled to port and descended towards the ocean, the pilots struggling with the controls, trying to regain level flight. Too busy to feather the propeller, they called the engineer forward and in the confusion he feathered No 2 instead. Now both engines on the port side were dead, No 1 was windmilling, they were too low and in a deadly spiral which ended only when they smashed into the water.

Louis, in his crash position in the waist area, was amazed to find himself alive, but trapped by something wrapped around him as the shattered fuselage began its death-dive to the Pacific seabed 1,650ft (500m) below. He was wedged beneath a waist-gun mounting, the snapped control wires pinning him in place. He struggled furiously, then floated free. He felt the frame of the waist window, pulled himself through and inflated his Mae West, which dragged him to the surface. He gasped air at last, coughing up the saltwater and fuel clogging his lungs and stomach. Zamperini, Phillips (who had been thrown through the canopy) and Sgt Francis "Mac" McNamara (tail gunner) were the only survivors as they began the hell of 47 days adrift on the vast Pacific.

The 42nd BS Mission Report coldly states:

"Results: Lt Phillips with airplane and crew reported missing (by Bomber Command) at approximately 0430. Lt Deasy reached Palmyra. No further reports received on mission this date."



ABOVE Serial 41-23893, Daisy Mae, also participated in the search mission of May 27, but — unlike Four Roses — it managed to return. It is seen here damaged at Midway after a raid on Wake on July 22, 1943.

RIGHT Zamperini (right) and fellow prisoner of war Fred Garrett, who had his leg amputated while a Japanese prisoner, after landing back at Hamilton Field, California, in October 1945.



In the USA the telegram was received by the family on June 4. On the 5th, Louis' disappearance created headlines in the press and was the lead story on radio. On Samoa, the injured men of the crew from the Nauru mission heard the news while still in hospital. At Kualoa search missions were flown without results and were terminated.

The three men's 47 days in the raft far exceeded the 24 days Capt Eddie Rickenbacker spent adrift in a raft in October 1942 after his B-17 ditched on the way to Canton Island, considered at the time to be the limit of human survival in Pacific conditions. Louis and his companions suffered horribly; there was little food and water, the latter topped up by the occasional rain shower, as well as insufferable heat, cold, extreme sunburn and the mental anguish of seeing passing aircraft which did not see them. Added to this were circling sharks, a strafing attack by a Japanese bomber, and a typhoon. On the 33rd day adrift, Mac died, leaving just Phil and Louis after they slipped him over the side.

FROM FRYING PAN TO FIRE

On their last day in the raft they had drifted close to the Marshall Islands, where they were spotted by a Japanese destroyer, on which they were taken aboard. A rendezvous with a freighter saw the pair transferred and delivered to Kwajalein Atoll. Each had lost about half their body weight.

They spent the following two years as "guests" of the Japanese, treated in ways that it is not necessary to describe; they are well known. Louis, harking back to those pre-teenage years, had the worst of it; he would not be bowed and the guards, one in particular, treated him savagely.

In June 1944, following USAAF procedure, Louis' status was changed from "missing" to "deceased". This information reached Japan in

THE ROLL CALL

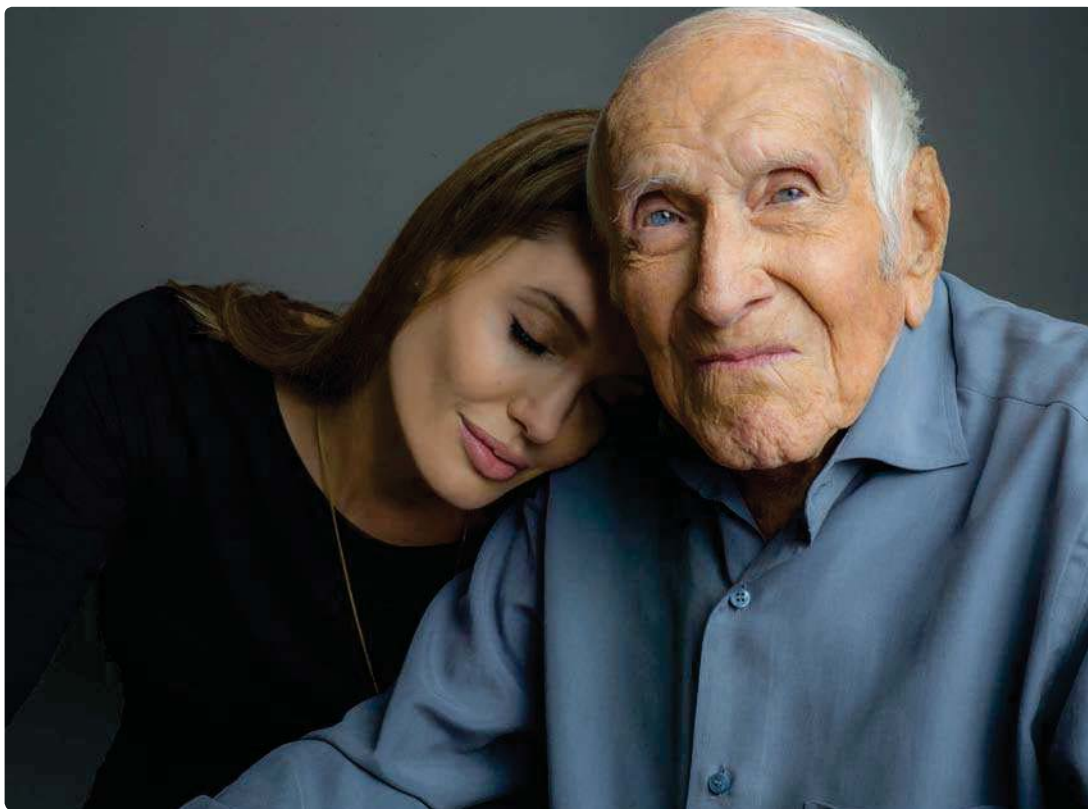
Consolidated B-24D serial 42-40219, *Four Roses*

Pilot 1st Lt Russell A. Phillips
Copilot 1st Lt Charles H. Cuppernell
Navigator 1st Lt Robert H. Mitchell
Bombardier 1st Lt Louis S. Zamperini
Engineer Corporal Michael J. Walsh
Assistant Engineer Staff Sgt Jay S. Hansen
Radio Operator Staff Sgt Frank Glassman
Assistant Radio Operator Private Leslie A. Deane
Armorer/Gunner Sgt Otto Anderson
Gunner Sgt Francis P. McNamara

November and the Japanese asked Louis to make it known that he was alive by appearing on the monthly Radio Tokyo show *The Postman Calls*. He wrote a piece that the Japanese accepted and he taped it for broadcast on November 20, 1944, bringing the news for which the family had dared not hope during the past 20 months.

An interesting sidelight is that after Kwajalein was invaded and taken from the Japanese by a combined force of US Army and Marines in early February 1944, Deasy, now Commanding Officer of the 42nd BS, was called to the island and shown translated Japanese documents. From their contents he was able to work out that three men had survived the crash of *Four Roses*, that one had died later and that the survivors were almost certainly Phillips and Zamperini. Although the USAAF now knew some of the story, nothing was known of them since their capture, and the news was not released.

Zamperini and Phillips endured the Japanese camp for a further eight-and-a-half months, both surviving their imprisonment, and both, though not together, were returned to the USA in mid-



ABOVE In late 2013 filming began on *Unbroken*, a biographical film of Louis Zamperini's life directed by Angelina Jolie (left) and co-written by Joel and Ethan Coen, in which British actor Jack O'Connell gave an award-winning performance as Zamperini (right). Another film, *Unbroken: Path to Redemption*, was made about Zamperini in 2018.

October 1945. Louis' tormented body meant that he would never run again. He married, but the years of mental and physical torture caused him to turn to alcohol, and he seemed bound for an early death. In late 1949, however, he met the Christian evangelist Billy Graham and he turned his life around for the second time.

EPILOGUE

Towards the end of Louis' life, American actor Angelina Jolie was looking for a third movie to direct after *A Place in Time* and *In the Land of Blood and Honey*. She read Laura Hillenbrand's book and decided that this was the vehicle she wanted and she befriended Louis. Universal Studios, which had owned the rights to *Devil At My Heels* since 1956, had made a number of failed attempts to get the story off the ground, but Jolie pitched her take on it to Universal for her to direct, won approval and "broke the jinx" that had dogged this project for more than 50 years.

Filming of the project, given the title *Unbroken*, was completed in February 2014 and the finished article was released in November the same year. The movie was filmed in Australia, and I was the B-24 consultant, spending three weeks on the set in January 2014 while the flying sequences were being filmed.

So why were these corrections regarding the airframes' identities not made? After years of watching the aviation rubbish in some movies and TV shows and wondering about the credentials of the credited advisers, I now have some sympathy for them. By the time I arrived the scripts were all written; I had no control over the daily rushes and pride of place on the set was a full-scale B-24 fuselage with *Super Man* artwork emblazoned on the nose. I quickly appreciated that some things are just too expensive in time and money to change; and so, to avoid giving the director one more thing to worry about, I kept my counsel.

Nevertheless, on day one of shooting, within minutes of meeting Angelina Jolie (who has a twin-engine instrument pilot rating herself), I did point out to her that two scripted scenes detailing the bombing of Nauru were not as it would have happened in 1943. She accepted my advice, joined the two scenes into one and it became more realistic. Subsequently there were times when I "tweaked" the script and corrected other things, taught the cast how to fly an aircraft and told them some back-story, so I was able to make my mark on the movie. Unfortunately, Louis Zamperini died, aged 97, on July 2, 2014, four months before the film's release — but he had at least seen a rough cut of the movie. 