

Christmas Greetings

1944

Love

Frieda

ONE YEAR DIARY

1945

PROPERTY OF

Sam Gevirtz,

San Francisco

MADE IN U. S. A.

I'm in Bremerton now. My ship, the Bunker Hill is practically completed with her overhaul and the days pass by now with working parties placing food and ammunition and supplies within her holds.

Fleet Admiral Nimitz has requested that work on the ship be speeded up so we may get into the theater of operation sooner.

We pulled away from our mooring at Bremerton on January 22nd and many faces were sad as we left the scene of many an exciting liberty. Our bow pointed south and we sped along at 33 knots, arriving at Alameda, California at midnight on January 23rd. Next day, I fortunately was placed on a detail delegated to purchase certain supplies for the Detachment.

Through the course of the day I was able to visit my family for about 1 1/2 hours – just time enough to dust off a delicious chicken dinner and a quart of milk. But this time I knew I was saying goodbye for a long time and I fully realized how short my time at home had been in comparison with what I had spent in the Pacific during the preceding year and what I was about to spend there.

Frieda said she'd stand on the Golden Gate Bridge as we pulled out, at 1600 on January 24th, but though many of my friends were waiting to wave a goodbye to her, she was nowhere [sic] in sight. Probably something had detained her.

The Air Group we took aboard at Alameda was a mixture of several Marine and Navy squadrons. Our fighters this time are Corsairs (F4U-10) with the customary Helldivers as dive-bombers and TBF's as torpedo [sic] planes. We're using 6 Hellcats (F6F) as night fighters. The Marines are the majority of fighter pilots, this squadron VMF221, a veteran of battles around Guadalcanal and other islands in that area. I was speaking with one of the Marine mechanics when one fighter pilot, a captain came over and started talking very friendly with us. I was very startled when I saw I was speaking with Captain John [s/b James Elms Swett] Swett, who had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor earlier in the war.

The Air group will be designated as Air Group 84.

Most of the crew aboard are little more than recruits, some being in the Navy no more than three months! It's this bunch in particular that is taking a terrific beating as we pass through some rough weather. Many men are throwing up, being violently sea-sick. Our speed is about 25 knots, course 245.

We've had some drills and practice firing at balloons [sic]. I also attended several aircraft recognition classes. For my battle station, I've been assigned as gunner on Gun 7, Battery I. Tom Hand is my loader.

We expect to arrive at Pearl Harbor in the afternoon of Jan. 28th.

Jan. 28.

All morning was spent at target practice and while you could easily tell that most of our gunners are inexperienced, the firing wasn't too bad. I did fair. We had our first flight operations today. Though several pilots have never operated from carriers, there wasn't a single crackup all day. One new sailor unwittingly walked into a twirling propellor & hit in the head. He has the honor (if it be such) of being the only man of this ship struck by a prop who lived. However his injury was very serious & he was taken ashore at Pearl Harbor & hospitalized. We were in Pearl Harbor until dawn the next day when we pulled out with two recruit ships, Randolph and Bennington & the old timer, Saratoga. This ship will be the flagship of all carriers in Task Force 58. & the Admiral aboard is Vice Admiral Mark (s/b Marc) A. Mitscher.

Scuttlebutt says this will be a gigantic operation, but that remains to be seen.

Jan. 30th.

Proceeding course 210 at 21 knots. During flight operations today, saw one plane from Saratoga crack up in water just off Sara's fantail while attempting landing. Destroyer searched for survivors. None found.

Jan. 31.

Today the destroyers had a field day, picking up men who had fallen overboard. In all, five men fell overboard from various ships. All rescued. Reefeuled [sic] destroyers today.

Feb. 1st.

A Marine ordnanceman [sic] worked on the guns of a Hellcat & through some accident the guns were discharged. The Marine and two sailors were wounded painfully by exploding .50 caliber bullets. All signs and scuttlebutt concerning this operation have the following as probable targets: Iwo Jima invaded about the middle of the month which will be covered either by our direct support of landing or this will be covered by

CVE's. It seems most definite that we will attack Tokyo, Japan this month. It goes without saying that opposition is expected to be particularly heavy.

Feb. 2nd.

More target practice today. All gunners are improving very much. Weather getting very hot.

Feb. 4th.

Fired at sleeve again today. Since all firing was done on port side today, we moved over to Battery Two & used their gun. Results still improving. Planes towing targets were B-26's from Eniwetok.

Feb. 6th.

This morning found out we were 300 miles from Truk & will pass closer to that island during the day.

Feb. 7th.

We had a cruel reveille last night about midnight in the form of a G.Q. Two "bogies" were caught by the radar about 6 miles, circling the task group. The new men aboard had a heck of a time with their first combat zone G.Q. "Rocky" Barr told some hilarious stories of his flight down the hangar deck, bumping into planes, tripping over lines, being pushed around by other men just as anxious as he to get to their battle stations. Night ammo was passed out & Rocky, still fogged up by his recent slumber, could hardly carry it to his gun. I couldn't help laughing & telling him he looked "all legs." Bogies later identified as heavy rain clouds.

During the afternoon, had torpedo [sic] defense. Several bogies at 15-17 miles. Patrol planes reported several enemy planes took off from Truk or Yap, so we remained at T.D. for about 3 hours. Weather getting hotter. Arriving at Ulithi tomorrow morning. Vice Admiral Mitscher is coming aboard at that time. We're not expecting to stay in port more than a couple days.

It seems incredible that less than a month ago I was pitching liberty in Seattle. All that happens now is so familiar: the flight operations, gunnery exercises, etc., that it seems we never left in the first place. All I have left from Stateside is a few luscious memories and some mail now and then reminding me I just came from "home:" I can't bring myself to realize that I'll be here for a very long time. It can be interpreted two ways:

optimism or pessimism, that I feel sure I'll be here only a few more months.

Feb. 8th.

Arrived at Ulithi this afternoon following additional gunnery exercises, and there before my eyes was the greatest naval armada in the history of the world. Large carriers, battleships, cruisers, and a multitude of destroyers comprising a strong enough force that could give a good battle with all the navies of the world combined. And it must have been a very encouraging sight to them also to see the four carriers and one small carrier steam into the lagoon to join them. They have been under attack by Jap aircraft very often since the time the "Bunky" was here last. We anchored and started loading more bombs and provisions and ammunition. Don Johnson, a good friend from Sea School, still aboard the Hornet, paid us a visit.

Feb. 10th.

Pulled out of Ulithi in a strong task group formation and headed north. Had more gunnery drills.

Feb. 11th.

The Marine Air Intelligence officer gave a lecture to the Detachment this evening on the coming operation. This is a summary of information given by him: We will attack the Tokyo area of Japan on Feb. 16th, and 17th, with the prime purpose being the destruction of enemy aircraft, airfields, and aircraft plants and factories. The Japs have on Japan about 3,000 operational combat aircraft from which we may expect the heaviest opposition ever experienced by our Navy in this war. This means a lot to us, as you can well imagine. Some ships will undoubtedly get hit, perhaps sunk. But if all goes well, it will mean the subduing of Jap air resistance to the inevitable invasion of the Jap homeland and it will start the Nip populace wondering that if the Yank navy has been sunk, what in hell is this bombing them, shelling them, strafing them, - destroying them??

After this attack, we will steam south to cover the invasion of Iwo Jima, scheduled to commence on Feb. 19th. On this 3 mile by 5 mile island, there is concentrated 13,000 enemy troops, whose annihilation (according to the schedule) should be over in 3 days. A veritable blood bath for the Marines going ashore.

Feb. 12th.

We had simulated attacks most of today with our Corsairs strafing and shooting rockets at a target sled we towed. They were very accurate. In landing operations, we had the first crackups of the cruise when 4 fighter planes piled into the crash barriers. One was damaged badly enough to be jettisoned later. Our night fighters had practice in night flying this evening, with one night fighter Hellcat cracked up in the barriers.

Feb. 13.

We refueled [sic] today to capacity for our run to the target area. Most of the fellows are openly nervous and apprehensive, and all are hiding it in loud bursts of humor and merriment. Our skipper, Capt. Seitz, gave us a little talk over the P.A. system. To all of us – this is it! – what we've been waiting for since the war started, history in the making: the first all-out carrier assault on Tokyo, capital of Japan. Here we ride, the greatest Navy the world has ever seen, twice as powerful as any other fleet afloat; the largest massed aggregation in all the long history of sea power, direct descendant of the supreme navies of the past: of the sword-nosed Greek ships that terrified the watchers on the towers of Troy, of the iron-rammed triremes of Tyre and Carthage and Rome, of the shield-girl boats of the Vikings. Our mission may easily and probably will be a major step in this war. This assault shall decide how soon we may invade Japan, - how soon the war will be over.

Feb. 14th.

Refueled [sic] a destroyer for a run on target. Still no bogies. Everyone's emotions keyed up, waiting for the first blasts of torpedoe [sic] defense.

Feb. 15th.

This morning patrol planes of another task group spotted a 70 ft. Jap fishing boat and heavily strafed it. About noon, a Betty was spotted flying low and promptly shot down by the CAP of 58.4. It is believed our ships were not spotted by the enemy plane because of their insufficient altitude. We were told there are about 70 Jap subs in the home waters of Japan, but so far we don't know how aggressive they will be. The weather is very cold, since Japan is on about the same latitude as the state of Washington. It's been raining today. We were issued special winter equipment. Only 4 days ago we sweltered in Ulithi!!

Feb. 16th.

At dawn today a heavy fighter sweep took off in a driving rain, blinding in its intensity and headed for Tokyo. It seems we have completely surprised the Japs, since we haven't had a bogie all night. Our planes could not go through to attack their particular target because of zero visibility, but secondary targets were strafed and many fires stated. Very few planes rose to intercept and these were either dispersed or shot down. They sank several picket boats and three injured and one other Jap survivor were brought aboard. The weather is frigid & wet. Miserable, dismal, rain, with icy wind cutting through the winter gear. We had many torpedoe [sic] defense calls, several G.Q.'s, but not a single Jap plane came into view! Several attempted to come out, but all were turned back or shot down by our C.A.P. This showing of Jap air might is the most baffling thing we've come up against. Where is their resistance?? Can't they do anything about this fleet parading up and down just off their mainland? There is only on answer and it's so extraordinary, I hesitate to make the statement. The Jap fight against American planes, ships in the Pacific area has been nothing but a huge bluff!! They have centered their air and sea power in those areas and at times when they were most needed, but have kept virtually nothing in reserve, nor have they sufficient airpower to put up a fight on several fronts at once. This weakness has been accented most by our huge air fleets of both the Army and Navy. The Army air force has their planes on the fighting fronts pinned down while this huge mobile air fleet, the Navy Air Corps can strike with enough force to dispense with any token resistance that is on hand or targets closer to the Jap mainland or "behind the line" strikes. This statement should be followed by another assertion that the war has now centered to the area where the Nip armies are centered, namely on Luzon, China, and Japan itself. Our army air forces are taking care of all enemy air resistance on Luzon and are not in need of Naval aid, the China front has long been a stalemate, but this should soon be offset and this front should swing to our favor as soon as the China coast is invaded, which I predict will take place within the next 4 or 5 months. The Jap mainland will probably come under the fleet's repeated bombardment now it is evident that their resistance is so small and futile. Our strikes, in conjunction with super-fortress B-29 raids should keep them busy and off balance until land based air power can swing from the Philippines and from our potential airfields on the Jap - held coast of China to the attack and concentrated bombing of Japan proper. This will undoubtedly be followed by invasion of the Nippon homeland.

From all this, it would seem that "it's all over but the shooting!" I believe there's more truth to this than jest. The end

of this conflict is in sight. I won't be foolish enough to make any time predictions, because it will undoubtedly drag on for some time, and during this time there will also be many useless casualties. A man with a torn arm or leg is an excellent argument against any silly prophecy that "the war should be over by so & so of 19xx."

Feb. 17th.

Dive-bombers and torpedo [sic] planes took off this morning with fighters on a very heavy strike over a specific target area on the outskirts of Tokyo. They sighted no Jap fighters, but while these planes were in constant view, they never attempted interference. A heavy strike took off later to attack the same area and bombing results were reported as "very good." Forty interceptors attacked and of these 5 were shot down and several others damaged. We lost no planes. All other strikes were called off because of the ferocious winds and icy rain squalls. We had many G.Q.'s again today with many bogies around but again not a shot was fired. Leaving Tokyo today.

Feb. 18th.

Refeuled [sic] destroyers today in preparation of bombardment of Iwo Jima tomorrow. In the last few days, combat operations have cost us many planes through Nip AA fire. This ship lost about 3 fighters, 4 bombers, and about three TBF's. Most of the crews were saved when they were forced to "ditch" around our task force. Several very bad crackups occurred on deck and one pilot was injured when his Corsair bounced, turned a complete somersault and crashed to the deck. The plane was the most complete wreck I've ever seen. The engine dangled deckward, tail smashed, fuselage buckled inward like an accordion. On another fighter, the wing was sheared off when it struck a 5 inch mount as a result of landing gear buckling. I saw 3 fighters and 2 dive-bombers thrown over the side after being stripped by salvage crews.

Tomorrow morning the invasion of Iwo Jima takes place, to be covered by our planes. From present outlooks it will probably be as bloody as Tarawa.

The pictures of yesterday's operations which covered part of Yokohama have been developed and we learned that our dive bomber pilots bombed and sank a CVL or CVE in addition to starting numerous fires in the navy yard.

Feb. 19th.

The Marines invaded the island of Iwo Jima at dawn this morning and our planes covered the invasion by making strikes all day in which dozens of rockets and small fragmentation bombs were dropped. All of our planes returned safely, though several were badly shot up.

We had a couple bogies during the day but none came close enough to bother us. About dusk we had torpedoe [sic] defense when a group of bogies approached from the north headed for us. They were Betty's and Helen's & there was six in all. They closed to about 10 miles and we had G.Q. The sky was very clear and the moon was very bright - every disadvantage to us. Five-inch gunfire broke out on our port quarter. All ships in the task force then began to blow huge quantities of smoke through their stacks. We circled and zig-zagged through endless evading maneuvers and entered the smoke of ships ahead of us, almost shutting out all light entirely. Tracers began streaming through the black night and firing became heavy. Friendly night fighters from another ship were in the air and within about half hour of each other, came two announcements that Betty's had been splashed. A battleship nearby had been firing sporadically with 5 inch and 40m.m, when suddenly all her guns cut loose in heavy firing centered on a converging spot. Suddenly a Helen exploded and it flew for several seconds brightly afire until it nozed [sic] downward, hit the water and exploded again, burned fiercely, then burned itself out. Bogies opened and finally faded. We secured and went below to hit the sack. Ripped out a stream of curses, when, an hour later, torpedoe [sic] defense pulled me from my sack and I ran topside again. A bogie closed to 12 miles, then opened and left. Finally secured and went to sleep. Iwo Jima was in sight today.

Feb. 20th,

We are refeuling [sic] at sea today and for the first time we are going to bring aboard ammunition while underway at sea from an ammunition ship. After this, scuttlebutt says we're headed back north, to hit Japan again, but this time north of Tokyo, where more of the aircraft industry is centered. We anticipate more opposition this time because the weather couldn't possibly be as bad as it was the last time when it was very difficult, almost impossible for enemy planes to locate us. However, no matter how concentrated their attack, most of it would be broken up our fighters and what damage they could do - even sink one or two carriers, they can't possibly change the course of the war. It's too late. The weather is sunny and clear, with a chill remaining in the air.

Feb. 21st.

Supported Marines at Iwo Jima today. Things are becoming much worse for them. Estimated enemy troops on island now 20,000, and there are many factors making it difficult for the Americans. Their casualties are higher than that of Tarawa, as I guessed and the official communique has announced that it's the hardest fight in the history of the Marine Corps. Our planes are making three passes at enemy targets: first bombing, then firing rockets, then strafing. All our planes returned. This evening had torpedo [sic] defense. Group of six bogies closing on us. Later on at dusk firing broke out on starboard quarter and we went to G.Q. Firing continued for some time, coming nearer. Finally our guns opened up. No results. We were making a smoke screen again, trying to hide our wake in the night. A fire broke out in the distance on the starboard quarter and we couldn't ascertain the cause. It didn't look like that fire that comes from a Jap plane. Enemy planes left about 10 p.m. & we secured.

Feb. 22nd.

Found out the cause of fire seen last night and some details on the attack. The first enemy planes to approach us dropped "winds", light metallic strips of paper supposed to confuse our radar. This was to be a cover-up for their remaining force to attack our troops ashore. However, our fleet circled to the north of the island and it was necessary therefore for the Japs to pass over us to get to their target. Our heavy firing confused them, and they decided to attack us instead. The planes were Zekes, fixed up as fighter-bombers. Somehow, one of them spotted the Saratoga, which opened fire. The Zeke made a suicide dive onto the deck of the Sara. The resulting fire attracted two other Zekes, which followed the other in a suicide plunge. The fire has raged all night, just being extinguished some time [sic] today. She's out of action for many months now, on her way to the States for repairs. Heavy casualties were reports. The Saratoga has been in operation against the Japs since the war started and while her planes have chalked up a very impressive score, the ship itself, while the most heavily armed carrier in the fleet, has never come under attack. Thus the first time her guns were fired against a living target, the ship has almost received a mortal wound.

We stayed around Iwo today, which was in plain sight several times, to support the Marines as much as possible. However, extremely adverse weather condition over us and over the target forced all our planes to return without dropping their

bombs. Another obstacle for the Marines, then, is no aerial support. This same weather, limiting visibility to 1/8 of a mile, is restricting our naval vessels from accurate firing also.

Feb. 23rd.

We refueled [sic] from tankers today getting all set for the trip up to Japan. Our target will be Nagoya, some 40-60 miles south of Tokyo, which is scheduled to receive two days of bombardment, from where we will travel shortly down the coast of Japan, and strike the island of Okinawa, between Japan and Formosa.

One of our Jap prisoners finally succumbed to his wounds and died today.

Today marks the end of my second year in the Marine Corps.

Feb. 24th.

Proceeding north through very rough seas. Waves breaking over flight deck. No bogies all day.

Feb. 25th.

Launched fighter sweep at dawn, followed shortly by heavy strike. Some enemy air opposition and nine enemy planes shot down. We had no losses. In the strike the primary target was obscured because of weather conditions and secondary targets, an aircraft assembly plant was attacked and severely damaged. After the initial opposition in the air, the air-borne resistance ceased, and the Jap's defense was restricted to AA guns. One of our fighters was hit and on the trip back was forced down at sea. A photographic plane, flying over the same area later, reported a surfaced sub making its way to the downed pilot. The largest force of B-29's, 200 in number, hit the Tokyo area at the same time. We had two bogies early in the morning, but there's been no further interference all day. About 4 TBF's cracked up in landing, one of them shearing his wing when it hit a turret. The seas were unusually rough and landing was exceptionally hazardous. The deck came up so fast on one occasion when a fighter cut his switch to land that when the deck came up, the plane came down and the two met, the landing gear buckled and it skid down the deck on its fuselage. Later strikes cancelled because of weather. It was hailing for a while. Seems we have bad weather every time we come up here.

Feb. 26th.

We had a dramatic bit of action early this morning while most of the crew slept and was not even conscious of what was happening. Somehow a Jap oil lugger, about 120 feet long, became tangled in our task group formation and sailed with us a while, neither of us aware of the other's presence. She was finally discovered and one of our destroyers opened fire. She scored a hit on the lugger who surprised her by firing back, scoring a hit on the destroyer, the Porterfield. One officer killed, 7 men injured. During the small encounter, 2 (this took place within 7000 yards of us) 5 inch shells, we don't know whether it was from friendly or enemy guns, sailed right over the flight deck. All hands took cover - but fast! We broke off from the lugger and left her for the task group about 10 miles astern of us, where she was sunk by one of their destroyers.

All strikes cancelled today, although some few other ships launched planes for a strike or two. At one time in the morning, we were 30 miles from the closest Jap airfield! And no bogies at the time. We had torpedoe [sic] defense in the afternoon, but the two bogies we had, left. We came upon the warm ocean currents and the temperature quickly rose. While the seas continued to be very rough, the weather was comparatively warm, clear, and sunny. We are returning from the attack on Japan, proceeding southward, and it is thought we are approaching a new target. This makes our second attack on Tokyo without any attack launched against us. When I think of the time we had at Palau, Truk, Saipan, Formosa, et al, I can't believe or let's say it's hard to believe that we've hit Tokyo itself twice, without even seeing a Jap plane.

Feb. 28.

Launched heavy strikes this morning over the island of Okinawa, in the Ryukyu Island chain, between Japan proper and Formosa. There was no air borne enemy planes sighted except one, which fled. Bombed and strafed airfields, industrial area, and harbor installations. Three of our fighters were shot down by AA fire, but all 3 were rescued. We had all our planes over the target and struck this island, about twice the size of Guam, all day long.

March 1st.

Steaming south, headed for Ulithi for provisioning and arming.

March 2nd.

Our scout planes on patrol sighted several rubber rafts containing the crew of a B-29 forced down probably on a raid to Tokyo. We had fighters and torpedo [sic] planes flying cover for these men all day long. In the evening, with a destroyer still plowing its way through the 90 miles that separated us from the rafts, we launched two night fighters to continue covering the survivors. They were picked up and the night fighters returned. As the first plane came in for his hazardous night landing, he cracked up on the deck, neatly shearing off the right wing, also completely ruining the radar equipment in the wing. The next plane also cracked up in the barriers.

March 3rd.

Refueled [sic] in the morning, and had target practice in the afternoon.

March 4th.

We pulled into the harbor of Ulithi this afternoon, and almost immediately barges and lighters came alongside and we started loading ammunition and bombs.

March 8th.

We moved over to a new berth for target practice for a few days. Firing results excellent; perhaps the best we've ever done.

March 9th.

Firing continued on into today, when results continued being extraordinarily good. The twenty m.m. batteries were credited with 2 or 3 sleeves on both days. The 5 inch guns were firing at a drone this afternoon. After it had eluded the bursts of the South Dakota and North Carolina, one of our bursts scored a damaging hit with shrapnel & started it smoking. It started dropping quickly when all of a sudden it went out of control and plunged directly at our ship. All guns were manned on the double and we opened fire. Several hits were scored and it was knocked off course, hit the water, spreading its wreckage over a large area. The humor of the situation suddenly struck us: almost "suicide" dive-bombed by a friendly robot plane! The chuckles sounded dry however when we realized how close we had been to being seriously damaged had we been struck.

We moved back into our original berth and discovered that during our absence, the Indianapolis moved nearby. The "Indy" is flagship of the Fifth Fleet with Admiral Spruance

aboard. More important to me directly, however, was that one of my old best friends, Jack Holland was aboard and I made arrangements to visit him.

March 10th.

This morning I found my name on the list of lucky persons permitted to go ashore on a recreation party. We went to the isle of Mogmog and found there a well-organized fleet recreation center. On the particular day, many notables in the sports world were present and we watched boxing exhibitions by Fred Apostoli and Lou Ambers and had a talk by friendly Cmdr. Gene Tunney. A baseball game in progress had for its participants all big league stars. To top off a swell day, we all trekked to the beach; where, unhampered by silly civilized customs, we merely stripped off our clothes and dove in. After a marvelously refreshing swim, we dressed and returned to the ship.

March 11th.

This evening I went to the first showing of our movie and afterwards lay down to the compartment where I was absentmindedly folding my laundry when a shrieking torpedoe [sic] defense blast ripped through the p.a. system, followed immediately by general quarters. I grabbed my jacket and made a dash through officer's country and up the hatch to my battle station. On the hangar deck there was temporary confusion since the call caught half the crew in the midst of the second movie. I arrived up on Battery One and looking aft I could see a large carrier in flames. Looking forward, I saw another fire, this one however, turning out to be on the beach. While strapped in our guns and prepared for action, we received the explanation of past events from Lt. Ponick who received his information over the phones from Air Forward. Two Japanese aircraft, one a two-engined plane, had attacked our task force while at anchor. The ship who had the radar duty this evening picked up the bogies at 68 miles and tracked them in to four before alerting the night fighters on the air strip on the beach. The two Jap planes passed directly over our ship at a low altitude where it was sighted in the gloom and clearly heard by all those topside. Since no warning had been given however, all thought they were friendly. The Japs circled the force several minutes and finally the single-engine plane selected the Randolph as his target, which was as lit up as we were. It was merely fate that decreed selection of a sister-ship a hundred yards away instead of us. The Jap made his run and dropped a bomb on the fantail of the Randolph, circled and made a suicide plunge into the island structure. The second

plane, at first believed to be along merely for observation, supposedly dropped a bomb on the island and fled. It was later ascertained that because of all the lights on the island, the Jap thought that there was a juicy carrier and made a Kamikaze dive into the earth. He incurred several casualties but the only damage was a hole in the ground. At first reports on the Randolph there was one man dead and about 25 wounded. Considering the surprise of the attack and the size of the blaze which burned on for several hours, this is a remarkably low figure. We made speedy preparations to get underway rather than be caught in the harbor but when there were no more bogies, preparations were suspended, we secured from general quarters and went to sleep uneasily below. This atoll, thus far, has been a definite jinx to us. We've been here three separate times. The first time, in early October, we were chased out by a raging ferocious typhoon. The second time in mid-November we were attacked by four midget Nip subs which snuck through the nets. In this engagement, one of our tankers was torpedoed and sunk, but all subs were plied out and sunk. This was the third time and I sincerely hoped, the last.

March 12th.

We learned this morning that several of the wounded on the Randolph had succumbed and there were now about 13 dead.

Permission came through this a.m. for me to visit Jack and I secured a ride on a Higgins boat over to the Indianapolis where I surprised him. We spent a very successful day together, having so many things to talk over. The last time we had seen each other was in Los Angles in Sept., 1943. While I was aboard, there came the call to "set condition one in the AA batteries." Of course this was merely their system for having torpedoed [sic] defense. Bogies approaching and I was aboard a strange ship! Looking over to the Bunker Hill, about 1,000 yards away, I saw she was getting up steam, preparatory to getting underway. What a funny feeling to experience the "Bunky" about to run out on me! The "bogie" turned out to be a C-47 transport, and after an hour of fretting, we secured, and Jack and I went back to battling the breeze, ending with his promise to visit me at his next opportunity.

March 13th.

We had torpedoed [sic] defense again today with a bogie closing to about 7 miles. It later opened and left. Many jokes are being cracked to the effect of: let's go back to Tokyo where it's safe!!

March 14th.

The task force pulled out of Ulithi this morning, commencing our next operation. We had target practice all morning with fair results and at about 1300 we a heavy simulated air attack by our planes. While watching and admiring our airmen, we saw two TBF's collide in mid-air at a very high altitude and parts and bits of wreckage floated down and dropped in the water. The fuselage of one, with its wings sheared off, hit the water directly in front of a destroyer, about a thousand yards off our starboard beam. The destroyer didn't even bother searching for survivors. Looking upward we could see no parachutes, but many parts of wings and engines were still dropping very close to us, so we were ordered to take cover. The other planes circled the wreckage and the remainder of the simulated air attack was cancelled. We assumed all six men aboard the two torpedoe [sic] planes were instantly killed. One Helldiver circled our ship at a low altitude and it was easy to see that his port elevator had been torn off by a piece of wreckage. He landed aboard safely. The weather is warm and sunny, the seas are very rough.

March 16th.

We refeuled [sic] at sea today from tankers. Tonight at 10:30 we had torpedoe [sic] defense. A group of 20 Betty's attacked the task force. Several were seen to be shot down in flames. Our night fighters claimed a few. We secured after standing in the icy winds for a couple hours, were called back up another T.D. a while or so later. Firing on the horizon again. Many flares dropped. We were at our guns watching firing around us when dawn broke and our fighter sweep of 16 fighters took off. Heavy firing broke out from the ships with us on the port side and we looked up and saw quite clearly a twin-engine bomber which we decided was a Frances. Our 5 inchers opened fire but it was travelling very fast and got away. We learned later our CAP shot it sown. Heard that other task groups under attack. The Enterprise was hit on an elevator with a 600 lb. bomb. She is still operating. The Intrepid, who with the Franklin, just returned to combat after being repaired in the States, received two near misses, causing some damage. She is still operating also. We had many torpedoe [sic] defense calls and G.Q.'s all day. We were lounging around in the late morning when we received the word that a bogie was in to 4 miles and all stations were alerted. No sooner had I strapped myself in than a yell went up and we looked aft. There was a Judy, no more than 600 yards away in the midst of its dive on us. Before we could open fire, its bomb was dropped and it landed about 50 yards off our fantail where it

exploded in the water. We opened fire while the plane was still on the starboard side, our battery being the only guns on the ship firing. We got several hits but it kept coming, pulled out of his dive at a low altitude, crossed the flight deck and fled to port. We swiveled our guns around for firing across the flight deck and got several more hits. All guns were firing by this time and it suddenly exploded in mid-air and fell to the water, a huge mass of flame. There were considerable bogies around and almost continuous firing for over an hour. When our first strike took off later, a curious accident occurred. A jeep with its driver was parked behind a fighter plane when its engine was turned up suddenly. The sudden blast of slip stream started the jeep rolling and a roll of the ship hurried it on its way. It went out of control. The driver, realizing his predicament, put one foot out of the jeep and prepared to jump. As he jumped, all his weight was on his right foot which was still was on the throttle. The jeep leaped ahead and went over the side. In its flight, it struck 3 men, fracturing one man's skull, and its bumper hit a life raft which tumbled to the water. The driver was thrown clear. He came to the surface after a few seconds and found himself right next to the life raft. He quickly scrambled aboard and awaited his rescue by a destroyer.

The target of our planes today was the southern part of Kyushu on the Jap homeland. They did very much damage to the airfield and struck at some shipping. Only one Zeke was sighted and shot down on the first sweep, but on the last sweep of the day, 13 planes were shot down. Several planes of our force were shot down during the day by AA fire.

Had torpedoe [sic] defense again this evening. Saw flares dropped. Torpedoe [sic] defense again at midnight. Can see no sleep tonight. T.D. again at 2:30 a.m.

March 19th.

We moved east during the night and the target for today's strikes will be centered around the Kuri Air Base. It seems evident from the repeated attacks on the ships in the task force that the Japs are making an earnest attempt to stop our carriers. We were strapped in our guns again today when our first sweep took off. There was firing going on our port side and we were zig-zagging furiously when we spied a plane diving on the Essex, the other CV of our task group. She was firing as quickly as possible and the plane dove into the water, just missing her bow. High over us, we glimpsed a Myrt, a speedy Jap reconnaissance [sic] plane hiding behind clouds over our heads. Our 5 inch opened up and though she was beyond 40m.m

range, our quads also opened up. All guns missed but she was later splashed by our CAP. About 7 miles off our starboard bow we saw a terrific explosion on one of our carriers in another task group. Found out the Franklin was very seriously damaged. (Over 1400 dead) Eighty men were thrown overboard from the force of the explosion. The fire was eventually brought under control, but then a magazine exploded and the fire started anew. As soon as this was brought under control, another magazine went up. At first, the order was given to abandon ship, but this was later rescinded when she was in no immediate danger of sinking. All personnel but about 250 men of the gunnery and engineering department were transferred to other ships and two cruisers started towing. They could only make 6 knots. Her skipper said if we can keep the Japs away, he'll bring the ship back. We had G.Q. again a short while later and firing again broke out. Another plane dove at the Essex, but it kept going and hit the water, directly in front of her bow, just off our starboard beam. As it hit the water, it exploded, as though a bomb was still being carried. Still at G.Q. a while later, another plane dove at the Essex. Our guns opened up this time and after some heavy firing, we hit the plane and shot it down. Thought the Essex was firing also, we got credit for the kill. We saved their necks that time. About 2 hours later, had G.Q. again and after a short time we spied a Judy very high on the starboard beam. It started a dive on us & we opened up. Got off two complete magazines. It was hit and fell in flames about 150 yards from us. The CAP tangled with one Jap very close to us. The Jap dove with a Corsair hot on his tail. The Jap hit the water and the Corsair pulled out. Much fire all day. The Wasp was hit by a 1000 lb. bomb, flooding her 3rd deck, but she is still operating. The Yorktown was also hit by a bomb, but is also in operation. Over the target, our planes spotted several major units of the Jap fleet: a couple carriers, battleships, cruisers, & cans. Many hits were scored but final results were not known. Our fighters scored many rocket hits on a large transport. The airfields received a pasting also! It is impossible to remember all the details of the past couple days. Rest was at a minimum. More action was crammed into these two days than I have as yet experienced, including that at Formosa last October and at Saipan last June, 9 months ago to the day. Our fleet carriers have taken a worse beating in the last few days than it has in the last 2 1/2 years, but fortunately only one carrier will be out of action for very long. The others will be able to be repaired in a few weeks by tenders (it is hoped). The Japs paid heavily for the damaged we sustained however. Instead of retiring tonight as is planned, we are remaining in the area to cover the retreat of the Franklin.

March 20th.

The day started quite quietly, but we had torpedoe [sic] defense several times in the morning with numerous bogies around. About noon I was wearing the phones when I spied firing on the horizon dead ahead. I immediately reported it to air Forward and about 5 seconds later, torpedoe [sic] defense went, followed by G.Q. Firing became very intense, and the task group we were watching reported being under heavy air attack and requested help. We launched several fighters to help cover them. We saw an explosion and knew a ship had been hit. A Myrt, speedy Jap recco plane, made its debut as a dive-bomber as it was seen making over 350 miles an hour in its dive. One Jap plane was hit (this was a Hellcat shot down in error), and though aflame, continued being airborne for about 15 seconds before collapsing and dropping to the water. The Franklin received another near miss. The Enterprise was hit by a bomb in her CIC room, putting her radar out of commission (Ship out comm. also). Six of the attacking planes were shot down by ship's guns and fighters and the rest left. Several times we were told to keep a sharp over-head lookout as bandits reported in the area. We secured later and had a very late chow. After a full day, still only a hundred odd miles from Japan. About 9:30 p.m. had torpedoe [sic] defense and G. Q. again. Saw firing on horizon. We secured a little later, but called back immediately by G.Q. and firing coming close. Suddenly several flares were dropped in our midst, very close to us. A destroyer, under the flares opened heavy fire at them, attempting to shoot them out, but failed. We opened fire with 5 inch aimed by radar at a bandit and one Jap fell in flames close by. Though two or three ships were firing it is believed in all probability to be shot down by us. We were on the alert for several more hours before securing and I went to the head in a hurried attempt to shave my now heavy beard. Looking in the mirror, I was startled by what I saw, hardly recognizing myself. My eyes were puffed up and swollen and bloodshot from lack of sleep. My lips were also puffed up, chapped and cracked from windburn. It looked as though someone had lain a hard right across my mouth and I had to laugh at myself. The weather the past few days has varied very greatly, depending on whether we were heading in or out of the wind. Out of the wind (at daytime), it was comparatively warm with a very bright sun and though the air was very cold, it wasn't minded much. Heading into the wind, it was very icy, making it very difficult to face forward before the eyes would water. The seas have been very smooth compared to the very rough seas we experienced the last time in this area. Clouds the first two days varied high and low, but the third day, the sky was void of all clouds and this night of

the latest attack it was very bright with a full clear moon. Our position is somewhere about 350 miles from Okinawa.

March 21st.

About 9:15 a.m., we had torpedoe [sic] defense. One bogie at 20 miles, which soon left. I guessed his intentions correctly as merely being to scout our present position. About half an hour later we had T.D. again, the G.Q. We heard a group of bogies, later found out to be six small groups of Betty's, Irving's, and Frans attacked a nearby task group. Suddenly the loudspeaker blared "Fighter pilots, scramble!!" A minute later the Marine fighter pilots were sprinting across the flight deck and jumping into their Corsairs. Several were launched and we were standing by expecting anything when an explosion high overhead startled us and a ball of fire, formerly an Irving, fell in flames and crashed a short distance off our port beam. Many bandits all around. An attack was made on one of our cans about 95 miles from us. It was stationed there to give us advance notice of bogies approaching. In the battle, one Betty was shot down. Later found out several more bandits splashed around our force by our CAP. It was quiet for awhile but it didn't last long. About 1300 G.Q. went again. Once again fighter pilots scrambled. Large group of bogies at 70 miles closing. We launched fighters which raced to intercept. They tally-ho'ed [sic] 26 Bettys and about 34 Zekes, some Jacks and a Myrt. The entire task force had 150 fighters in the ensuing dog fight. After the battle was over, found out all 26 Bettys shot down, 13 Zekes, 2 Jacks, and 1 Myrt also shot down, with 2 more Jacks as probables. Our loses: 2 fighters. Of all those bandits shot down, this ship was credited with 17. No ships in the task force was under attack by this group - a good showing for our fighters. Our pilots tally-ho'ed [sic] the enemy before any other ship's planes arrived because they were on duty flying CAP. Two Jap prisoners brought aboard, one wounded.

This evening, we were notified that Commander Shaw, Gunnery Officer of the ship, told Lieutenant Ponick he had a very good battery and our shooting was outstanding; and that we can take this as our "well done" for the operation. This meant very much to us on Battery One as no other gun station had ever thus been praised. Followed some tall boasting with the other Marine gun stations.

March 22nd.

We refeuled [sic] from tankers today, also reloaded some bombs from an ammunition ship while under-way 400 miles

from Okinawa. Striking there tomorrow in softening up process for invasion scheduled for April 1st. This invasion will be made by Marine troops to the north who are confronted with the obstacles of their nearness to Japan, almost entire rocky area and caves. Army troops will invade southern beaches and are confronted with level land sectors. It is to be a race between the Army and Marines to reach the center of the island.

We were warned this afternoon of many mines in the area. During the refueling [sic], one mine was blown up by a destroyer about 500 yards off our starboard beam. Pretty close. About ten minutes later a lookout up at Air Forward let out a screech and we saw, not twenty feet away, a big ugly, black, horned mine adrift. All stations were alerted as lookouts.

We received replacement aircraft from the Franklin and Wasp who it appears are returning for repairs. Enterprise may be repaired at Guam with Yorktown.

March 23rd.

Our planes took off this morning on a heavy strike over Okinawa. I was standing on the battery with Rocky Barr and several other fellows watching the planes take off. Several planes had a hard time taking off. A bomber came down the deck without sufficient speed to insure a safe take-off. As soon as he left the flight deck, he started downward in a glide, and hit the water about 30 feet in front of the ship, a little to starboard. I ran to the smoke-bombs we keep on the battery for that purpose and punctured the nose and tossed two overboard. Rocky got one over also. The plane passed right under us and we looked down on it. It had flipped over on its back and for awhile, no one was sighted. Presently a hand came up and waved. Several seconds later, another hand waved a short distance away. Both were afloat and presently a destroyer plowed its way to the smoke markers we dropped. Both men were rescued. Over the target area, some shipping was attacked, as were several airfields. No enemy aircraft sighted in air or on ground. Very poor weather, overcast over 500 feet. The weather over the task group was very bad also, very overcast with several rain squalls. Several alarms of bogies, but mostly they were friendly. One Myrt was shot down by CAP about 30 miles away. One bogie came to 7 miles, but was up at 36,000 feet, probably photo recon - if he could take pictures through this soup.

March 24th.

The weather cleared up a bit today and bombing of Okinawa was stepped up and much more effective. While there

is no aerial opposition, the pilots are up against some of the thickest flak they've ever seen. Five of our planes were shot down over the target: 1 bomber and 4 fighters. The pilot of one fighter was rescued by an OS2U, sent out by a cruiser, as was the crew of the dive-bomber. The men who didn't return were several of the most valuable in our Air Group. The Air Group Commander was shot down and made a water landing about a mile and a half from the beach. One of our planes dropped a life raft to him and a rescue plane was sent out. It arrived to find him floating motionless near the raft, making no effort to reach it. After waiting around as long as was safe, the plane left, assuming the Cmdr. was dead. The Fighter Skipper, a Major in the Marine Corps, was shot down and attempted a water landing. His plane hit the water and blew apart. No trace was found of him. The other pilot lost was a Marine 2nd Lt. He was forced to bail out at a very low altitude. As a result his chute didn't open and he was killed.

March 25th.

Refeuled [sic] at sea and took aboard some bombs and ammunition. While refeuling [sic] had torpedoe [sic] defense, but bogies soon left and we secured. About 9 p.m., closing on target again for attacks tomorrow, we had a bogie which our radar picked up at 63 miles. I was wearing the phones and I heard the bogies tracked in to 23 miles, when T.D. blew. We had launched two night fighters to cover a commando raid scheduled for two tiny islands near Okinawa, and these night fighters were recalled in an attempt to intercept the bogie. At about 21 miles, a great fire appeared on the horizon, and that's all there was to our bogie, now identified as a Betty. Our night fighter shot it down. We secured after a few minutes, but a little later on, we had bogies again and once more, T.D. sounded. Bogies closed on us and we started a smoke screen, zig-zagging around to hide in it. There was a bit of gunfire on all sides, but it tapered off and the bogies left.

March 26th.

Attacks over target continued. Over 700 rockets each day have been fired by our fighters and for awhile our fighters carried bombs.

March 27th.

Okinawa bombarded again, this time by battleships also. We had no bogies all day and we took advantage of the lull and got some sack time.

March 28th.

We refeuled [sic] and took aboard some bombs and ammunition and also launched a strike against some crazy-named island near Okinawa Jima atoll. This evening the chaplain addressed us over the p.a. system. He said that what was left of the Jap fleet was spotted prowling about, off the southern tip of Kyushu. Tomorrow morning we are launching a search, followed by a strike "loaded for bear," as he put it. On the hanger deck, I watched some sailors put a torpedoe [sic] up into the belly of a TBF. The Japs are evidently making every attempt to reinforce and bolster Okinawa's defenses and they must be quite desperate, risking the remnants of their fleet, as they are. The last time in this Kyushu area, we were under more or less repeated attacks by enemy aircraft. With their ships to protect this time also, we can stand by this time for anything. The American Navy is out for a kill and - to put it mild - the Nips are in for a bit of trouble.

March 29th.

The first sweep, search, and strike took off early and from first reports, no fleet units of the Jap navy were found, so selected secondary targets on the southern tip of Kyushu were attacked. A sub-chaser was sunk by our torpedoe [sic] planes and very much damage was done to airfields in the vicinity. Our CAP shot down a Zeke about 50 miles from us. About 2:30 p.m., we had T.D. and found a bogie at 31 miles. Suddenly, it was 13 miles and even before I could strap myself in my gun, gunfire broke out in our task group, and our own 5-inchers opened up. A Jill (Jap torpedoe [sic]-plane) made a run on a CVL (either the Bataan or Cabot), dropped a bomb which landed just off its fantail. By this time most of the ships were firing in a very disorganized manner. The Jill went over the Hancock, then over a battlewagon where it veered to port, crossed over in front of us and out of the task group. Many shell bursts were right around our ship and shrapnel churned the water very close by. One of the Bataan fighters, returning from a strike was instructed to get after the bandit. Notwithstanding the fact that he was alarming low on gas, he gave chase and shot it down. There were many bogies all around us and another bandit was splashed. The bogies shortly left. Most of the remaining strikes and sweeps scheduled for today have been cancelled and we're returning to Okinawa. Bogies around this evening and we had T.D. about 9:30 p.m. Nothing happened.

March 30th.

Strike took off this morning heavily loaded with bombs. Even some fighters carried 500 lb. bombs. Had several alerts but nothing happened. We secured from Condition One Easy, enabling all those not on watch to go below and get some sleep, along with getting miscellaneous things accomplished - getting haircuts, cleaning rifles, etc. Most of the fellows didn't even bother going below and just crapped out on the battery. For the past several weeks it's been the accepted thing to be awake for 24 hours at a time, grab one or two hours sleep, the go back for another 24 hours. Day in and day out of this becomes very tiresome and many meals are passed up to get another half hour sleep. Right now, "Depth Charge" Carlos, "Watso" Watson, and "Torpedoe [sic]" Witbeck are trying to relax playing cards. "Pop" Graves is stretched out on the clipping room table snoring away and I have the good fortune to be on watch, wearing the phones, so I'll crap out later on today/

March 31st.

Continue striking Okinawa, with today's attacks centered around the invasion beaches. Couple more of our planes shot down by AA fire.

April 1st.

Early this morning about 2 a.m. while playing a phonograph to keep myself awake on watch we had several bogies all around. I was in the very vortex of war - and yet as I sat there listening to Bing Crosby singing, a Jap was shot down in the distance and I watched him burn. Bogies closed to within 15 miles at one time but T.D. wasn't sounded. Our night fighters which were launched with the purpose of harassing the Japs on the island were recalled and shot down 3 more Jap planes.

At dawn a strike took off to support the invasion of Okinawa this morning. One fighter has its engine cut out just as it took off. The plane crashed into the water right off our port bow and the napalm bomb it carried exploded. The next plane in line then took off and exactly the same thing occurred. We watched the two fires, blazing furiously in semi-light of dawn and watched the two American pilots die. We went back to the alert watch, a little sick at heart.

From word we received the invasion was progressing fairly well but it was too early to really tell.

We were told a short, but intense typhoon was headed our way and to prepare for it by lashing all gear securely.

Already we're tossing and rolling quite a bit and several sailors just couldn't wait for the typhoon itself and became seasick early.

April 2nd.

All strikes scheduled for today were cancelled because of fierce weather conditions. The assault troops ashore will have to get along without our aid until the storms subside. Reinforcements for them as well as food and ammunition is therefore a new major problem.

We were supposed to refuel [sic] and rearm today and the tankers and ammunition ships are dispersed through the task group but no attempt is being made to receive fuel or bombs. Some ships have rolled as much as 75 degrees. There is no rain as yet. Just wind and these high, roaring whitecapped [sic] waves. Everyone was issued a police whistle in the event of falling overboard to attract rescuers. Being under ten feet or so of water, gasping for air, floundering around for support, I can't see how a toy whistle can save me, but what the hell - orders are orders and I suppose the brass hats know best.

April 3rd.

We had many bogies today. At one time we had as many as five groups in our area. In all cases, the CAP dealt with them successfully and we were not attacked. We were at G.Q. three different times. In all, one Zeke, two Nicks, one Tojo, and one Jill were splashed. Several got away. Our planes continued supporting the assault troops on Okinawa with bombs dropped on enemy installations on Okinawa and nearby Amami Shima [sic s/b Amami Oshima, Japan]. Several ships were hit and heavily damaged. In the last sweep of the day over Amami, our fighters spotted 15 Zekes preparing to land on the airfield. The attacked and in the battle which followed, ten Zekes were destroyed to none of our planes lost. There were a lot of smug grins evident on the faces of our pilots when they landed. We had a few bogies in the evening but nothing happened.

April 4th.

Strikes continued hitting Okinawa and nearby Jap held islands all day. On the last sweep of the day, our fighters ran into heavy and very accurate AA fire, resulting in one of our fighters being hit and crashing on the target. Another of our pilots was wounded in the forearm and couldn't see. Two other pilots "shepherded" him to Okinawa, telling him by radio where to fly and finally when to set her down. They all landed on the airfield

which the Marines had just captured. The wounded pilot made a crash landing but came out O.K.

April 5th.

All task groups have been taking turns withdrawing from the target area to refuel [sic], reload, and receive replacement aircraft. As a result we were able to maintain a continuous bombardment of all Jap positions. Today we refueled [sic] in rather heavy seas, and reloaded bombs and ammunition. Our chow has been getting steadily worse.

April 6th.

Returning to the target area, we launched a very heavy strike on Okinawa and several nearby islands. In the morning, the Executive Officer came over the p.a. system and told us the Japs were making an all-out attempt to loosen our grip on Okinawa. Attacks of 50 planes or more are to be sent out in the morning to attack our transports and troops and in the afternoon will give us "some attention." All hands were to clean and oil guns and to stand by to repel. He didn't have to tell us any more. After I was through, my gun never looked better.

In the afternoon they came. Our CAP splashed many and they made attacks on almost all our ships. Three Kami-kazi [sic s/b Kamikaze] planes dove on one of our destroyers. Another can was hit, and still another. Very heavy firing all around. Indianapolis took a hit. Another cruiser was hit. A suicide plane dove at the Cabot, Its bomb just missed and the plane was so close it sheared off the Cabot's radar. The explosion temporarily put the Cabot out of control but she was quickly fixed up. I saw many planes shot down and many were burning on the water. I saw a Corsair shot down by mistake but the pilot was saved. We were at G.Q. for a long time and word kept coming to us of Jap planes being shot down, and we happily watched the trickle grow and grow. Over Okinawa, the Japs pressed obsolete planes into service, using Vals of 1939 vintage and Sonyas [sic s/b Sonia], of 1936. Almost all were shot down. We lost one plane in a dogfight and one other but this pilot was rescued. At the end of the day the Japs loss was tallied. An incomplete count placed the planes shot down at 198(new tally 240)!! This ship got only 16 because we were unlucky to be not near at hand when the Japs appeared.

April 7th.

We sent out search planes to search the area up as far as Kyushu to search for Jap fleet units. Strikes were also sent out.

Word just came over the phones from Air Forward. Our search spotted two light cruisers, one battleship, and 8 destroyers off the tip of Kyushu, about 230 miles from us. Torpedoes were loaded into TBF's and armor-piercing bombs were carried by the SB2C's. Some fighters carried 250 lb. G.P. bombs. A very large force of these planes took out after the Japs. Meanwhile we had bogies all around and G.Q. sounded. We were searching the skies, when Tom Hand, my loader, struck my arm and pointed upward. A Jap plane, probably a Zeke, had come out of the clouds right over our heads. As yet no one on the ship or task group was aware of the Jap but our battery and Mr. Ponick, our battery officer shouted "Designate!" Immediately we all opened fire on the plane. It flew away from us for awhile, then turned around and dove at us. All guns were now firing. So far no other ships were firing but us and the Jap pilot was frightened by our volume of fire and when he was within approximately 800 yards of us, suddenly veered off and plunged directly at the Hancock, just off our fantail. The Zeke hit the carrier and exploded. I continued watching my own sector for additional enemy aircraft and consequently did not see the instant of impact, but right after, we made a turn and the Hancock was in front of me. The initial shock of what I saw almost left me speechless. From the bow to her stern she was a mass of flame. Fires raging throughout the hangar and flight decks, completely obscuring the island structure and shape of the hull. Many men were forced to jump overboard in an attempt to escape the heat. Gradually the flames were brought under control until fires were no longer visible but great billows of smoke poured out. After another great while, the smoke tapered off to white smoke or steam. Three destroyers went back to pick up those who jumped overboard. For a while we all thought she was a goner, but she sent over word that within several hours she'd be able to operate again to a limited extent. Until that time, her aircraft operated from this ship. Many bandits all around and we remained at G.Q. for about 3 or 4 hours. At one time, we were alerted and spotted a Jap plane (unidentified type) in a long glide on our starboard side. All ships were firing, with our 5 inch and 40m.m guns firing very heavily. The Jap headed for the Essex but before he arrived at his target, he was hit and crashed aflame. This ship put in a claim for the kill. Saw several more Japs shot down in flames on the horizon over another task group. One of our fighters on CAP spotted a Dinah and made a pass, only to discover he was out of ammunition. He continued bluffing the Jap, making fake passes until more planes came up and splashed it. We got results of our attack on the Jap fleet. Our planes arrived before any other ship's and consequently made torpedoe [sic] runs on the battleship, which fired her 16 inch guns in

defense along with her regular AA. Eight of our torpedoes struck home and the BB was sunk (the Yamato)!! We lost one TBF and one fighter. The two cruisers were sunk by other ship's planes, as was 3 destroyers, of which one was claimed by us. Two others were left aflame. Out of this Jap task force, all the ships that got away unharmed were 3 destroyers! Our morning search had also spotted some float planes, and shot down six. Later they splashed a Jill. What a day!

April 8th.

Received some info and saw a dispatch describing Hancock's damage and casualties. 28 killed - 15 missing - 52 wounded. 60 picked up by destroyers. Several guns out of commission. Decks warped and buckled from heat. Elevator warped upward 18 inches. Many beams buckled. Air pressure operating arresting gear out of commission, and operated by hand only. Casualties mainly from Air and Gunnery Departments from suicider [sic] with bomb landing near Battery Four. Hangar deck facilities mainly burnt out. I saw many planes thrown overboard. Today, no strikes are scheduled, but we are maintaining a CAP over Okinawa in case the Japs send over some planes to attack our forces still battling for control of the island. A search was also sent out to search for additional fleet units expected to be in the area.

We had torpedoe [sic] defense several times, but mostly the bogies turned out to be friendly. One torpedoe [sic] defense had bogies rather close and we had G.Q. the Hancock and Essex opened fire and finally our 5 inch and 40m.m. guns started firing heavily. No planes shot down. At this time the Essex' CAP shot down a Nick. We have received word that our aerial support is no longer required for Okinawa because there are now sufficient aircraft on the airfields just captured by the Marines and Army to protect and defend themselves against Jap attacks.

I saw one plane crackup on the Essex deck and burst into flame. It burned for about 5 minutes. Fate of pilot unknown.

We are retiring from the area. The Okinawa operation is complete. (So we thought.)

April 9th.

Refueling [sic] from tanker and reloading ammunition from A.E. The Hancock left the task group to go to one our islands, probably Guam, for repairs. We retained many of her planes and pilots for this ship, In her stead, the Enterprise

rejoined us, after getting her bomb hit of several weeks ago repaired.

April 10th.

Several small islands near Okinawa were invaded today and our planes supported them. One of our fighters were shot down when it was strafing a boat. Another was shot down but a Navy flying boat, a PBM, escorted by two of our fighters, picked him up. They shot several planes down.

April 11th.

Sent over several strikes again today. About 11:45 a.m., we had torpedo [sic] defense, followed shortly by G.Q. Large group of bogies closing quickly. We passed out a lot of ammunition and waited. It didn't take long. Out of the clouds high on the starboard beam a Judy dove on us. We opened heavy fire and she smoked, but continued over our heads and off to the port where she was finally splashed. Then, heavy firing broke out on all sides, and Jap planes dove at us from all angles in a heavy, concentrated, well-organized attack. I can't possibly remember the details of the attack, except that I fired at many different Jap aircraft. They came out of the clouds and out of the sun. Some were strafing. A Jap Zeke made a suicide dive on us in a long glide on the starboard side. It seemed he was diving right down my barrel. Finally, when he was getting so close I felt my muscles tense for the collision, he flew apart and crashed not 30 yards away. The vibration of my gun had knocked loose my shoulder bars and I forced, for a short time, to fire about a foot in back of my gun instead of close up. All empty magazines were passed to the clipping room and we made ready for any following attacks. Three planes dove out of the sun and I fired a burst of about 10 rounds at them and quit, since they turned off. We were so thunderstruck by the cloudburst of action we could scarcely speak. Most of the men were pale, with eyes still starring-large. I ordered my trunion [sic] operator to pick up all loose shells and throw them over the side. A 5-inch shell-burst broke about 25 feet in front of us and we stood spellbound for a second, then looked to see who was hit by shrapnel. No one was. One sailor on Battery Three received a cut on his forehead by flying shrapnel. We surveyed the situation to see how we stood. I had fired about six and a half magazines. Some had fired more, some less. We were therefore hard-up for more ammo, but the clipping crew was hard at work fixing up and loading more magazines. A 20m.m. shell had landed about a foot and a half in back of Lyle Ferris, the gunner next to me and exploded in the wooden deck, and neatly slicing off the handle of a fire

extinguisher bottle. Rocky Barr, his loader, found some shrapnel imbedded in his trousers. He was going to "frame it" but the pieces fell out. We were all happy by now when we realized we had emerged from the heavy attack unscathed, and we laughed and joked about everyone's personal experiences during those hectic few minutes. There were about a dozen dents in a small group on my trunion [sic] directly in front of me about 2 feet away. My empty brass receiving bag which was only 12 inches from my leg had a mysterious fresh hole. One sailor on Quad 5 had seen the suicide Zeke diving on us and decided it would hit us. He ran from his gun and started racing down the ladder. His grip slipped and he died later, his back broken from the fall to the flight deck from the island. Another sailor was struck in the forehead by a 20m.m. shell. He was rushed to sick bay, and it's said he'll be O.K. The Enterprise was hit and had a near miss. The Essex had a near miss. One destroyer was hit by a Kamikazi [sic s/b kamikaze]. This ship shot down 2 Judies and one Zeke and was also credited with two assists. Throughout the task group there was 11 Jap planes shot down. The CAP shot one down. We were at our battle stations for hours and were extremely exhausted - physically and mentally. We had a very late chow in the evening consisting of a sandwich [sic] and cookie. We secured for a few minutes in the evening and were notified to expect an attack in the middle of the night. While standing around with a bunch of fellows talking of the day's events, the ship's chaplain walked up to us and said, "You boys did very good today, very good indeed!" We went to sleep - Not for long. Torpedoe [sic] Defense broke out about midnight with firing all around. Went to G.Q. Several Japs shot down. Night fighters splashed 3. Gunfire got two. About an hour later we were awake again. I was so tired, this was the first time I ever slept through the blare of torpedoe[sic] defense. Someone had to shake me & wake me up. Gunfire again. Flares dropped. We fired. No results. Secured. An hour later, had T.D. again. Again gunfire. It was now about 3 a.m. in the morning of the 12th. After we secured, some sailors offered their sacks, if we cared to sleep in them. We gratefully accepted.

It was light at about 6 o'clock when we were shook awake and told to change to day ammunition. Information was received that the Japs would make an all-out attack on us and our newly-invaded islands. Consequently, no strikes were planned but we would maintain a very heavy CAP over the target and over our fleet.

I was below in the compartment at about 9 a.m., when suddenly our guns started firing topside, their explosions

blending with the gong of G.Q. I raced up to the Battery, arriving breathless, to hear that a Corsair had dove out of the sun and trigger-nervous gunners on almost all ships around had fired upon him, thinking it a Jap. We had many T.D.'s during the day and several G.Q.'s, but mostly the bogies were friendly. Several bandits were shot down in the area. The Japs did make their all-out attack on our newly-invaded islands. Our CAP over the target reported a very heavy scrap in progress. I don't know the total number of Jap planes shot down, but our pilots alone shot down 32 enemy aircraft - our losses: none! Most of Jap planes were Vals and Zekes. We received word that the Japs were going to launch buzz-bomb attacks at us from bombers, probably Betty's. We learned later several buzz-bombs were shot down by pilots of the Bennington. The Japs were all around us at dusk and we saw firing in the distance. Darkness closed down and we passed out night ammunition. We ate what we nicknamed our "battle chow." We've had the same food for lunch and dinner for days. One ham sandwich [sic] and one jam sandwich [sic]. "A jam & a ham." We secured. Had T.D. again about an hour later. Much firing again. One Jap shot down by gunfire. Firing on all sides. It finally quieted down and we secured. T.D. again a while later. Dozed off while strapped in gun. Woke up by gunfire. Secured after about an hour and again dropped off to sleep. Slept through breakfast.

April 13th.

Word received Japs would attempt all out attacks again, so our Air Dept. is carrying over same flight schedule as yesterday with the exception that fighters will carry bombs and rockets for Jap airfields. Our bombers and torpedoe [sic] planes on the hangar deck have been degassed in case we get hit. Word was just received that at 1530 yesterday, President Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage [sic]. The war in Europe is progressing very favorably with allied armies within 75 miles of Berlin. Too bad the Chief couldn't have lived to see Victory come through the fruits of his labors. Harry S. Truman, former vice-president is now President.

April 14th.

Patrolled again in the Okinawa area. In the afternoon, a sweep took off and hit Kyushu. Very quiet in this area all day. Our sweep shot down several enemy planes. At 10: p.m. we had T.D., followed by G.Q. Much firing all around. Saw one Jap plane burning after getting hit. Secured. About 2 hours later, T.D. again. Again much firing all around. Saw 2 Japs burn.

Night fighters also splashed two. Secured. Again had T.D. No sleep at all tonight. Firing again.

April 15th.

We had G.Q. this morning before the regular scheduled one. Bogies all around. Sweeps again struck at Kyushu. Several of our planes shot down. Two airmen rescued. The other task group was under attack quite a bit and we saw one explosion indicating a ship was hot. Later found out it was the Intrepid. Also several cans hit.

April 16th.

Staying in same area. We had many T.D.'s and G.Q.'s and several times other ships around us opened up at Japs in the area, but we never opened up. At dusk, two Frans approached us very high. Many ships, including this, opened up. Followed the heaviest firing I have ever seen. Every ship in the area had its guns aimed in the vicinity of the Frances' and were blasting. Finally, our Mount 4 got a hit and it burst into flame and dove downward. I guess it was a means of relieving tenseness, but while that Jap was on fire and falling, the small-range automatic weapons also opened up and shot at him again & again. The cheers that burst forth and the curse words which flew at the Nip with the bullets never sounded louder or more fluent. The Fran crashed right next to the South Dakota, about 1500 yards from us. A fighter plane accounted for the other Fran.

All night long, we had T.D.'s and G.Q.'s. No sleep. Much firing. Night fighters got 2.

April 17th.

Bogies in the morning. Later had T.D., then G.Q. About 5 Japs attacked this group. The first one dove in front of us out of the sun. We fired at him. He didn't blow up or even smoke, but he dove right into the water. Another made a dive at the Randolph, which joined us today. Our 5-inch & 40's fired at him. He was hit & burst into flame. I saw a parachute blossom out midst all the puffs of gunfire. Later, when a destroyer attempted picking him up, this pilot pulled a pistol and fired at his rescuers. Two sailors grabbed him and beat holy hell out of him. He was later brought aboard this ship. Another plane dove at the Randolph. He seemed to want to suicide dive, but got cold feet. He wasn't hit, but pulled out very low and made a run on the Bataan. It looked like a suicide dive here, but again he changed his mind. He pulled out, but this time was hit and crashed into the water. Later heard one of our 40m.m. shells hit the Bataan

while firing at this plane. Our pointer on a 5 inch mount on the port side was hit a glancing blow by a 40m.m. shell and knocked unconscious. One man ran to the shell, which had its detonator screwed loose. It was smoking and was immediately tossed overboard. Strangely quiet all night.

April 18th.

Retired to refuel [sic] and rearm. We were supposed to receive provisions tomorrow but for some reason we are rushing back to the Okinawa area. Food we have now is awful. All we have left is a ten-day supply. We received replacement aircraft. Included was the new Corsair - new in respect to armament. Instead of mounting six 50 caliber guns, they now carry 4 20m.m. guns.

I was sitting in the company office this evening when a cook dashed in, bringing the news that our Jap prisoner attempted hanging himself. I went below to the brig and got the details from the brig sentry, P.F.C. Parkhurst, who was still swearing at the Jap, who was lying down with his hand covering his face. He had taken the cord used to support his trousers and tied it around a pipe against the overhead. Then, rolling his mattress up to lift himself up, he secured the rope around his neck and kicked the mattress away. He would have succeeded in his attempt to meet his honorable ancestors, but a groan escaped his lips and Parkhurst immediately investigated. He roused some cooks out of their nearby bunks and obtained a knife to cut his prisoner down. Surprisingly, he later turned out to be very friendly. We are returning to the Okinawa area to help our troops break the stalemate on the island. Our planes are to carry the heaviest possible bomb load in an effort to break through the Jap's line. Even bombers and TBF's are to carry rockets along with the fighters.

April 19th.

We were flying heavy strikes all day, and are surprised and relieved to have no bogies all day. Even the night was quiet. Scuttlebutt says the Japs are making another all-out attack on us tomorrow. This ship now has more Jap aircraft shot down by our AA guns than any other ship in the fleet with one exception: the battleship, South Dakota who knocked down many Japs in one particular battle with her 16 inch guns. Our scoreboard now displays 26 Jap flags. What is even more wonderful is that though we've had as many Jap planes attack us as anybody else (perhaps more) we have never received a hit (knock on wood).

April 20th.

On the dawn take-off of a strike, a dive-bomber had its engine cut out and it crashed about 50 feet off our starboard bow. The few of us in the clipping room heard the crash and ran out on the battery. Directly below us saw the pilot and gunner, their meawest life jackets inflated paddling furiously to get out of the way of the ship and our propellers [sic]. The water was choppy and waves broke over them. There was distinct terror in their eyes as, with their bulkiness, they made very little headway. As a coincidence, it was Rocky Barr and I again who threw smoke bombs over the side to mark their position. They cleared our fantail safely and a little later were picked up by a destroyer. Our strikes went out to Okinawa, where it was reported the Army was once again advancing, and over neighboring islands which were recently invaded by Marines. Super-fortresses have these past few days bombed airfields on Kyushu and we believe this is the reason we have not been under attack.

April 21st.

We had torpedoe [sic] defense several times today. During one T.D. in the afternoon, we were landing planes and our position during these landing operations was about 3 miles astern of the Randolph. One of her SB2C's cracked up in the water, being unable to land for some reason. A few minutes later I spotted a life-raft ahead of us. Nearby were many life jackets thrown to the pilot and gunner who appeared further away. The appearance of these two were in sharp contrast to those of yesterday. One had grasped about 3 life jackets and was in no danger. The other, though with no life jackets but his own meawest, and being unable to swim to those in the water, was in no immediate danger either. As we drew abreast of them, they gaily waved to us and we to them. The one with the 3 life jackets formed the "OK" signal with his thumb and forefinger. They were picked up.

During the night we had torpedoe [sic] defense about 5 times. Bogies all around. Firing in the distance. Night fighters from this ship shot down about 4 planes - one only about 10 miles away. It burned very brightly. The sky was very clear, the moon and stars very bright. No sleep during night.

April 22nd.

Expecting attack all day. Bogies came in during afternoon. One crossed overhead at 27,000 feet. Barely visible. Our 5 inch guns started firing almost straight up in the air. A single-engine silver colored aircraft was seen through binoculars, identified as a Myrt. CAP splashed 4 Tonies, several Myrts. Our

CAP from this ship spotted the Myrt over us and were only 6 miles away from it. The Corsairs chased the Myrt for 92 miles before catching it and shooting it down. Had a few more bogies around but they didn't come within 10 miles.

April 23rd.

Refeuled [sic] and rearmed today at sea. Many working parties.

April 24th.

Returned to Okinawa area. Just before dawn we were within 25 miles of the island. It rained most of the day with a very low ceiling. We had a few bogies, but they all turned out to be friendly. No strikes were launched because of weather, but we did maintain a CAP over several of the islands.

April 25th.

Continued very bad weather. Rough seas. Kept CAP over islands again.

April 26th.

Several heavy strikes over Okinawa through rough weather.

April 27th.

Refeuled [sic] and rearmed. Loading of ammunition was rushed and in the late afternoon we pulled alongside a freighter and brought over some provisions. A small amount was lost overboard due to rough seas.

April 28th.

Returned to Okinawa. One of our task groups is returning to Ulithi today. Another is refeuling [sic] and rearming which leaves this task group as the only one in the area. In the early hours this morning we were attacked by about 10 Jap planes. Much firing all around. Night fighters from other ships shot down 5. Our night fighters were launched about 3 a.m. and shot down 2 more, a Peggy and a Tony. At dawn there were many bogies around. The Japs discovered we were the only task group in the area and attempted bombing our troops on Okinawa. On one flight, a division of 3 of our planes accidentally stumbled into a group of 15 Jap planes. They shot down 8 with no loss. Another group of 20 of our fighters attacked a large group of Jap planes and shot down 23. One of our planes is missing after this

fight. Another fighter, after running out of ammunition, attempted ramming another Jap plane. He succeeded, in some way, in destroying the Jap, thereby incurring serious damage to his tail. He lost about 5000 feet altitude before bringing his plane under control. He made a successful landing at one of our newly-captured airfields in the islands. In all, 32 Jap planes were shot down. Our losses: one fighter. Those were the tabulations of this ship alone. There were undoubtedly more enemy aircraft destroyed by the other ship's planes with us.

We had about 3 torpedo [sic] defenses during the day, but the bogies did not come too close. One of our submarines in the area was damaged by enemy air activity and we are keeping a combat air patrol over it until it gets out of the danger zone. This evening, about 9: p.m. we had torpedo [sic] defense with two bogies closing. The moon was unusually bright and all ships were silhouetted quite plainly. Our screen and picket destroyers were called in from their positions about 12 miles away and posted around the task group, with all ships bunched together a little closer than usual. Our outlying ships opened fire and soon all ships were firing by radar control very heavily. We zig-zagged and started blowing smoke in great black volumes from our stacks and attempted hiding in its screen. Apparently we succeeded. The Japs left after a while. No ships hit. No Jap planes shot down. Yank & Red armies met in Germany.

April 29th.

Several bogies in the morning. A group closing. Fighters shot down 4 Tonys. Several Japs came over us very high & several ships opened fire. No hits. G.Q. several times. About 9 p.m. our radar picked up 3 large groups of Jap planes, estimated at about 200 each were closing. They attacked our Okinawa positions. Details unknown. We had several planes come to us, probably attempting division. I saw one plane shot down, later another. The second was hit, burst into flame & flew for several seconds several miles away directly at us, so that the light appeared stationary and we guessed it to be a flare at first. It hit the water, exploded, and a fire spread over a large area. Air Forward was in ecstasy. Over the phones, he cooed, "Oh what a beauty!"

April 30th.

Our fighter lost several days ago was picked up safe & we found he had also shot down one Jap during the battle. Therefore our planes shot down 33 Jap planes & we lost no

pilots. Several support missions during the day. No bogies.
Retiring for refeuling [sic] & rearming.

Word received Mussolini is dead.

May 1st.

Found out that in night raid of several nights ago, Japs attacked the hospital ship "Comfort" and a suicide plane dove into it. The "Comfort" was about 50 miles from us at the time.

We refeuled [sic] and rearmed again today and took aboard some provisions. In the evening the Chaplain came over the loud speaker and told us today was the first anniversary of our air group. He also said that in the short time the Air Group 84 was aboard this ship (which is only about 3 months) our fighters shot out of the air 173 Jap aircraft, plus many probable, an excellent record.

May 2nd.

Returned to Okinawa area. Weather very bad. Low overcast, occasional rain squalls.

May 3rd.

Weather clearing slightly. Sent up a strike in the afternoon, attacking Jap positions on Okinawa. Later launched a sweep, covering the Ryukyu chain north of Okinawa extending to Kyushu. They attacked several airfields and air installations. Two of our planes were shot down by AA. One was rescued by an OS2U Kingfisher sent out by a cruiser.

May 4th.

We had many bogies in the early hours and night fighters shot down 5 bandits, one of which was an Emily, 4-engine flying boat. There was a large group attacking our Okinawa positions. One destroyer was hit by 6 suicide planes but still (surprisingly enough) was afloat. During the day, many Japs shot down over the islands. Our fighters covered a different area however, and only got 3.

The pilot shot down several days ago and returned to us, was speaking to us. He said after he shot one Jap down, his controls were shot away and he was forced to bail out. As he descended, a Jap made 3 separate passes at him and tracers flew on either side of him. He slumped in his chute, playing dead & the Jap left. He was sure mad when he told us about it. His name: 2nd Lt. Langston.

May 5th.

Our island positions attacked again in the morning. They've been having it really rough on the beach. We had a few bogies and one T.D.

May 6th.

Refeuled [sic] & rearmed & reprovisioned [sic]. Working parties. Quiet all day.

May 7th.

Returned to Okinawa. Heavy strike took off in the morning. We had T.D. when a bogie came in to 10 miles, followed by a G.Q. A Frances was seen in the distance by our after gun stations. It came in showing our IFF. The Fran started leaving but was caught by the Randolph CAP and shot down. Another bogie came in but was later identified as friendly. Word was received about midnight that Germany surrendered. (Report found to be premature.)

May 8th.

Weather was very rough and rainy. Many clouds, low overcast. No flights all day.

May 9th.

Several strikes sent out with many incendiaries to burn out the town of Wan on Kikai. Good results reported. No aerial opposition. Word officially received. Germany had signed unconditional surrender. All ships in the immediate vicinity of Okinawa fired a shell into Japan's sector at the stroke of noon as a salute.

May 10th.

Refeuled [sic], rearmed and about noon a refrigeration ship came alongside and transferred over the first fresh meat and fruit we've had since the operation started. Crowds of us on the flight deck yelled over to the supply ship trying to get the sailors there to throw a couple oranges over. A few complied and there was a mad rush to get them. No, I didn't get any.

May 11th.

A very large force of Jap planes, mostly Kamikazi [sic s/b Kamikaze], (about 150) attacked our Okinawa positions about midnight this morning. We had T.D. about 2:15 a.m. with 4 bogies pretty close. Went to G.Q. and there was very heavy

firing all around. A night fighter shot down one. They left finally and since it was about 3 a.m. by this time, I didn't bother going to sleep. It's been standard procedure in this area to have reveille every morning at 3:30. At one time we were within 18 miles of Okinawa and we saw flares from Jap planes and heavy gunfire from the island. This morning about 6:30 a.m., 1st Lt. Ponick, our battery officer notified us to expect a heavy attack today.

At 10:15 a.m., Mr. Ponick, Tony Pezone, "Top" Tomaskovich and I were playing catch on the flight deck near the battery when suddenly Mr. Ponick stared and pointed out to our starboard quarter. There, not 800 yards away were 2 Zekes plunging straight at us. We dove for the battery heading long in an attempt to unsecure our guns and fire but were too late. Tom Hand, who was in the battery, was able to sight in and fire at the first one, but his gun jammed after the first round. The first plane dropped an armor-piercing bomb which tore through the flight deck at a sharp angle and by the greatest luck came out through a window of the hangar deck and exploded in the water, for a damaging near miss. The plane was a suicide and crashed into the deck at an angle and tumbled over the side. By this time we got our guns loose and though without sights and not being strapped in, opened fire on the second plane. The only guns on the ship to fire were the three forward Marine 20m.m. batteries. The Zeke bore closer & closer and about 50 feet above the deck we hit it but it was too late. A 500 lb. high-explosive bomb was dropped. I dove to the deck and a great explosion went up and the ship shuddered. A gigantic cascade of wooden splinters and shrapnel and plane parts flew over 100 feet into the air. This all occurred within 10 seconds from the moment we first sighted the Jap planes. It was only after we were hit, afire and smoking badly that general quarters was sounded. Another Zeke was seen about 7000 yds. away and we reported it. It was also making for us and our 5 inch & 40m.m. opened very heavy fire. It veered to the left and as we prepared to fire, a 5 inch shell burst made a direct hit & the Zeke crashed aflame. Now our dead and wounded were being brought out of the fire area. I won't go very much in detail regarding our damage which was great, nor our casualties, which were tremendous. Since we were not at G.Q. when we were hit, the ventilators were in operation at the time and immense volumes of smoke were sucked into the compartments below. Hundreds of men suffocated and gagged to death. Scores of others were burnt to death and for days, parts of bodies and skeletal forms of my friends and shipmates were being dragged to topside. The ship is a shambles. I witnessed unbelievable brave deeds of men who were untrained for what job they were doing since the trained personnel were either killed

or just not around. Fighting fires, first aid, any great number of things. Every one of our planes aboard was destroyed by the fire and smoke which was impenetrable without rescue breathing apparatus or gas masks.

It is now over a week after the hit that I write about it. I wasn't going to write at all, but rather to destroy all articles that held memories of the ship. I want to forget what my ship looked like with such a list that we feared she would capsize. I want to forget the positions I saw my dead comrades assume the instant of their very violent deaths. These grotesque and distorted figures will be blazed into my mind and dreams for heaven knows how long. Our water system had been cut off and were it not for the two destroyers and cruiser that pulled alongside to fight the fire and hours later finally extinguished it, the fires may have reached our magazines. Hundreds of men jumped overboard to escape the smoke and heat. Of an estimated 700 that jumped, only 303 were picked up by destroyers. Some were wounded and forced to succumb. Some could not swim and drowned. Some got exhausted and surrendered themselves to death. Even sharks accounted for some.

That evening, I went below decks for the first time to see if anything I owned was salvageable. Nothing was. Everything I owned was destroyed. I owned nothing but the clothes on my back and my life. I felt that was sufficient.

Any words I could think of to describe my trip below decks to my locker would never suffice what I saw. If whoever reads this can imagine what it would be like to enter compartments and walk down passageways where there was no light at all. Smoke was everywhere, making it even more difficult to breathe. Our battery-operated battle lanterns pierced the blackness, throwing weird, eerie yellowish lights about the bulkheads. There was over 6 inches of water in most of the passable compartments. And kneeling down to escape as much of the smoke as possible and wading about, I found many compartments and passageways through which I could not pass. Dead men still lay in the spot where they died. I was forced to step around, over, and between the legs of countless immovable figures.

I could go on and on filling all these remaining pages with what I saw and what had occurred, but I'll stop now. I'll bring this book which was in my pocket the entire day to a close. Though the story of the Bunker Hill is not over, for she'll return someday to battle fixed up and with a refilled crew, I feel it fitting to bring this story of the ship to a close now because her

challenging, proud spirit is dead. Not permanently dead perhaps but I don't think she will ever bear men as enthusiastic as those who "raised her from a child" so to speak, and those who brought her fame and excellent battle record. It is not a mar on her record that she was hit. The wily enemy had duplicated our radar signal, enabling them to attack when we were unprepared. No one in the task force knew of the Jap planes in our area until our hit had occurred.

We hold the record for carriers in the Pacific with 28 Jap planes shot down by our guns in defense of our ship. Our pilots have shot down in the vicinity of 500 enemy aircraft in the course of the ships career. I don't know how many ships our planes have sunk and damaged, nor their tonnage, but I do know that no other ship in the fleet approaches our score.

I am proud of the Bunker Hill. I am glad that I am returning with her when she comes out of the corner at the bell for the next round. And now I feel that I want to pay tribute and a snappy salute to the men who died in her service. They will be missed by their friends and families, but somehow I know they will be missed by the Bunker Hill as well.

End.

May 22, 1945