

## **The Fog of War — Email to Bob McDonald in Colorado, 28 February 2005**

Dear Bob McDonald, *Colahan* Plank-Owner and Honored Shipmate:

In your latest email, you noted that the late Frank Gardner told you at a *Colahan* reunion that he shot down two Japanese planes during the Pacific War, and you wondered how he could have done that, since one of the two Japanese planes the *Colahan* shot down on April 17, 1945, came over the bow while Frank was manning the rear 40mm gun director. First, let me say that there was undoubtedly a measure of braggadocio in Frank's two-plane claim. Never in *The Original Tomcat*, the fifth edition of which you are reading, do I give credit to Frank for shooting down those two planes. Even in earlier editions, I couched the matter carefully, saying only that Frank "manned the after 40-millimeter gun director in April 1945 when the destroyer shot down two Japanese planes," which is not the same as saying Frank shot down both by himself. When everybody is shooting at a flying target, it is difficult to say who actually fired the mortal round. Frank had a pretty good claim in regard to the Nakajima fighter that came up from behind. Taking numerous hits, it strafed alongside the wildly zigzagging *Colahan* and crashed into the sea astern of the *USS Benham* up ahead. Even then, however, Paul Hayward, who was operating the 40mm director for Gun 43 on the port side of the after stack, claimed the kill for himself. Paul "will get it, if at all, over Frank Gardner's dead body," I wrote. It's the fog of war, Bob. Nobody knows what really happened.

Jackson