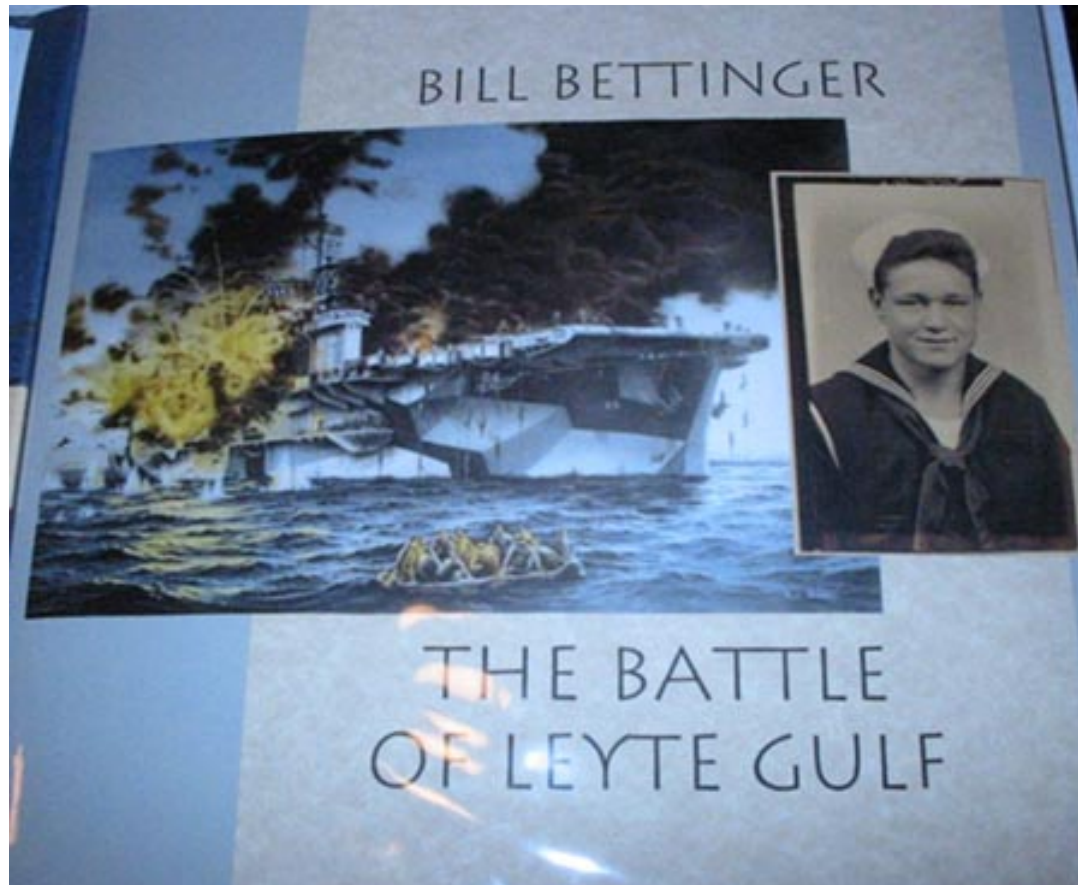


Multigenre Report Writing:  
Bill Bettinger and the Battle of Leyte Gulf  
Heather Topp



*Cover picture of Heather's great uncle who was on the first ship to*

November 7, 2005


Dear Reader,

Ever since I was a child, I would walk into my grandparents' house and see the picture of a young sailor on the wall next to a portrait of an exploding, sinking ship. I knew that the picture was to memorialize my great-uncle, Bill Bettinger, but I never knew much about how the ship exploded, or exactly how Bill died. I never really knew anything about Bill as a person. To me, Bill was just this man who died in World War II. I must say that after researching and interviewing for this project, I have come to a new understanding of Bill as a person, and what his life might have been like. I feel more connected to him, and learning more about his life and death made me feel as though I missed out on meeting a great family member.

My interviews with my great-aunt, Margie, and my great-uncle, Paul, were so helpful and important to me in getting to know Bill better. I took a few Sunday afternoons to spend time with Bill's brother and sister. Each time I met with one of them, I was introduced to another facet of Bill's life. I was touched deeply as I was brought closer to Bill by seeing the feelings they had for their brother in their eyes and in the tone of their voices. They remembered their brother as if they just lost him yesterday, and I could hear their love for him as they spoke. Both Margie and Paul were very happy to share their memories and anything else they could to keep Bill alive in all of our hearts.

A great thing about interviewing Margie and Paul was that they were in two different places during the war. Paul had a different point-o

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## A Short Visit Home<sup>1</sup>

**Characters and Ages**

|            |                        |
|------------|------------------------|
| Margie-10  | Clarina-25             |
| Grace-15   | Serf-Clarina's husband |
| LaVerne-11 | Carl-6                 |
| Clete-14   | Bob-12                 |

Bill is in the Bettinger household in June of 1944. Bill, one of eleven returning from boot camp for just eight days before he is for active duty.

(in the Bettinger living room)

Clarina: Isn't it exciting! Billy is coming home today. I can't wait till he is eating around one dining room table.

Margie: I wish it would be even better if Paul could be here too. (deep breath) I really miss all of us being together.

Clarina: It seems like yesterday when we were all playing basketball in the back yard. Dad would wonder what was taking us so long to our chores. (giggle)


Margie: Dad always been an expert at getting a good ole game of basketball after what sport we are playing, Billy is always the best at every game.


Clarina: Well, Billy could be safe in the U.S.A. if he just took that offer from the military. (sigh) If I were him, I would have snatched up that deal as if it were hot.

Margie: I know, but Billy wanted to serve, just like Paul. Sometimes when I think about it, that's all there is to it.

Clarina: I think he'll get another offer to play in the pros when he gets home.

Margie: Well, it would be really grand to have a super-star baseball player in the house. (giggle) Now up to bat, Billy. Bye-Bye Bettingers. (laughs)

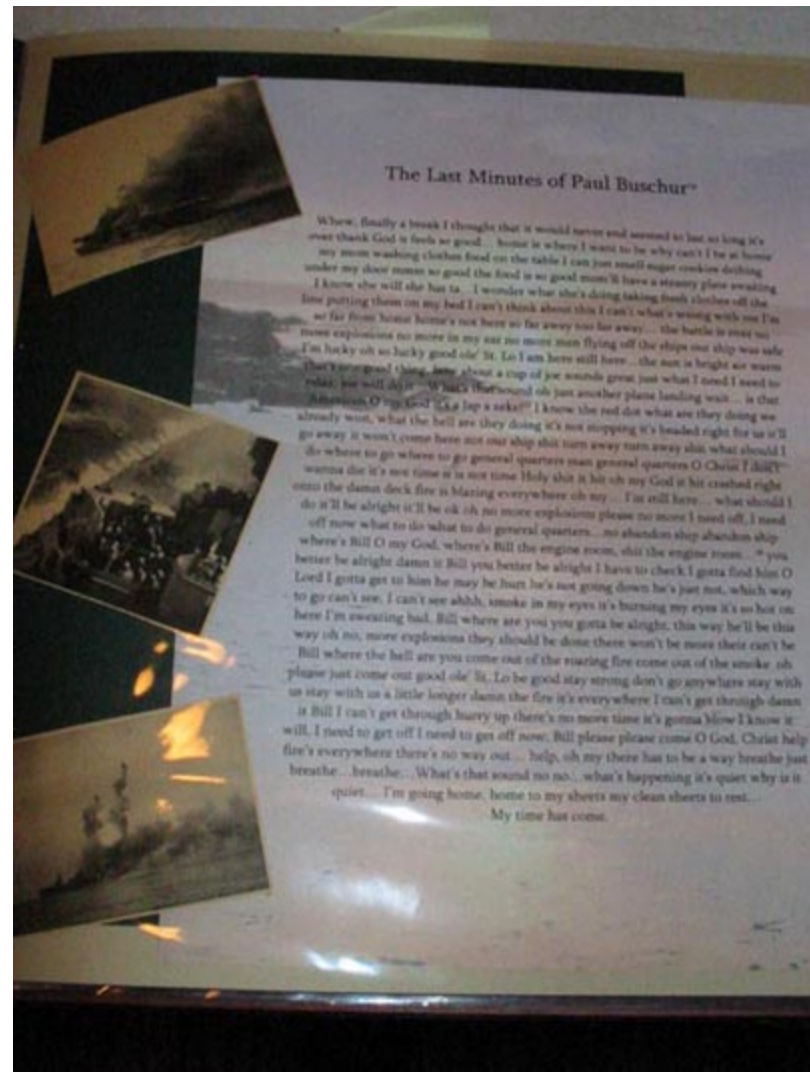




Play about Bill's last trip home before his tour of duty in the South



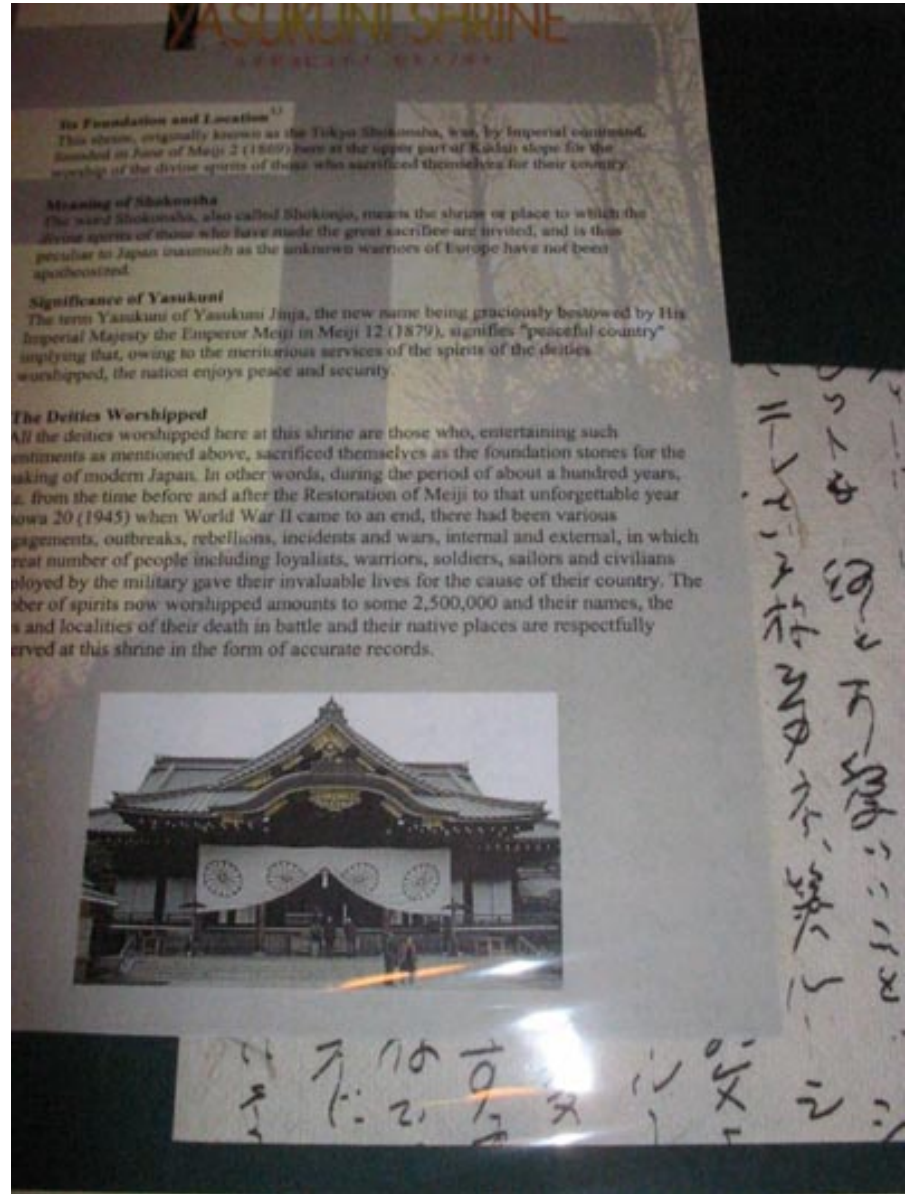
Letters between Bill and Paul about missing each other at Pearl Harbor.



Stream of consciousness about Bill's last minutes during the kamikaze



Newspaper article about kamikaze the kamikaze attack on USS St. Lo.



Stream of consciousness from soldier in helicopter crash.