

JFK & PT 109 – An Eyewitness Account

LCDR Theodore M. Robinson, USNR (Ret.)

On the night of August 1-2, 1943, a Japanese destroyer roared out of the darkness of Blacket Strait and rammed PT 109, slicing it in half, which began one of the best known stories of WWII. PT 109 was skippered by a young Naval Lieutenant named John F. Kennedy, destined to become President of the United States. A few miles off, acting as Radar Officer on PT 159, the lead boat in the attack, was Ensign Ted Robinson, standing next to the PT Commander in charge of the entire attack. They both witnessed a huge explosion they thought came from one of the other eleven boats in the attack hitting one of the four Japanese destroyers. It wasn't until the next day that they found PT 109 was missing. The PT boat next to PT 109 said the explosion was so great that no one could have survived.

A week later two Melanesian natives, who had paddled for thirty miles handed Robinson a coconut on which JFK had scratched a message reading "I'm still alive – send help. JFK". Robinson handed it to his CO who asked Ted if he would like to go in on the rescue mission behind enemy lines. This started one of the greatest true stories of WWII. The coconut ended up on JFK's desk, when years later he became President and it changed Robinson's life forever. Hear all about it in a speech that takes about an hour. It includes an official Navy chart of the area and invaluable pictures, the originals of which are now in the Smithsonian Institute Presidential exhibit in DC. Don't miss this amazing firsthand account of how JFK performed as a young Naval Officer. Was he a hero or a heel?