

mtougias@comcast.net
michaeltougias@yahoo.com

***A New Presentation from NY Times bestselling author
Michael Tougias...***

U-Boats So Close to Home

An American Family's World War II Story of Survival and the U-boat that Attacked Them

Michael J. Tougias, bestselling author and co-author of 24 books, offers a dramatic presentation based on his co-authored book *So Close to Home*. Tougias will use slides of the attack, the survivors, and the rescue to make this “an edge-of-your seat” multi-media program.

On May 19, 1942 a German U-boat in the Gulf of Mexico stalked its prey 50 miles off New Orleans. Captained by 29-year-old Erich Wurdemann (Iron Cross and coveted Knight's Cross recipient) the submarine commander had his sights set on the freighter *Heredia* with 59 souls on board. Most of the crew were merchant seamen, but there were also a handful of civilians including the Down's family. The family was comprised of the parents, Ray Sr. and Ina, along with their two children, eight year old Ray Jr., nick-named “Sonny”, and eleven year old Lucille.

Fast asleep in their berth the Down's family had no notice that two torpedoes were heading their way. When the ship exploded all four members of the family were separated from each other. More than half the crew and passengers aboard the *Heredia* perished, but incredibly, after 15 hours in the ocean – facing sharks, hypothermia, drowning, and dehydration—all the members of the Down's family survived and were reunited.

Ray Downs Jr. aka “Sonny” is now 82 years old but he remembers every detail of the voyage, the attack, and his family's miraculous survival story. Tougias also had access to the U-boat commander Erich Wurdemann's War Diary, and the presentation will include a discussion of the challenges faced aboard the sub, and some of the other daring raids the commander made off the coast of America. *SO CLOSE TO HOME* is a survival story and history book rolled into one, similar to Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken*. “I enjoy doing these programs,” says Tougias, “because I like to transport the audience into the heart of the action so that they ask themselves ‘*what would I have done.*’ It's like watching a movie with the author giving behind the scene details.” A book signing will follow the program, and the presentation is suitable for all ages.

Tougias, known for his fast paced writing style and character-driven stories, has written several true survival thrillers, including *The Finest Hours*, which is now a Disney movie. His other sea saga's, include *Rescue of the Bounty*, *Overboard!*, *Fatal Forecast*, *A Storm Too Soon*, and *Ten Hours Until Dawn*. On a lighter note, the author penned the award-winning memoir *There's A Porcupine In My Outhouse: Misadventures of a Mountain-man Wannabe*. His latest book is *Extreme Survival: Lessons From Those Who Have Triumphed Against All Odds*, and his newest nature book is *The Waters Between Us*:

A Boy, A Father, Outdoor Misadventures and the Healing Power of Nature. Visit www.michaeltougias.com for more information.