

THE FLYING, FIGHTING WEATHERMEN



OF PATROL WING FOUR



1941-1945

U.S. NAVY

KODIAK, DUTCH HARBOR, UMNAK, COLD BAY, ADAK, AMCHITKA, KISKA, SHEMYA, ATTU
and THE EMPIRE EXPRESS TO PARAMUSHIRO

MEMOIRS OF PAUL E. CARRIGAN



*Willimaw dreaded downdraft from
mountain top churns snow around
Navy mechanics at Umnak*

VOLUME I

FOREWORD

My husband of 57 years, Paul E. "The Black Irishman" Carrigan had been researching and compiling his World War II memories which include 33 months in the Aleutian Islands.

Paul died on June 22, 2001.

I am sorry to say that the manuscript went untouched these last several years due to his deteriorating health.

In his memory I have decided to publish his writings just as he left them.

Finishing this project could not have been accomplished without the encouragement of Paul's brother, Ralph O. Carrigan.

Much Paul's research was done in the libraries of the late James S. Russell, Admiral, USN (Ret.) and the late Carl H. Amme, Captain USN (Ret.)

These men were young pilots when Paul first flew with them in 1941, 1942 and 1943.

The time frame starts before the attack on Dutch Harbor and ends after the last Japanese soldier is removed from The United States on the island of Attu.

And following his wishes we dedicate this manuscript to

THE FLYING FIGHTING WEATHERMEN OF PATROL WING FOUR.
AND ALL THOSE AIRDALES THAT FLEW IN THIS COLD CORNER OF HELL.

Jean Carrigan
Tokeland, Washington
August 11, 2001

*This manuscript is published using the original untouched writings of the author.
All copy was left intact with proof corrections and changes.*

APPRECIATION

by

Jacob W. Dixon
First Lieutenant, Air Corps

I don't have much use for the Navy,
being an Army man.
But I must take off my hat to some pilots
of this seafaring clan.

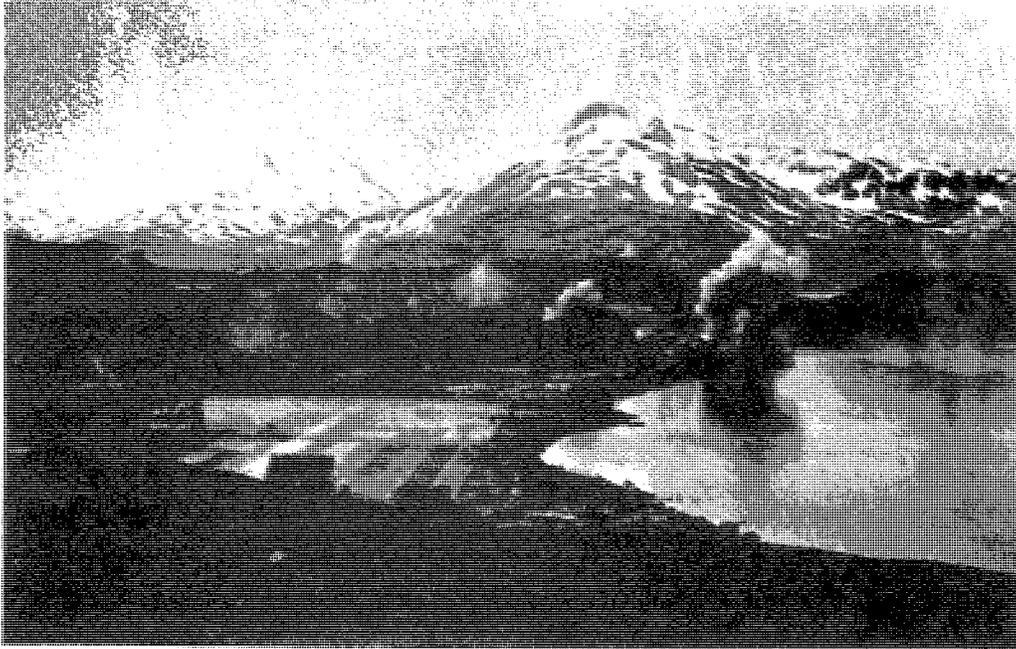
These boys didn't give a damn for the weather,
and Jap lead meant even less.
I've seen 'em fly through storms aplenty,
their plane a riddled mess.

I'll always remember the way they informed us
of the Jap's position at sea.
And how they told us, almost to the minute,
the time an attack would be.

Then when we went on the offensive,
and flew with no land in sight,
We knew that in the clouds above us,
a rescue plane watched the flight.

They even patrolled where we were fighting,
to save us if we fell.
They hid in the clouds from the "Zeroes,"
and the ack-ack go to hell.

So here's to those boys of the Navy,
a bunch of damn good guys,
And especially to those great pilots
who fly the PBY's.



Day of Infamy, No.II, June 3, 1942
Japanese Attack Dutch Harbor



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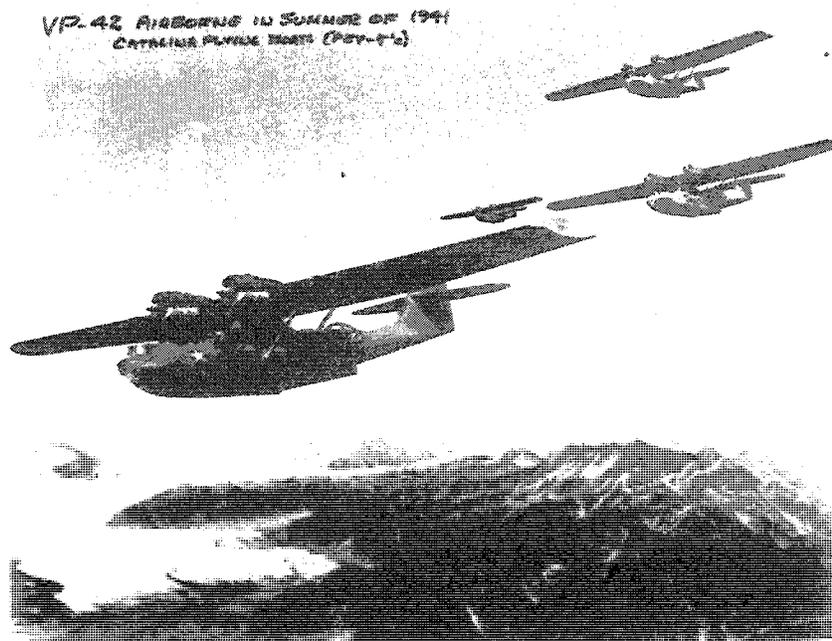
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Chapter I

1

A Crooked Path Led To The U.S.Navy

Another Japanese Zero fighter started a strafing attack directly toward our U.S.Navy weathermen's zig-zag fighting trench. The enemy pilot's target, the navy communications shack on top of a small hill behind our position, was only 50 feet away.

We fired our rifles at the incredibly swift enemy plane until the weaving rows of small geysers of earth drew close. The geysers were made by the bullets and exploding shells from the Zero's two 7.7mm machine guns and two 20mm cannon. We scrunched down in our sandbagged trench until the Zero flashed past. I licked my dry lips while reloading. Others had turned around in their positions and were firing at the Japanese fighter as it made a lightning quick climbing turn.

It was June 3, 1942 and shortly after daylight in the Aleutian Islands off Alaska's southwest coast. At the Dutch Harbor U.S. Naval Operating Base we had been under heavy attack for twenty minutes by Japanese fighters and high-level "Kate" bombers launched from an enemy aircraft carrier task force.

Fires were raging and clouds of thick, black smoke rose to further darken the already dirty grey skies above. It appeared that our Dutch Harbor installations and those at the U.S.Army's adjoining Fort Mears were destroyed but because of the smoke it was difficult to be sure.

"How in the world," I asked myself, "did I get into a mess like this?" During my trouble plagued young life I'd asked this question many times. If there were a simple answer it still eluded me.

I was born August 11, 1923, in northern New Jersey a few miles from New York City. My father was of Irish descent his forebears having been in America for several generations. My mother's parents, Angelo

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and Barbara Valtz, were from the "old country" and as teenagers had "come over on the boat" from Italy. They met and married here but both were from the same small mountainous region close to the Swiss border in northern Italy. Having been born citizens of the Kingdom of Piedmont, which later became part of Italy, they considered themselves Piemontaise not Italian. The Piemontaise dialect they spoke, although basically Italian, made conversation with those from southern Italy somewhat difficult. No such subtle differences existed outside our immediate family and we were considered to be Italian on my mother's side.

We were living with my mother's parents when I was born. To some, the combination of my volatile heritage and the time and place of my birth may have started me off in life with two strikes against me. Be this as it may, I must have known that I was in the ball park, it was still the first inning, and I was up at bat with at least one vicious swing left. I'm told that when my grandfather, Angelo, came into the bedroom and first saw me, he shook his old white-maned handle-barred mustachioed head sadly and said to my mother, Tiglia, "tasta dura", hard head. Grandpa somehow sensed that here was one "bambino" that would likely never "render unto Caesar."

I began life in the middle of the Roaring Twenties soon to be followed by the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression years. It seemed we lived in the center of everything. Lucky Lindy would solo the Atlantic to Paris when I was four. Jack Dempsey was the Heavyweight Champion of the World. The "Babe" was swatting them into the seats at Yankee Stadium. It was the height of Prohibition and there were "speakeasies" where one knocked for admission and to the eye at the peephole said, "Joe sent me." The joints on the outskirts of town were called road houses.

Paterson, N.J. at that time was known as the "Silk City of the World." Big trucks hauling rolls of silk from the many mills were frequently hijacked a few miles outside the city. Gangsters were hired to protect the loads and drivers from other gangsters. As kids we often stood on a street corner and watched the powerful, black sedan full of armed men riding "shotgun" purringly pass by about a mile ahead of the truck. When these "protected" single trucks were still hijacked and the drivers often killed, the trucks were then sent through in long convoys at night

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with a car in front and one behind. Dutch Schultz, the noted mobster, was gunned down in a nearby city. There were almost constant Mafia style executions. A power struggle was raging among the families of the Cosa Nostra. My early development occurred in the midst of this era and community of violence.

Relatives and Friends

My father was almost fifty years old and my mother in her mid twenties when I was born. He was next to the eldest of ten children in his family all born and raised in New York City. As a young man he left home in 1898 for the Klondike Gold Rush. After seven years' adventures from Chilkoot Pass to Nome he returned to New York to find his niche in life. Eventually, he obtained a job as salesman with the John T. Stanley soap company of New York City. He possessed the Irish gift for gab, was easy going to a fault, had a quick temper which he usually managed to keep under control, and he was well liked by everyone. He had finally found his calling about 1916 and sold wholesale lots of soap products to factories, hospitals, churches, convents, schools, hotels, and restaurants. My father had recently started in this line of endeavor and was building up his customer routes when he met my mother who was a doctor's secretary at a rest home. They were married about 1918.

I never knew my dad's parents because his father died before I was born and his mother when I was about a year old. One of my father's brothers had been killed in WWI and two mysteriously disappeared, one having last been heard from in Brazil shortly after the turn of the century and another after arriving in San Francisco about the same time. His five sisters, who never married, visited us infrequently and moved to California when I was about twelve. The paternal relatives that we saw several times a year were his younger brother, Paul, and Paul's family who lived on Long Island.

This was not so with relatives and friends of my mother's family. We had Italian aunts, uncles, and cousins by the dozens. They came and went in droves.

While growing up, my older brother, Andrew, my younger sister, Barbara, little brother, Ralph, and I were proudly told that this visiting relative or

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friend was a doctor, this one a lawyer, those two teachers, one an accountant, and more than one a professional boxer. Most, however, were laborers. A few of the well dressed, polite but quiet men were simply referred to as "businessmen".

I realized many years later that one of these distant cousin "businessmen" was a rum-runner during Prohibition. He owned and operated a long, cigar-shaped, mahogany boat named Lucky Strike that was powered by two Lycoming aircraft engines. I saw this boat when I was about five years old. My mother's brother, Ernido, our favorite uncle, was a very good mechanic and he was asked to repair the boat. My father offered to drive him and I was taken along on the night ride the short distance to the Bayonne, N.J. dock area. A man met us at a darkened warehouse, ushered us inside, and led to the far end of the large building where the Lucky Strike was berthed in a locked boat house at the end of the pier.

Another "businessman", an elderly, grey-haired Italian visited my grandfather several times. He always came in a black, four-door Lincoln accompanied by five men. The car was parked in back and the five men stayed outside. One man chain-smoked cigarettes while leaning against the car; one stood by our back door; one strolled casually around and around the old house; and two took up station at the front door. One of these two men was thought to be a musician for he had a cello case.

When these people came, we children were sent out to play. My sister, Barbara, three years younger than I and about three at the time, asked the "musician" if he would please play for us. He looked at her with a puzzled expression but made no response.

"I bet'cha don't know how," she taunted.

The second man thought this was very funny for he laughed long and loud.

"Take my word for it, doll face," he finally said, "he can really play a tune on that thing but he's busy now. You kids run along and play."

We could see my grandfather and the old visitor through the windows of the sunporch as they talked, waved their arms animatedly and laughed a lot. My mother said they hadn't seen each other in over fifty years but were very old friends, having grown up in the same mountain village in Italy.

The Way It Was

When many of our grandparents and often mothers and/or fathers sailed in past the Statue of Liberty they landed as teenagers, often alone, penniless, uneducated, and could not speak the language of the new country. The first thing they did was find relatives from the old country and move in with them until they could make it on their own, which was often never. This is how the overcrowded ghettos started. Many newcomers became disillusioned. Some must have realized they had left a better existence than the one in which they found themselves. Quite a number of immigrants returned to their native countries if they could borrow passage from relatives or save enough from meager earnings.

The ethnic groups did not mix well. Different cultures, the additional barrier of languages, and centuries of warring with each other in Europe had established mistrust which carried over into the ghettos in this country. One could stir these mixtures up in the factories and schools until they seemed to almost blend. The moment the mill whistle blew at the end of the dreary day, however, and the school bell rang, the conglomerates quickly separated into ethnic parts; the Irish returned to their "Shantytowns", the Italians to their "Little Italies" etc.

The various mothers' tongues were spoken at home although many were trying to learn English in order to take and pass the test for citizenship in the new land of opportunity. Because we lived with my mother's parents until shortly after I started school, I heard Piemontaise spoken more than English. My father was gone all day and my mother, although she spoke English to me, conversed with her parents, friends, and relatives in their native tongue.

Real troubles began for many children upon their entering school. With a classroom full of Russians, Dutch, Poles, Greeks, Slavs, Italians, or Jews from Russia, Poland, or Germany, how could the teacher and class communicate? Most teachers spoke only English and one can only get so much across with pictures and sign language.

As a result, many kids quit school early, not making it through grade school. There was often no great pressure at home for them to continue. With open arms most struggling parents welcomed another

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wage earner. In those days, paychecks were brought home unopened and turned over to Momma and Poppa. Perhaps, a little spending money was doled back out.

These children faced a bleak future. This was especially so with a boy for a pretty girl might marry well. The odds were heavily against any of our ever making it to the "other side of the tracks" where the rich white kids lived. Those well educated people all had good clothes, money, and even talked differently. The mothers, in nice cars, took the fathers to the railway station every weekday morning so they could catch the 7:15 commuter train to New York City. These men all looked like they came out of the same mold to us. Each wore a dark suit, many wore glasses, a hat called a homburg, all seemed to have brief cases, and each carried a folded morning paper under one arm. We wondered what kind of racket these guys were mixed up in.

These parents played something with cards called bridge and they played tennis and golf at the country club. They vacationed for a whole month each summer at swanky places on Long Island or up in New England. The wealthy kids all went away to summer camps in the mountains.

For the rest of us it was a great event to spend one day at Coney Island with the teeming millions, the sand, the flies, and the grapefruit and cantaloupe rinds, and, maybe get treated to a hot-dog. We could seldom afford more than one or two ten cent rides in the amusement park. It was plain to see, even at that early age, that there were two completely different worlds and that we'd most likely never get to ride the 7:15.

Ahead of most street kids lay the prospect of poor paying jobs in the mills, life in the rackets, or becoming a boxer. One could get killed quickly in all three occupations. I swore to myself early on that I would never work in a mill. The second two choices offered far more opportunity. They seemed to be the only two ways to acquire money, girls, a car, and be "somebody". Enlisting in a branch of military service never crossed our minds until Wacky Mosher joined the navy. His action prompted mild curiosity among his friends but did not provide any answers because he had effectively disappeared. Geek Ferguson tried to follow Wacky into oblivion but couldn't pass the physical.

Mention of Wacky and Geek recall how we strangely

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had nicknames for everybody and most things: Dutch were "Zuider-Zees" or "Windmills"; Poles-Polocks or "Square-heads"; Russians were "Ivans", "Rasputins", "Bolsheviks", or if he was a really wild Russian kid we called him a "Cossack". Poles, Russians, Czechs, and other Central Europeans were sometimes lumped together as "Bohunks". The Irish were "Micks" (usually preceded by the word-thick) and the poor Irish were "Shanty". Chinese were "Chinks" or "Tongs". Italians were mostly called "Dagoes", "Wops", or "Guinaes". A good one or friend was a "Paesano". Greeks were simply Greeks. Blacks (although that term was not in use then) were mostly called "Coons", "Shines", or "Jigaboos" but sometimes referred to as "Kinky-heads" or "Zulus". If he was a friend he was referred to as the "colored guy".

Although this metropolitan area of NY-NJ was called the "great melting pot", it wasn't a complete stew for until I joined the navy I never knew a Swede, Norwegian, Finn, Dane, Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Japanese, or Filipino. The Scandinavians certainly came over on immigrant boats but, somehow, managed to hop, skip, and jump right over the NY-NJ area and keep going.

Sickness

My older brother, Andrew, was about six years old, I was four, and our baby sister, Barbara, about one when tragedy struck our family. I got double pneumonia and was being cared for at home. Andrew, an angel sweet child loved by all, kept slipping into my sick room to keep me company. He soon came down with pneumonia too. I recovered after a long illness but he died. Even a child of four has greater awareness than adults would believe possible. I too, began to wonder why God had chosen to take Andrew.

The 1929 Crash occurred when I was six years old and we were well into the Great Depression when I was seven and in the second grade. By that time we had baby brother, Ralph. Late that fall my sister, who had not started school, and I both took very ill about the same time. She had a double mastoidectomy and was recovering at home when I was operated on for a single mastoid. I was convalescing at home after a seige in the hospital when about Christmas time they rushed me back for an emergency sinus operation. This was

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before sulfa and penicillin and my infection had spread to the left eye area. Both types of operations required delicate surgery by a specialist. My recovery was slow and painful.

These major surgeries, doctor and hospital bills were a devastating financial blow to our parents. My father had been taken off commission at the start of the Depression and placed on a small salary. Then, over a short span, he was given four ten percent pay cuts. Still, we were better off than many people for he at least had a job. There were college graduates who could not find a job digging ditches. It was the time of long bread lines and soup kitchens. For some there was starvation or freezing to death in the winter in unheated, cold-water flats in the tenement sections.

Because I missed five months of school that year I had to repeat the second grade. The friends I'd made were now one year ahead of me. Kids, and teachers too, quickly forgot why I spent two years in the second grade. They only remembered that I'd flunked second grade and must therefore be dumb.

Learning To Box

Pale, skinny, and sickly the first seven and a half years of my life I had been easy prey for bullies. Although I fought hard they beat me up regularly, before school, during recess, and/or after school. I'd come home with torn clothes and battered face. My mother scolded me for fighting and constantly being in trouble.

Uncle Ernido decided to change one aspect of this situation in a practical and scientific way. He gave me a set of boxing gloves and two headgears for Christmas when I was eight years old and healthy for the first time in my life. He then patiently spent a great deal of his free time and mine, over the next few years teaching me how to box. He knew much about the so called "manly art", was an excellent teacher, and I an eager pupil.

Most kids my age fought by blindly charging forward while swinging wild round-house lefts and rights. They soon became easy targets as I jabbed, moved, blocked or slipped blows, counter-punched, and threw short, straight punches in combinations to the head and body. The street and school ground fights

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became fun for a change.

My immediate group quickly learned not to pick on me. I discovered that I was vindictive and sought out a few older bullies that had earlier and repeatedly beaten me up. While settling these old scores I also found that I possessed a mean streak and derived a certain sweet pleasure meting out more than deserved. With the exception of these several early fights and a few in later years I never went looking for trouble. I was not a bully. Over the intervening years though, instead of decreasing as one might expect, my fights increased in number. As my small reputation grew and spread I was challenged by older and older kids. It was similar to chickens in a barnyard establishing their pecking order. It was perhaps more akin to the "fast gun" syndrome of the old west for when one is called out into the street, one goes. By the time I was sixteen I was engaging in fights over a constantly expanding area. It didn't matter if it were with a tough, Italian pin-setter from some bowling alley, a rugged young Pole from one of the mills, or an usher from a movie theater. Our emissaries handled the details of time and place. Neither my friends nor my opponents ever butted in for these were not gang wars.

Most of these fights were fought sans gloves. Most bare-knuckle fist fights end quickly. The face has a tendency to bust open like a ripe melon when struck full force by a well delivered blow. Afterward, win, lose, or draw one's hands are sore and swollen.

Some of these more mature toughs got the better of me but they had their hands full and from the time I was about thirteen years old, no individual ever really "worked me over" again.

Trouble In School

Periodic trouble in grade school, mostly of a disciplinary nature, plagued me. My grades were good in subjects that interested me such as geography, history, spelling and simple mathematics. Although long periods of convalescence at home had turned me into an avid reader I seldom carried text books home to study.

I possessed a violent temper that was quickly triggered by any injustice, especially, if it was directed at me. I did not resent all authority only

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the tyrannical adult who wielded power and abused it. It was demeaning to be hauled into the principal's office by a teacher who was twisting my ear half off. Then, for a minor infraction, ordered to bend over to receive a half dozen viciously applied blows to the behind delivered by the paddle of the sadistic principal. To spare the rod may spoil the child but to apply it overzealously either breaks a child's spirit or makes him more defiant, depending on the individual.

I was expelled from the eight grade for several weeks when I "put the slug" on my shop teacher, a tall, gaunt, young man of German extraction who was a real martinet.

I'd been one of two kids detailed to sweep down the shop while each individual swept off his work table and put away the tools he'd used. I'd completed my sweeping and was returning to my table. The teacher, on a quick inspection tour, picked up a hammer from my table that had not been there a few moments before. He informed me that I would receive five demerits. Then he extended the hammer and ordered me to put my tool away. I refused to take the hammer saying that it was not mine and that all I'd used during class was a metal file while working on my book-end project. He became angry at this insubordination. Still clutching the hammer he slowly raised it to a position alongside my head above my left ear. Then tapping me on the head for emphasis he sneered, "When I tell (tap) you to (tap) put your hammer (tap) away, I mean NOW (tap)."

The instant he delivered the final tap something inside me exploded. I pivoted to my left, knocked the hammer out of his hand with my right then threw a short left hook that caught him square on the jaw and knocked him over the work bench onto the floor. He was still on his hands and knees in a dazed condition when I walked out of class and went home.

The police picked me up within the hour, returned me to school briefly but I was then remanded to the custody of my parents pending further action.

Several days later a hearing was held at school with my father, mother, and me in attendance. The teacher admitted that he had rapped me several times on the head with a hammer before I struck him. It was several weeks before the school board met and handed down the verdict that I be allowed to return to school. The principal did not attempt to paddle my

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behind.

In my absence, the almost completed bookends had mysteriously disappeared. I was given failing marks although I had completed a nice end table and magazine rack that quarter. I must have been one of the few kids that ever flunked a shop class. Both headlights were smashed on the shop teacher's car and all four tires slashed. The police had a good suspect but they had no proof.

My troubles were not confined to just the public school system. Several years earlier I'd also been the only Catholic kid, in anyone's memory, to have been kicked out of Sunday school. The nun who taught catechism class that year used a heavy, metal edged ruler to swat the upturned palm of any child who did not answer questions correctly. The second time she purposefully strode down the aisle like a giant penguin toward my desk I made up my mind that I would not submit to this cruel punishment.

"Put your hand out," she ordered.

"No".

"You will do as I say."

"No, I won't do it."

"You must."

"Like hell I must."

She lost her temper and slapped me in the face. I then told her what she could do with her ruler and her catechism book.

"Get out! Get out this instant you filthy mouthed boy."

After graduating from grade school we went to the ninth grade in a large junior high school whose total enrollment came from many grade schools. Thrown together with strangers my school career went from bad to worse. I was expelled four times that year for fighting on school grounds: twice in the hallways; once in gym class; and once on the playground. I did not start any of the fights. My patient mother spent almost as much time at school as I did that year in her efforts to get me reinstated.

Some of the words bandied about by school authorities and relatives to describe me included; incorrigible, anti-social, non-conformist, and juvenile delinquent. One relative, the wife of a doctor, diagnosed my condition as dementia-praecox. I made no attempt to get a second opinion.

I flunked the ninth grade and fell two years behind my original classmates. My young sister was

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now only one year behind me in school. I had received "A"s and "B"s in typing, mechanical drawing, and print shop but had failed the solid subjects that now required some studying. My future did not look good as a scholar.

Chasing An Elusive Dream

The future was brighter, however, as a boxer and by the summer I turned seventeen I'd been exposed to the tutelage of Paul Cavalier, a former top heavyweight contender who'd fought Jack Dempsey. Cavalier was the coach, trainer, and manager of the amateur boxing team sponsored by Wonder Bread Bakers. In a Paterson, N.J. gym we learned some of the finer points of the fight game from this astute teacher.

He separated us into categories according to ability and experience. We learned the technique of using the ring ropes to one's advantage, an art in itself; how to cut off the ring on a bicycling opponent; how to box different types of opponents in relation to their style. We learned the best way to box a southpaw and how to weather a storm in order to clear one's head. Cavalier taught us to hold our fists slightly open, first because this made it easier to catch or block punches but most of all to conserve energy.

Many of us had always closed our fists tightly. We practiced for hours to break this bad habit. He had us start punches at the heavy bag with a slightly opened fist and then tighten it before landing. He pointed out that a constantly closed fist would sap the strength from fist, wrist, forearm, upper arm, shoulder and even the upper torso. Cavalier taught us to turn the fist and wrist with a slight twist as a punch was delivered. This provided more power by aligning all the bone and muscle from fist to shoulder and also opened cuts.

We learned how to execute a quick foot shift when moving inside on an opponent for additional power and leverage. Hours spent on a skip-rope drill made this foot shift more natural. He explained strategy such as how to pace one's self. He taught us how to feint and to always move away from the side of an opponent's most powerful hand. We learned how to either punch or tie up an opponent on the inside.

Cavalier instructed us on how to throw the double

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left hook and an almost stiff armed left hook that came off a jab. This punch was delivered by withdrawing the hand a few inches after a left jab, then with a lightning quick inward twist of the left foot coupled with a simultaneous pivot to the right, the short devastating blow is thrown almost sideways from left to right. To the recipient it almost seemed that he had been struck by a third party. This punch requires much practice and to be effective and not leave the deliverer open to a counter-punch, it must follow the jab almost instantaneously..just..Bam! Bam!

Paul Cavalier's motto was "Kill the body and the head will die." He believed, above all else, in body punching. He used to say that a man can move his head, legs, arms, and upper body all over the place but he can't even wiggle his belly-button. He told us that it didn't matter how many medicine balls the man caught in his abdomen, body punches eventually took their toll. Sooner or later the opponent's guard would slowly come down. More emphasis could be shifted to the head at this time but even then we were not to stop punching to the body.

U.S.
A great punch he taught to use early in a fight was setup by throwing several straight rights at an opponent's head. This punch was started out the same way but was dropped in under the heart when the opponent's left elbow and glove went up too high to protect his chin. The blow had a paralyzing effect and seemed to freeze an opponent. Occasionally, with a stricken expression the man crumpled to the canvas and stayed down.

Cavalier taught these body punching techniques to all of his pupils but they were especially practiced by those of us who hoped to turn pro someday. In the amateurs, with large gloves and only three rounds of two minutes duration, there often wasn't time for body punching to take full effect.

Although Cavalier taught only clean, scientific boxing we learned how to fight dirty, if need be, from the old, second-rate pros that we often worked out with. They showed us by painful example how to butt so that it looked like an accident; the thumb in the eye; and how to apply the glove laces across an opponent's eyebrows and ears. There was also the tactic of using one's shoulders as two extra weapons by coming up under an opponent's chin in a clinch if he should happen to be in the right position.

We learned how to clutch, grab, and hold when the

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referee's view was blocked. There was also a way to sometimes tie up both of an adversary's forearms on the inside with one arm leaving one of your own fists free. It was all a dirty, bloody business but I loved it.

In between the official sanctioned amateur tournaments there were countless businessmen's smokers in every city or large town. A fat, cigar chomping Jewish guy named, Sol, and his brother, Izzy, catered amateur fighters. They kept tabs on us all and had a large stable of boxers always available to supply the constant smokers.

At an appointed time I would be picked up at a street corner and with two carloads of other boxers driven to these evening affairs to perform. Afterward, we usually got all we could eat of the leftover food catered by others. Sometimes we got to view the stag films. We were also each slipped a couple of bucks or a cheap watch which we hocked.

There were thousands of tough kids mostly from the slums who were chasing the elusive dream of someday becoming a boxing champion. At this time there were dozens of fight arenas all within a twenty-five mile radius of New York City. Fight cards were presented at one or more arenas every night of the week except Sunday. There was no television then and all the fight clubs flourished.

It was just like a baseball farm system in that the willing, eager kids came in off the streets into the crowded regular gyms and those of organizations such as the Police Athletic League and Catholic Youth Organization. The PAL and CYO also provided instructors and promoted amateur boxing tournaments of their own separate from the Diamond Belt and Golden Gloves. The amateur boxers provided a steady stream of young talent to pro boxing.

A young professional began his career by fighting preliminary bouts in the small arenas. Some boxers moved up to semi-final or main event status at these local clubs. If they kept winning or were exciting fighters that gave the customer's their money's worth they moved up to a larger club. There were many categories and calibre of clubs and a local favorite had to prove himself all over by starting near the bottom as he moved up in each fight arena class. To fight a match in prestigious St.Nick's arena was a high plateau but the pinnacle was a chance to perform in Madison Square Garden. This was similar to an

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entertainer playing the Palace Theater in New York.

I had been approached already by one local fight manager who urged me to turn pro. He wanted to add me to his stable which consisted mostly of what we called "ham and egggers" because this was about what they earned--the price of a meal. Most of his fighters were of this calibre and filled out preliminary cards in early four and six round bouts at small arenas. He also used his fighters as last minute substitutes.

This manager had a great spiel and pointed out that quite a number of fighters I'd beaten when they were amateurs were now rapidly climbing the professional ladder to the big money and big time. This was pure crap and we both knew it. Most of these fighters had little ability and would soon become disillusioned chasing their dream. They would find a job in one of the mills, marry young, live in a shack or tenement, have squalling babies, and be trapped for life.

I was intelligent enough to know there was a vast difference between the amateurs and pros. There were also additional huge gaps in ability between the run-of-the-mill club fighters, main eventers, contenders, and champions. Time seems of little importance when one is approaching seventeen. I was in no hurry.

A Special Time Of Life

That summer of 1940 is remembered with fond nostalgia--a special fleeting moment of my life. Times were better and the Great Depression was behind us. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's alphabetical administration had produced some economic help. His National Recovery Act (N.R.A.) which included the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.), and Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) had provided badly needed jobs. People had a little money to spend.

It was the height of the big-band swing era and jitterbugging. Most of the great bands played engagements at the nearby Meadowbrook Inn located on New Jersey's Pompton Turnpike between Cedar Grove and Little Falls. Pompton Turnpike was also the title of a top selling record by the Charlie Barnett band. Many of the famous band leaders and musicians often stopped at our soda fountain luncheonette hangout on their way to the Meadowbrook. Some dropped in for a

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quick hamburger, a coke, or a pack of cigarettes. Glenn Miller smoked Luckies. I spoke to him several times as well as Jack Teargarten, Gene Krupa, Artie Shaw, and several others. Benny Goodman was reported to have stopped by briefly but I missed seeing him.

It was a typically hot muggy summer but the girls never looked so good at the swimming holes on the Passaic River. It was a bitter sweet time of awakening.

The Fleet's In

Three things happened that summer and fall of 1940 when I turned seventeen that changed the course of my life. First, the U.S. Atlantic Fleet came in and anchored in the Hudson River. Sailors poured ashore on liberty and the public was invited to go out to the ships. A free round trip launch ride on the river was something to take advantage of.

In a crowded boat load of visitors a few close friends and I went out to the battleship USS Texas. We wandered around and came upon a large group watching a huge, flattened-nosed, muscle-bound fighter punching the heavy bag. He was ponderously slow and must have been at least thirty years old.

I asked a sailor, "Who's he?"

"He's our heavyweight champion," came the proud answer.

The rather clumsy giant did not look that good to me.

"You mean of the whole damned navy?" I asked the sailor.

"No," he replied, "of the Texas."

I thought this over for a moment.

"Does each boat have its own champion?" I asked.

"Sure," said the sailor, "in each weight classification. Boxing's a big deal in the navy."

We asked the sailor additional questions and were surprised to learn that all of the boat champions, (he kept correcting us and said they were SHIPS not boats), fought for division titles such as battleship, cruiser, destroyer, carrier etc., These division or squadron champions all then got together someplace and fought for fleet titles like Atlantic, Mediterranean, Pacific, and Asiatic. These champions then fought once a year for the All Navy Championships. These winners went on to battle in the All Service

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Championships.

The sailor mentioned that top-flight navy boxers stood watches but they received a lot of extra time off for boxing and some other considerations because it meant a great deal to the pride and morale of a crew to have a U.S.Navy champion aboard. Somehow, this made it more of a fighting ship. Training and boxing year round between wild liberties ashore sounded like a sweet setup to me.

On the way home that evening we stopped off at Palisades Amusement Park on the Jersey side of the Hudson River. Here we saw many happy sailors with pretty girls clinging to their arms. They were all having fun and seemed to have a lot of money to spend. I began to have visions of exotic far away romantic places and all the pretty girls in every port. For the first time in my life I wondered seriously if a hitch in the navy might not be a bad idea. It would provide me with a great place to continue boxing while I matured and sharpened my skills. I could turn pro when I got out at twenty-one years of age.

Sunken Treasure

At the tail-end of 1940's summer the second event occurred that altered my life. One of my friends discovered where dozens of bags of five and ten cent lead slugs had been disposed of in order to get them out of circulation.

The location of this hidden gold mine was under a high railroad bridge that spanned the Passaic River a short distance above the Paterson Falls. The bags had been dropped from the bridge and near the center of the river. This had most likely been done at night and several bags had hit the base of a bridge support and broken open. Spilled slugs were visible if one happened to stand at just the right spot and look down.

Four of us recovered thousands of loose slugs and intact bags over a period of a week by diving at night to keep our secret. While two dove in the tricky currents after swimming from shore, the other two positioned themselves on the bridge to haul up the salvaged slugs by means of a bucket and long length of rope. We assumed that the slugs had been taken out of circulation by the police.

The slugs worked beautifully and there were coin

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operated machines everywhere one looked. Rows of them were in every movie house, bus and railroad station, ferry boat, subway station, and many stores. Others were on the sidewalk in front of stores. We could only eat so much candy and chew so much gum. My jaws began to ache and my pimples were getting pimples.

We began to sell candy and gum to others at cut-rate prices. Real money came rolling in. Our customers thought we were breaking into the machines themselves and stealing the goods which, in effect, we were doing.

We four partners soon had more coin of the realm than we'd ever seen before except in the collection plates at church. We still had so many slugs that we thought we'd never get rid of them. There were thousands more in deeper water that we planned to recover the following spring and summer. We got greedy. Our big mistake was to change our modest operation to wholesaling the slugs themselves in large lots at prices few could refuse. I made enough to purchase a late model but slightly wrecked Indian Sport Scout motorcycle. With some additional earnings I picked up a few used and new parts, did some straightening and other repair work and got the machine running. My friends promptly dubbed it the "heap". It then quickly evolved into "Heapo's heap" and I was stuck with a nickname I did not like.

My parents questioned me half-heartedly about where the money was coming from but I refused to say. I'm certain they were afraid of what the truth might be. I did not consider what I was doing to be a real crime but it was certainly a form of robbery.

Everything was going along just great until after school started that fall. I went down to our favorite street corner to join a group of friends one night and was told that some frightening visitors had just left. A black car had driven up with two hoods in it. One very large and mean looking individual had gotten out and approached the group. After surveying them for several moments he said, "Pass da woid tada punks what found da slugs dadiv one maw toins up'n enny ovda machines 'ul braig boatta dere arms 'n leggs jus fa stadahs."

We knew that mobsters controlled many things but we hadn't realized this extended to coin machines. It was a terrible shock to learn it had not been the police but some Mafioso family that had taken the slugs out of circulation. For the first time in my

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young life I was really scared. If they did not already know who was ripping them off they could surely find out. We hid the remainder of our slugs in "Fat Man's Misery", a narrow, very deep, many chambered cave in a quarry at Great Notch. Alarmingly, there was no way for us to get back the thousands of slugs most recently wholesaled.

Suitable For Framing

I became jumpy of shadows in the dark and out of one of these late one night came the instigator of the third incident that changed my life. Two friends and I were walking home when a lurching figure came toward us. Suspicious and tense I looked around for escape routes. As the man drew near I was relieved to recognize him as a young New Jersey State Trooper who lived in the area. He was off duty and had been drinking. My friends and I split apart to give him the whole sidewalk. When we all were abreast he stopped.

"Well, well, well," he said, "if it isn't the Irish wop that thinks he's a fighter. Come on punk, put 'em up and let's see how damned good you really are."

As I started to pass him I said, "Go home and sleep it off. I don't have to prove a goddamned thing to you."

He pushed me into a wall and threw a haymaker. I ducked and doubled him up with a punch in the stomach. Instead of going down he fought back like a wildman. When I finished he was down and a bloody mess but as I walked away he was screaming filthy curses at me.

Even though two friends witnessed this fight, the man spread the word that I had started it and taken advantage of his condition. He also said that my friends had jumped into the fray to help me. To add to this lie he also bragged that I did not have the guts to take him on alone when he was cold sober. About ten days later I obliged him when he was off duty. He was not much of a boxer drunk or sober but he was one tough sonavabitch. This time he spent overnight in a hospital for patchup and observation. A few weeks later the rumor on the street was that I would soon be framed and "sent up the river" where I belonged for a series of recent, unsolved grocery

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store and gas station burglaries.

Several of us knew that the burglar was a sweet-faced, altar boy who was an accomplished criminal at age fifteen. I had no desire to rat on him to try and save myself should I be brought in for questioning. It would have been impossible for me to account for my whereabouts on the nights in question which stretched over a period of summer months. There was also no way in which to explain my new-found riches without incriminating myself in other illegal activities.

My bitter-sweet world, such as it was, appeared to be coming unglued. I felt like a rat in a trap. Although in New Jersey it was often difficult to tell the good guys from the bad guys, I suddenly had people on both sides of the law after my scalp. There seemed to be no place to run or hide until I remembered the battleship Texas.

Recollection of those sailors in their dress whites and jaunty little hats was like a life preserver thrown to someone about to go down for the third time. I knew there was probably no gold in the pot but I would ride the U.S.Navy rainbow the hell and gone out of New Jersey. .

My Mom and Dad co-signed for me because I was not twenty-one. I quit school and in New York City passed the thorough peacetime U.S.Navy physical examination. With sixty other recruits I left that night on a passenger steamer headed up Long Island Sound for the U.S.Navy Recruit Training Base, Newport, R.I. I had escaped the trap but I was uprooted and alone for the first time in my life.

2

Boot Camp

The overnight steamer ride was nice and a completely new experience but I missed my family already. Things would never be the same for me or at home. Although my family knew how much I loved them, one doesn't say these things until it's sometimes too late. I resolved to write a long letter and try to express all the things I felt in my heart. I'd especially tell Mom and Dad how much I loved and appreciated them; how sorry I was for the troubles I'd caused; how proud I was of them for the way they had worked so hard for so many years through all the bad times and heartaches without complaint and had somehow, cheerfully kept us all together. I then began to wonder if I might turn out to be one of the good kids after all?

The next day at the Naval Recruit Training Center, Newport, R.I., we were issued navy regulation clothing and gear. The clothing was all several sizes too large. We packed our civilian clothes (civvies) for shipment home. As I tied the box with tough cord and cut the string, I knew another tie was being snipped.

Almost immediately I found I had made a bad mistake by joining the navy. It seemed worse than prison where one was locked up then left pretty much alone. It was not so with these navy guys. Instead of rollicking good times, it was regimentation in the extreme. Every move was done at a "quick step" or "double time" in marching order from predawn darkness to nighttime. We did not have regular beds but had to sleep in hammocks. These had to be "slung" each night for use. Each morning after reveille, which blew at an ungodly early hour, the hammocks were taken down, "lashed" up into a tight bundle in regulation manner and stowed. Our extra clothing had to be rolled or

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folded just so and placed in precise locations in our lockers.

Everything one did was cut to the barest allowable time, even brushing one's teeth. At night, at an early hour, it was "Lights out" and "Silence about the decks". Back on the streets of N.J. everything was just getting cranked up.

One even tells time differently in the navy where all clocks have twenty-four hour faces. The navy day starts at midnight, designated 0000 hours and progresses to noon, 1200 hours. Then instead of foolishly starting over it continues to 1300 hours etc.. This clock eliminates the a.m.-p.m. confusion which often leads to costly errors in war or peace. 2:32 p.m. in military time, for example, is simply 1432. Navy time will be used throughout this book.

On the second evening another recruit and I got into a brief scuffle in the barracks. His father had retired from the navy and his two older brothers were serving with the Atlantic fleet. He'd learned many salty phrases while growing up. In answer to my polite question he replied, "You don't know shit from shinola." I hit him. For punishment we had to jog around the perimeter of the marching grid for two hours while holding our nine and one half pound Springfield rifles at chest high position. With aching arms I went round and round and could not help contrasting my present plight with the happy sailors I'd seen at Palisades Amusement Park several months earlier; I wondered if I had enlisted in the same navy. I could not help thinking, "The hell with this noise. Who needs it?" I made up my mind to "go over the hill" at the first good opportunity. I'd been in the navy about seventy-two hours. My fleeting vision of ending up a good guy faded quickly.

The U.S.Navy had stagnated during many years of Peace and reduced appropriations following WWI. We were still at Peace but a war was raging in Europe. Although the U.S.Navy was desperately attempting to catch up with modern times this was not evident at boot camp. All of our training seemed to be geared to past ages or at least to the old "gunboat" diplomacy policy. We even dressed like the sailors in the movie, "Sand Pebbles" and wore laced up high leggings.

Our studies included sailing ship seamanship. We practiced many times on the rifle range; marched and drilled a lot; poked bayonets at straw dummies; put on gas masks and groped our way through a dark old house

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filled with tear gas. We learned to row a boat and storm a beach. We even learned how to "repel boarders" and I began to wonder if there were still pirates in the world.

I understand now that much of this was for tradition and discipline but at the time it all seemed ridiculous to many of us. A number of other men also felt they had been conned and planned to go AWOL*. This boot camp, however, was a tough "pen" to crack out of especially in the middle of winter. It was like Alcatraz in more than one way for it was almost an island. A long, narrow causeway connected the base to the mainland. There was a locked gate on the causeway guarded twenty-four hours a day by armed sentries.

I decided to wait until I was allowed to make a liberty into the town of Newport but a few others could not stand the pressure. One kid attempted to swim to the mainland and drowned. Two others committed suicide: one by jumping head first out a second story barracks window to the cement courtyard; the second by placing the butt of his bayonet against a wall, the naked tip against his heart, then lunging into the point. This man was in our recruit company.

After each company reached the fifth week of training its members took turns at nighttime shore patrol duty. A group of us would be transported by truck into Newport and dropped off at the regular shore patrol office. Here we received brief instructions and were assigned as helpers to experienced shore patrol (SP) sailors. The pairs were then assigned to different sections of the city. In making our official peacekeeping rounds we had authority to walk into any movie theater, restaurant, dancehall, bar etc. This was good duty. It was great to see other people again.

About this same time we were issued liberty passes for either Saturday or Sunday. Curfew was midnight. At this first real glimpse of freedom some of the recruits went over the hill but were promptly caught, brought back and thrown in the brig. How could one get lost quickly in the middle of the winter around Newport, R.I.? These guys were dumber than I was.

By then I had planned to bide my time until boot

Absent Without Leave

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leave and hop a freight from one of the many hobo jungles around home. I'd ride the rods to someplace like Chicago or Detroit, go to some sweat-stink, smoke filled gym and try to catch the eye of a fight manager. This I knew would not be difficult if one had anything on the ball at all. I'd have to change my name but I had already done this many times at clandestine smokers in order to protect my amateur standing. When I joined the navy an apprentice seaman's pay was \$36.00 per month. Upon completion of boot training one made seaman second class and the pay jumped to the magnificent sum of \$54.00 per month. I would save every cent and perhaps there would be enough by boot leave to see me through.

One of our instructors was a gruff but kindly old chief boatswain's mate who taught seamanship including a course in knot tying. Only now a rope was a line and tying a knot in it was bending a line. This chief took a liking to me and after class one day he gave me a fatherly talk. He knew I'd gotten into a few minor scrapes in the barracks and he cautioned me to remove the chip from my shoulder. He said that the navy was a good life if one simply "kept his nose clean." If one didn't, it was straight to the rock pile. He pointed out that if one broke a navy regulation there was no jury trial: that was it. Furthermore, it hadn't really been so long ago that the navy hung men from the yardarm for what now seemed like minor offenses. He suggested that if I had any frustrations to work off that I sign up for the coming boxing tournament. I appreciated his advice and thanked him but his words only made me more determined than ever to "make tracks"; I'd wait until the damned snow melted.

After his repeated suggestion the following day I did sign up for the recruit boxing tournament. The sailor on the USS Texas proved to be right. I was excused from group exercises and recreation classes so that I could train at the gym with other boxers. With little opposition I won four bouts and the light heavyweight championship. At the gym I met a very fine kid from another recruit company. His name was J.J. Keegan and at 194 pounds he was the best amateur heavyweight I have ever seen or worked out with. He had it all. Keegan was from Buffalo, N.Y. and had won the Golden Gloves title there for two years in a row but had never come down to box in the NY-NJ area. I have often wondered about him. He must have been

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maimed or killed in the war.

Training and testing in boot camp continued and included learning to send and receive messages with Morse Code and semaphore flags. In order to pass these two tests one had to send and received a minimum of only five words per minute. We also took many aptitude and I.Q. tests but were not shown the results. Other test scores were made known to us and I passed with flying colors. Things became easier as the end of boot camp drew and with it, the reward of ten day leave.

At the end of leave we were ordered to report back to Newport for assignment to duty. I decided to go home, spend my money and come back. I'd let the navy send me someplace far away for free and carry out my plan from there.

When I returned from leave broke but happy I was put on the old frigate USS Constellation to live with several hundred sailors. This was the sister ship of the USS Constitution and dated back to the Revolutionary War and John Paul Jones. We slung our hammocks below on the second deck. It was four and one half feet from the deck to the overhead and one couldn't stand up straight. With each succeeding deck down to the keel, this distance grew shorter. The sailors that John Paul Jones fought the American Revolution with must have been a herd of midgets. To keep busy the navy had us scrub, varnish, polish, and put on the 402nd coat of paint. It was on this historic wooden frigate that we learned the old navy saying: "If it's adrift (loose) secure it (fasten it down); if it's secured, paint it, if it's painted, scrub it." By the time I left her I had old navy tradition and atmosphere coming out both ears. I also felt certain I had at least one more thing in common with John Paul Jones than just his motto, "Don't Tread On Me."

German Panzer divisions and Stuka dive bombers were blitz-krieging Europe. The talk was that we'd soon have to go over and bail the "Frogs" (French) and "Limeys" (British) out again. There was scuttlebutt that a few of our destroyers on Neutrality Patrol had already had a brush or two with German U-boats in the North Atlantic. There were rumors too that we might have already sunk one or more U-boats and possibly lost one of our "tin cans". Many recruits were leaving the USS Constitution and being assigned directly to destroyers. Other men were awaiting

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assignment to gunnery, radio, quartermaster, signal, or other navy schools.

An odd thing happened that further altered my life. Another kid, Fred B. "Fatty" Wall, and I were told to report to the chief yeoman at the personnel office. The chief said that his lieutenant had given him a slip of paper with our names on it and instructions to pull our files. The officer had said, "Get these two men. They have more native intelligence than the rest put together." It had something to do with our aptitude and I.Q. scores. I was going to ask the chief if native intelligence meant we were pretty smart indians but figured he might not appreciate the crack.

"What happens now, chief?" asked Wall.

"They want you two to put in for Aerographer's school."

"What's an aerographer?" I asked.

"I'm not certain," came the surprising reply, "but I think it has something to do with weather balloons."

With a vision of me being sent aloft in a small wicker basket dangling under a huge, free balloon I said, "No thanks, chief. I'm not volunteering for anything."

Fred Wall must have scored higher on the tests than I did for he asked, "Where is the school?"

"At the U.S. Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, N.J. and the school lasts thirteen weeks."

Lakehurst was only seventy miles from home. That was not the long navy trip I envisioned. Lakehurst was also the direct opposite of an exotic, romantic port of call. Wall, who was from Boston, was enthusiastic about volunteering. He thought he could make it home from Lakehurst on a long weekend pass. The chief yeoman kept insisting, "It's a helluva good deal for you two," even though he obviously knew little about naval aerology. Wall and I discussed it for a few moments. He convinced me we had nothing to lose. Our decision delighted the chief far more than it did me.

Primary Aerographer's School

Early the following morning Fred Wall and I received our transfer orders. These ended with the standard navy phrase, "by means of first available transportation." In our case this was via train. It was almost April Fool's Day-1941.

The U.S. Naval Air Station (NAS), Lakehurst, N.J. is in the south central section of the state about fifteen miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean. Known as the "Pineys" this flat, red clay, scrub-pine belt was sparsely populated. Lakewood and Tom's River were two, small, closeby towns. Asbury Park is some twenty miles to the northeast; Atlantic City fifty miles to the south; and Philadelphia, PA., forty miles to the west. The U.S. Army's huge Fort Dix is about fifteen miles to the west.

NAS Lakehurst was also a U.S. Naval Lighter Than Air (LTA) Station and the navy's east coast blimp and dirigible base. Although, by 1941, the U.S. Navy had abandoned dirigibles, many blimps were in use as long range reconnaissance craft extensively employed with destroyers in maintaining our country's neutrality patrol in the Atlantic.

In conjunction with the blimps the navy's LTA school was located at Lakehurst. In addition to this and aerographer school there was also a navy parachute-riggers school and a parachute jump school with a practice tower.

Aerology is synonymous with Meteorology: the science that deals with the atmosphere and its phenomena, especially as it relates to weather and weather forecasting. Aerology, in addition, deals especially with air. Navy weathermen placed great emphasis on all of the upper air sounding and observation methods available because weather changes take place there far in advance of surface indications.

The term Aerology, as it is used in the navy, also

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incorporates the science of Oceanography. Navy weathermen had to know the ways in which weather was either produced or affected by ocean currents. They also had to understand the way in which wind generated waves and open ocean swells were formed, their characteristics and movement. This was vital to accurately forecast surf and swell conditions for amphibious operations and sea conditions for aircraft carrier operations.

The U.S.Navy's interest in this total field increased markedly during WWI. It was evident that aircraft would play a major role in any future war. This would require additional accurate weather information, improved forecasting techniques, and an operational weather organization. The first step was establishment of a U.S. Naval Bureau of Aerology (herein after referred to as the "bureau") under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Naval Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) in Washington, D.C.. Dr. Francis W. Reichelderfer, considered to be the founder of Naval Aerology, served as the first Officer in Charge (O-in-C) of the Bureau from 1922 to 1928.

The first officers who chose Aerology after graduating from the U.S.Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD. were sent to Massachusetts Institute of Technology for their post graduate studies in meteorology. This group included Lieutenant Commander Wilbur M. "Red" Lockhart; Lieutenants Howard B. "Hutch" Hutchinson; Thomas J. Raftery; Howard T. "Shorty" Orville; Anthony L. Danis; Arnold E. True; Fred A.L. Dartsch, and several others. Upon graduation in 1928 these officers became the U.S. Navy's first fully trained meteorologists. They were also sent to Norway for additional studies under the world's foremost meteorologist, Dr. Sverre Petterson.

Although vastly complex, the science of meteorology, at the practical level, can be broken down into two main work categories. First are the university graduates, in the navy these are the officers who majored in meteorology and were trained in theory, weather map analysis, and forecasting. The second, much larger group, consists of enlisted weathermen who read the many instruments and maintain them; take all of the various kinds of surface and upper air observations and record them; encode these weather reports for transmission and decode incoming reports; enter all of these weather signals on maps and charts; and carry on the twenty-four hour daily routine of running the weather offices aboard

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ships and naval stations.

These two weather occupations overlapped. Aerological officers had to know the weather codes and symbols for their work and the enlisted aerographer's mates** learned map analysis and forecasting. Many aerological officers were quite capable of standing a regular office watch alongside their men. A few did on occasion during WWII, some willingly, some out of sheer necessity.

Conversely, because of periodic shortages of officer forecasters and wartime emergency situations many aerographer's mates were designated as "acting aerological officers". This was especially true in Patrol Wing Four (PatWing 4) during the Aleutian Campaign of WWII. Many aerographer's mates also made the transition to officer rank during the war.

The school for training aerographer's mates was originally at NAS Pensacola, FL.. In 1926 the school was moved to NAS Anacostia, Washington, D.C.. It remained there for several years until transferred to NAS Lakehurst.

In the early 1920's the first enlisted aerographers were designated aviation quartermaster, wore this rating and stood quartermaster watches. Navy quartermasters are not to be confused with U.S. Army quartermasters whose navy equivalent is the rating of storekeeper. In essence, a navy quartermaster is an assistant to the ship's navigation officer. On many small naval vessels he was the navigator.

Quartermaster watches are stood on the ship's bridge. The work includes keeping all navigation charts and publications current; assisting the navigator by providing relative bearings and other navigational aids such as tide, weather, and wind conditions and logging this data; and standing helmsman watches. This was as close as the navy came in those days to having trained weathermen aboard its ships.

In the "You've come a long way baby" department, pigeons were still being used in those early days as one method of delivering messages. The early aerographer/quartermasters were usually given the extra duties of taking care of these birds by the ship's senior

**Enlisted Navy weathermen were designated aerographers until late 1941 when the warrant officer rank of Aerographer was created. At that time the enlisted petty officers became aerographer's mates.

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quartermaster. As a result, they were often referred to as the "pigeon keepers". In the early 1920's the separate enlisted rating of aerographer was created and pigeons presumably either flew the coop or were phased out in some other manner.

Through its infancy during the 1920's and until the mid 1930's enlisted aerographer school classes were of small enrollment. Many had only six or seven students. Class 12, by far the largest class of that era, consisted of twenty-four members. When it graduated on May 25, 1936 the number of navy aerographers went over the one hundred mark for the first time in history.

My class, number 22, was the largest one up to that time and included fifty-eight sailors and six marines. Upon graduation, our group raised the figure of aerographers in the navy to above three-hundred. With such a small number scattered throughout the U.S. Navy it is little wonder why the chief yeoman at boot camp had only a vague notion of what an aerographer was. About half of the sixty-four men in my class came from other boot camps. The remainder were screened applicants from far flung naval stations or fleet units. Most of this latter group had been in the navy for a year or more and were transferring to aerology after serving apprenticeships in other ratings. Several were third class petty officers including one radioman. I realized that I'd been given the opportunity to join rather select company.

Before getting into the making of an aerographer's mate I would like to touch briefly on the other schools at Lakehurst. We were in close association with these other students beyond having our school buildings and barracks in proximity and eating in the same messhall.

Parachute-rigger and aerographer students were often called upon to help the LTA students and trained LTA ground crews moor blimps. This help was provided at any hour of the day or night. Invariably it was needed whenever the wind reached a stiff breeze; a persistent condition along the New Jersey shore. Quite often we were roused out of warm bunks in an emergency situation caused by gusty winds accompanying thunderstorm activity.

Most blimps returned low on fuel after long patrol and could not circle for hours waiting for poor landing conditions to improve. In any kind of a wind the "gas bags" are a bitch to control during the mooring operation. Being lighter-than-air, considerable engine power is required to bring the craft close to the ground, usually at a sharp, nose down attitude. The blimp is

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maneuvered low enough so that the ground personnel can grab the mooring lines which trail below the blimp. The blimp is literally pulled down and held down by hand until its nose is secured to a wheeled mooring tower. With ground crew still holding down the massive inflated bulk, tower and attached blimp is then pulled into one of the outsized hangars and secured.

~~The main hangar~~ (a) NAS Lakehurst was so huge that under certain conditions it had its own atmosphere. Clouds occasionally formed inside when the skies outside were clear.

A blimp, unlike a dirigible, is not rigid. A blimp is just a large bag filled with helium while the dirigible has a complete, light aluminum framework. A blimp's flight control gondola with mounted twin engines is fastened on after the bag is inflated.

The gas bags were occasionally either deflated and stored, or removed from storage and inflated. For some reason the storage warehouses were not close to the hangars. The LTA people never seemed to have sufficient available personnel and also needed help to either fold-unfold, store or unstore. In either case the gas bags had to be lifted and carried. One hundred-seventy feet in length and weighing tons, a hundred and fifty or more fledgling LTA, parachute-riggers, and aerographer's mates would stagger in transporting one of these serpentine bundles.

These various coolie activities connected with blimps had been engaged in over the years by every student who ever went through the schools at Lakehurst. One of these early men, obviously disgruntled with the situation and perhaps after consulting a dictionary on one definition of blimp, added the letters TTS following LTA. From that day on the rest of the navy's sobriquet for a blimp sailor has been, "Lighter-Than-Air-Thicker-Than-S___." I wonder who the real dummies were?

Parachute-rigger's school fascinated me. I had never considered that somebody had to actually fold and pack a chute. This work was practiced on long, glassy-smooth tables. It was done over and over under intense supervision until it was letter perfect. It still amazes me that so much silk and so many shroud lines can be packed into such a small tight bundle. Later in the Aleutians I once accidentally tripped the rip cord handle while walking past a stored chute in an in-flight PBV Catalina patrol bomber. A parachute does not merely open...it virtually explodes. This one filled

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the middle third of the large plane.

The most unusual facet of Parachute-Rigger School was the final examination. Aerographer and LTA classes were dismissed and we trooped outside to view the proceedings. With some trepidation the parachute-riggers climbed aboard buses for transportation to the airfield. As the buses pulled away with their cargoes of rather palefaced young passengers, the other assembled students hooted, jeered, cheered, or saluted. At the airfield the riggers climbed into a doorless cargo plane. The plane took off then climbed lazily in ever widening circles to an altitude of about six thousand feet. The riggers had received ground training at the jump school and tower but this did not lessen the drama of the moment. As the plane flew back over the field each student jumped with a parachute he had personally packed. If it opened, the student became a qualified rigger. Lord! Talk about studying for a final examination!

U.S. Marines occasionally used the training tower jump facilities although I believe their primary jump school was at Fort Benning, GA.. Other detachments of experienced marine paratroopers passed through Lakehurst to perfect their jumping skills. Paratroopers in wartime jump from minimum chute opening altitude so they won't be dangling targets. Like rows of peas thumb-popped out of pods these marines tumbled out of the planes at an altitude of only 500 feet. They were on the ground in seconds ready for combat.

It is not the purpose of this book to try to turn the reader into an amateur weatherman. However, a certain basic knowledge of our duties is necessary for clearer understanding of that which will be touched upon throughout this book.

Our work included taking, transmitting, and recording six main kinds of weather observations: 1. **Hourly** (Surface)- each hour, on the hour, twenty-four times daily. 2. **Synoptic** (Surface)-Four times daily at designated Greenwich Meridian Time. A synoptic observation includes far more data and in greater detail than an hourly. 3. **Ship Report**-This is basically a synoptic with additional information such as position, course, speed, swell and sea conditions. 4. **Pilot Balloon** (Pibal) (Upper Air)- Small, unmanned, balloon sounding to determine the winds aloft. Taken twice daily at designated Greenwich times. Soundings also made at unscheduled times when needed. 5. **Radiosonde** (Raob) (Upper Air)- Unmanned balloon and instrument sounding to obtain pressure, temperature, and humidity aloft.

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Scheduled twice daily at designated Greenwich times. Also launched at unscheduled times if weather conditions deemed it necessary. **6. Pilot Reports (PiReps)**-Taken by pilots or aerographers in flight. Any time available.

In order to take these observations we worked with a variety of instruments. Some of these are: Thermometers for obtaining various temperature readings including maximum and minimum thermometers which are reset every twenty-four hours. Psychrometers, a hygrometer employing both a wet and dry bulb thermometer used to obtain the dewpoint temperature and relative humidity. Thermograph-a self recording thermometer. Mercurial and Aneroid barometers for measuring atmospheric pressure in either inches of mercury or millibars. Barographs-a recording aneroid barometer. Hygrograph- an instrument that automatically records variations in humidity. Hygro-thermographs- records both humidity and temperature changes. Selsyn wind direction indicator. Anemometer-wind velocity measuring and indicating instrument. Theodolite-modified surveyor's transit used to track a Pibal to obtain relative azimuth angles each minute of the balloon's flight. Circular plotting board- a device for showing graphically the periodic position of a moving target in relation to a stationary observer's position. Used to work up the Pibal data observed through the theodolite. Radiosonde(Raob)-Two instruments. First is the temperature, pressure, humidity instrument package with its battery and radio transmitter carried aloft by the large raob balloon. Second, the radiosonde receiver which records the precise tone signals continually transmitted by the balloon's instrument package during flight. Clinometer- a hand held device that indicates elevation angles. Used a Aerology in conjunction with a large spotlight at night to determine by triangulation the base of a cloud layer. Standard rain gauge- a rainfall collecting instrument the contents of which are periodically measured with a calibrated dipstick then emptied. Tipping-bucket rain gauge- an instrument that collects rain water and records the amount by means of a small interior bucket that trips each time it becomes full. One could always be assured that it was a classy navy weather station if its equipment included a tipping-bucket rain gauge. There were other instruments or devices that were used in our weather work and they will be explained briefly as they appear in the book.

Instructors explained how these various instruments worked, how to read them, change charts on the recording

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ones, how to maintain them and in some cases how to make minor repairs, adjustments or recalibration.

Approximately half of the data for each type of weather observation was obtained from instruments. Some of this data was immediately usable such as the temperature, wind direction and velocity. Other instrument information such as that obtained from the pibal and raob had to be either processed through calibration, correction, or interpolation tables, plotting board, or special charts to obtain usable values and/or additional data.

The remaining half of observations were obtained by visually noting the current weather phenomena. This phase of weather observation work included establishing the visibility (the greatest distance toward the horizon that objects can be identified with the naked eye). The types of clouds had to be identified as well as their heights, amounts, and direction of movement. The State of the Sky, ie, total amount of sky covered by clouds had to be determined as well as any specific kind of weather phenomena occurring at time of observation.

When the data for each type of observation had been determined the information was transcribed into precise arrangement in the weather code for that particular type of observation. The report was then transmitted by radio and/or teletype so that all weather stations could share the information. Certain centrally located weather offices, both civilian and military, were designated collection and dissemination centers. These stations assembled all of the various types of weather reports according to category and placed them in "books" or schedules for rebroadcast. Specific weather codes in numerical form had been devised in order to handle this vast amount of twenty-four hour a day radio/teletype traffic.

The simplest weather code was the one used in the pibal sounding. It was only necessary to identify the station with a call number then have a means of indicating altitude, wind direction, and velocity at each standard level. The code used for this was HDDFF. H=altitude level. 5000 feet, for example, was represented by the figure 5. DD=wind direction represented by degrees of the compass. For example, a wind blowing from 320 degrees (Northwest) was reported as 32. FF= Wind force (velocity) in mph. A trained weatherman could glance at the numbered groups for this reporting station's latest pibal sounding and determine instantly what 53218 meant.

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By far the most complex weather code was the one for the six hourly synoptic observation. At each Greenwich synoptic time (map time), weathermen all over the world make a detailed weather report. After collection and dissemination these observations are entered on synoptic weather maps for analysis upon which the weather forecasts are based. Because all observations were taken simultaneously regardless of each station's location and Standard Time Zone, the data represents the weather occurring throughout the globe at that moment.

Each primary weather station that has forecasting responsibilities selects a hundred or more synoptics which are entered upon that station's area map. For example: Because all weather systems in the northern hemisphere move generally from west to east the navy weather office at Lakehurst would be primarily interested in the weather reports from the U.S., Canada, part of the Caribbean, and western Atlantic Ocean. The Lakehurst synoptic map would cover this area. On the other hand, the Seattle, Wash. U.S. Navy weather center's map and signals would cover the western half of the U.S. and Canada, Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, and North Pacific Ocean.

In order to have room to enter the complexity of data from upwards of two hundred stations on the maps, even in condensed form, the synoptic code employed both numerals and symbols. This complicated things because transmission was in numeral form only.

For example there are twenty-seven basic types of clouds, nine each for low, middle, and high. Each cloud type is an indicator of weather past, present, or future. Each of the twenty-seven clouds was assigned a one digit numeral such as low five, middle two, high six which were represented in the synoptic code arrangement as C_l , C_m , and C_h . Each number in turn was represented on the map by a special weather symbol. Low one, for example, is cumulus of fair weather and represented by a symbol that looks like a scoop of ice cream with a flat base. Low two is cumulus, heavy and swelling. Its symbol is two scoops of ice cream one on top of the other. In similar fashion, the symbols closely resemble what the cloud actually looks like.

There are ninety-nine types of weather phenomena each assigned two digits (WW) in the synoptic code and each represented by a special symbol. Zero through thirty-nine represent special phenomena such as dust devils, tornado, hurricane, sand storm, water spout, heat lightning, etc. All of the 40's are types of fog

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represented on the map by horizontal bars in various combinations. The 50's are drizzles with the comma (,) being the basic symbol. The 60's are types of rain with the dot (.) symbol. 70's are snow represented by the asterisk(*) symbol. For example, 72 is light continuous snow represented by the symbol **. All of the 80's are types of showers represented by a basic triangle symbol. The 90's are thunderstorms with capital "R" being the basic symbol. There are other codes within the synoptic code including those for state of the sky, wind force, visibility, barometric tendency during past three hours, amount of barometric change, past weather, amount of precipitation during past weather, cloud direction, cloud height, etc.

Two men normally did the map entering with one man calling off the data while the other entered the information with a pen around each numbered station's circle on the map. Let us say that number 121 on a synoptic map represents Flagstaff, AZ. Man "A" would say, "121...121.." (giving man "B" a second or two to locate the station).. "northwest 5 and overcast...187..36..snow shower..8 miles and 31...low 3 at 25 from the northwest..mid 4 and a high 1..plus 10 George..showers at 1 a trace.....129...129(next station).

Man "A" was looking at a bunch of five group numbers arranged in the order of the synoptic code. This arrangement, reading from left to right, differs from the precise order in which he must call off the data for ease of entering. His eyes had to skip about and he had to know the codes within the synoptic code. Man "B" had to know the same thing plus the symbols and the specific arrangement to place the information around the Flagstaff station circle.

After calling out "121...121..northwest 5" in the above example man "A" had to locate the numeral for state of the sky. In this case it was figure 8. In the state of the sky code this means overcast. Man "B" dutifully filled in the station circle to indicate a complete cloud cover. 187...36 represented a pressure of 1018.7 millibars and a Fahrenheit temperature of 36 degrees. This data for PPPTT was in the third five digit numeral group of the synoptic code. There was a coded figure for present weather of snow showers as well as a code figure for 8 miles visibility. 36 was the dewpoint. The symbols for barometric tendency closely resemble the tendency as evidenced by the trace mark on the barograph. In the above case the figure was 4 which denoted

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"George". "George" is a barometric tendency that falls then rises sharply, hence, the symbol is a check mark.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 and the Declaration of War added one further step to our weather code work. It became necessary to encipher all of our weather numbers into the day's secret radio transmission code. We were furnished each month with these radio code books that contained pages of five digit groups. The following example will explain how this additional work was done.

| | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | Kodiak, AK aerographer- | Secret radio cipher | 89744 |
| | | Weather group | <u>12125</u> |
| add | | | |
| | Adak, AK aerographer- | Transmitted | 01869 |
| | | Received | 01869 |
| | | Secret radio cipher | <u>89744</u> |
| subtract | | | |
| | | Weather group | 12125 |

For mental exercise I'll let the reader figure out how many times, by now, this was a code within a code. This final ciphering had to be done with every group of every report and added hours of eye straining work to our office watch routine. It is small wonder that quite a number of aerographer's mates ended up wearing glasses. Obviously, in order to accomplish our work under the pressure of limited time, all of the codes had to be memorized.

I'm hoping that the foregoing hasn't led to utter confusion. It is only necessary to realize the great detail and some of the problems connected with weather work. With practice, all of the various codes became a comfortable second language.

How many times have we, as lay persons, passed a telephone lineman working on a spaghetti like mess of 246 different colored wires and wondered, "How is the world does he know what he's doing?" To you and me his work would be impossible but he accomplishes it with a cigarette dangling out of his mouth and while carrying on a laughing conversation with his partner. The man could probably snip, crisscross, and splice wires blindfolded if someone told him the colors.

The hourly weather report differed markedly from the synoptic in both arrangement and code. These reports incorporated some abbreviations in addition to numbers and symbols. Furthermore, some weather offices had teletype machines which had special hourly weather symbols on the upper carriage of their keyboards while other offices had standard teletypes. On a regular

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keyboard ,for example, one typed OVC for overcast while a special keyboard's overcast symbol was a cross inside a circle.

Pilot Reports (Pireps) used the Aircraft Meteorological Code (AirMetCo). This was a combination of the synoptic, hourly, and ship code and contained provisions for reporting the aircraft's position, altitude, speed, cloud bases and tops, turbulence, icing conditions, etc.

Weather reports from commercial ships ceased with the outbreak of war. No ship captain was going to give away his ship's position to enemy submarines by opening up his radio transmitter. The result was that the vast expanses of ocean were blank on our weather maps adding yet another problem to weather forecasting.

There were manuals to cover every phase of our weather work. Our primary "Bible" was the hard cover Aerographer's Manual: a thick volume that went into great detail. Smaller, special manuals such as the Radiosonde Manual went into the taking of this complex observation. We used a small, blue cover Circular "S" publication that was our Cloud Atlas. This manual contained representative photographs of the different basic clouds and their variations as a help in identification. This manual also explained how each type was formed and the kind of weather associated with it. There was also a thick manual on teletype procedure which is strictly regulated much the same as the Federal Communications Commission controls radio traffic.

The aerographer's school was staffed with excellent instructors. Under the command of Lieutenant Ross R. Kellerman, USN, this group included: Lt(jg) C.W. Barber, USNR, Chiefs John Dungan and E.E. Allin, both USN, Robert D. Case, AerM1/c, USN, M/SGT C.G. Cole, USMC, and S/SGT R.L. Gray, USMC.

The students had considerably more freedom than at boot camp and were given weekend liberty. The only catch was that almost everyone had to burn varying amounts of midnight oil studying our manuals and memorizing codes in order to correctly answer oral questions in daily class and pass the weekly written tests. Additionally, as we became more proficient we were assigned, in small groups, to stand weekend watches under supervision at the NAS weather office.

Our class included several near geniuses, --Fred Wall was one--, about twenty percent who lived precariously from week to week on the ragged edge of flunking, and the rest were grouped in between.

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The liberties we did make were mostly one day local outings to Tom's River or Lakewood bars. With some buddies I did make one foray as far away as Asbury Park. Several small groups of classmates hitch-hiked to New York City to see the bright lights. On weekends, hundreds of sailors from the base thronged out of the main gate in their summer whites and spread out along the main road to hitch-hike. One weekend I invited two shipmates to thumb a ride home with me. Traffic was light and we trudged along heading north in the hot sun. The three of us were not picked up and walked all the way to Lakewood, a distance of about eight miles. By then we were so hot, dusty, and thirsty we stopped in at a bar for a beer. We didn't make it any further. Late that night we met a man and woman at a restaurant who were driving south. They offered to drop us off at the air station.

Many of the Lakehurst sailor's liberties ended in brawls with soldiers. The Army's huge, sprawling Fort Dix was only a few miles away. No matter which establishment the sailors dropped into, within a fifty mile radius, they were usually heavily outnumbered. As two or three sailors walked through the door of some bar, a half drunk "dirt-pounder" invariably could not resist saying something such as, "Well, well, well, if it ain't a couple more 'o them yellow-bellied "swab-jockeys" in their funny little boy suits."

It was at Lakehurst in the spring of 1941 that I met just about the quietest yet toughest man I've ever known. He was an AerM1/c at the NAS weather office. Old time navy weathermen will recall him because he was a living legend. Still young and in his prime he was reported to be the current or former heavyweight champion of the Pacific and Asiatic Fleets. He was dynamite personified. When the smoke cleared there were usually inert bodies stacked up all around him.

Early one weekend afternoon this man and a friend went into a rather plush, almost empty Lakewood cocktail lounge for a peaceful drink or two. A large, happy drunk army captain moved down the bar and began to incessantly pester the two sailors. To get away from the bore the two moved to the far end of the bar but the captain followed. When the AerM1/c politely refused, for the third time, to let the army man buy him drink, the captain suddenly turned into a mountain of filthy-mouthed belligerence. The aerographer's mate's patience was exhausted and he knew he could not avoid a fight. In a lightning move he clamped his powerful left arm around the captain's neck in a vise grip. With his other hand

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he ground a half smoked cigarette out between the captain's eyes. When he released his hold, the captain was unconscious and just toppled over backward off the bar stool. The aerographer's mate then turned to the sailor with him and said, "Drink up and let's find someplace that's quiet."

Class #22 graduated in mid July 1941. Every member that started made it through with passing grades. Those of us who were new to the navy and had come from boot camps were advanced to Seaman First Class. It was officially noted in our records that we were graduates of the U.S.Navy Primary Aerographer's School and therefore qualified strikers(apprentices). At the time it was one of the mandatory requirements that a man be a primary school graduate before he could make aerographer's mate third class, the lowest petty officer rating. A few of those in my class who'd been striking at weather offices in the fleet while awaiting assignment to primary school were given the test for third class immediately upon graduation. The rest of us had to wait six months before we could be recommended for the test.

We were given seventy-two hour passes and I used this long weekend to finally make it home. Then, one by one, over the following week we all received orders that sent us to U.S.Naval Weather Stations and/or U.S.Naval Fleet units scattered throughout the far corners of the earth.

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U.S. Naval Destroyer Base, San Diego, CA.

My complete fascination with weather school, the concentration required in studying, and the other interesting naval air station activities had made the thirteen weeks at Lakehurst whisk by. Upon graduating I was infused with a great sense of accomplishment. Almost magically, the navy had qualified me for an occupation that wasn't dirty, seamy, illegal, or bloody. I'd also become aware that at a naval air station aerographers were a respected group. I was a "somebody" even though a tiny fish in a large pool.

A set of written orders directed me to report to the U.S. Naval Destroyer Base, San Diego, CA., for further assignment(FFA). First available transportation was by bus to Philadelphia thence by train to San Diego. With light heart and confidence I set out on my journey. This feeling of well being and security was a new experience. The end of July five day train ride via the southern route was uneventful although suffocatingly hot, grubby, and tiring on a day coach.

The U.S. Naval Destroyer Base(DesBase), San Diego is actually located in National City on the southeastern shore of San Diego Bay. Tijuana and the Mexican border are eleven miles to the south.

Destroyers of the Pacific Fleet used the base for refitting. Major repairs were made at one of the large west coast naval shipyards. There were a dozen or more of these slim, sleek, greyhounds of the sea at the base. Some were drydocked. The primary work seemed to be hull clean up, inspection and repair or replacement of hull plates, and painting.

After a destroyer is hauled out, the seaweed, slime, and barnacles are scraped off from waterline to keel. This hard, dirty work is done by sailors manning heavy, stout-handled scrap-tools and wire

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brushes. I'd no sooner checked in when I was ordered to get into my dungarees and join a large work party. I quickly found myself with scraping tool in hand and elbow to elbow with about 100 hundred other sailors hard at work along the still wet hull of a destroyer.

The most notable event happened one day while we were busy at this chore. The man on my right lacerated his knuckles on some barnacles. He cursed the barnacles, the damned destroyer, and the navy. Still mad, he took a vicious swing with his scraper at the knuckle slashing spot. The end of the tool went through the hull! Those nearby stared in utter amazement. A small crowd gathered. The steel plating in this location under the marine growth and barnacles had been reduced by rust to thin flakes. The sailor kept hammering around until he had beaten out a ragged hole about a foot in diameter. With our fingers, many of us felt the gauge of the sounder metal around the jagged opening. We could not believe that the "good skin" was so thin. It appeared to be about one quarter of an inch thick. Was this all there was between the sailor and the sea?

"My God," said a sailor, "you mean they're going to send us out in these things? No wonder they call them "tin cans."

"I heard this morning," said another man, "that this destroyer just came in from Samoa."

"Get off your dead asses and stop gold brickin' it," hollered a chief boatswain's mate who'd come up behind us.

We went about our drudgery in silence, each man lost in thought. I thought about the odd contrasts of the destroyer base. It had impressed me at first sight as a flat, hot, dry, dusty place. Half under my destroyer it was dripping wet and it stunk. I stunk. My face and clothes were splattered with the guts and juices of crushed barnacles. Seaweed was plastered over both shoulders. Fragments of barnacle shell had fallen inside my shirt. My eyes burned and I itched all over.

I wondered about all the intensive weather training I'd just been through. If that was a dream this was a nightmare. With aching arms I wielded the heavy scraper while wondering if my orders to this base had been a mistake. It was obvious that a Seaman First Class aerological striker was not held in any respect at the DesBase.

On the fifth day I was summoned to the personnel

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office. Like a prisoner being granted a reprieve, I was handed a new set of orders. They directed me to report immediately to the aircraft carrier USS Lexington(CV-2) for Temporary Additional Duty(TAD). The giant "Lex" was tied up at the U.S. Naval Air Station at nearby North Island located in the middle of San Diego Bay. Transportation this time was by bus to downtown San Diego then by "nickel snatcher", a foot passenger ferry, to North Island. I knew I would never end up on an old destroyer (or so I thought), because they almost never had aerographer's mates aboard but I began to wonder about the thickness or should I say thinness of a carrier's skin.

Temporary Duty Aboard The USS Lexington(CV-2)

I reported aboard and promptly got lost trying to find the weather office. Don't laugh, I'm not that stupid, it was simply a case of the Lexington being that huge. Sailors told me later they had been aboard for a year or more and still occasionally got turned around. It was unlikely that anyone had visited every compartment on the ship.

Large aircraft carriers are three times longer than a football field and are comprised of many decks above and below the waterline. With the exception of the flight deck and to some degree the hangar deck, each level is divided into a great number of compartments of varying size. All are interconnected by a maze of narrow passageways. Hundreds of steel ladders connect each deck with the one above and below.

To have confidence in one's sense of direction simply is not enough. The labyrinthine passageways seemed to turn the wrong way and the ladders invariably appeared to lead topside or below in the opposite direction of one's instincts. Before long one could completely lose one's bearings and an hour could be spent trying to get back to the original starting point. This, too, could be difficult if one could not explain clearly to another exactly where this was.

A carrier also has an "island" which is comparable to a regular ship's bridge super structure. On a U.S. aircraft carrier this structure is offset on the starboard side of the flight deck to allow for aircraft operations. The island appears rather small but this is only by comparison with the rest of the ship's gigantic bulk. Towering high above the flight deck the multi-leveled island also contains its own maze of compartments, passageways and ladders. Within the island are the carrier's bridge, navigation department, signalmen, quartermasters, flight control, gunnery

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control, radar, radio, weather, Air Combat Intelligence, Combat Information Center, Ship Captain and Executive Officers quarters and offices as well as those of the senior air group officers and flag officers. The island is the fighting brain center of the ship.

During the short time I was on the Lexington I wandered over only a very small portion of the ship, mostly when I was lost, seldom by design. It was difficult at first to even find my way from bunk, to head, to messhall, and to the weather office located on a lofty deck of the island and fully 150 feet above the water.

Lexington class carriers are almost entities unto themselves needing only to take on fuel and stores. They are like a large, floating city lacking only a few notable exceptions. The "Lex", for example, had shoemakers, ship's service (soda fountains called "gedunk stands" in the navy), printing presses, daily newspaper, libraries, gymnasiums, recreation lounges, complete communications systems of every kind, movies, barber shops, GI clothing stores, tailors, etc.. One could engage in boxing, basketball, handball, ping-pong, and shoot pool. The flight deck and/or hangar deck, on occasion, served as a track, touch football field, softball diamond, volleyball court, badminton court, and even a golf driving range. All of these facilities provided services, recreation, and exercise for approximately four thousand officers and men of the ship's company plus several hundred attached to the air group on board.

In addition to extensive messing and berthing accommodations the ship contained a vast number of machine shops, repair shops, and maintenance shops for both the ship and its aircraft. The Lexington's huge turbines were capable of producing enough electrical power to light a large city. In fact, during an emergency situation, the Lexington had once been called upon to furnish all the power for Tacoma, Wash., a city of 150,000.

The operation of a ship this size is a complex one in itself; when the problems connected with conducting air operations involving close to one hundred planes off a carrier's often plunging, swooping flight deck are added, the total operation becomes staggering in magnitude.

The Lexington was in the midst of conducting a summer program of training exercises and weekly fleet maneuvers when I reported aboard. Her planes had taken

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off at sea and flown to the NAS North Island and the carrier had just come in and tied up at North Island to provide weekend liberty for the crew.

Early the following Monday morning she got underway again and proceeded to a naval operating area off San Clemente Island. The fighters, dive-bombers, and torpedo planes flew out to the ship and our exercises resumed with plane recovery operations.

I'm sure the reader has seen at least one movie over the years depicting aircraft carrier operations. The ship and her air group practiced all phases under simulated emergency and wartime conditions. All of the work was performed against the clock in striving for the ultimate in teamwork, speed, and efficiency. These maneuvers also served the purpose of building morale and instilling pride in one's self, his department, and his ship. Very high standards of achievement were set. When a ship and crew met these rigid requirements the result was proudly displayed for all other ships in the fleet and the whole wide world to see. A large, white "E" for Efficiency was painted on the Lexington's stack. Not all ships qualified.

Although I was aboard as temporary duty I was absorbed into the Lexington's weather group and stood regular watches. My spare time was divided between eating, sleeping, getting lost, and boxing.

I turned eighteen on the Lexington and when we came into port that weekend I went ashore and celebrated alone. After a couple of quiet beers I went to the ***Star Steak House*** and finally chewed my way through a tough rib-steak. Later I walked down to and along the picturesque, palm tree lined quay. I sat on a bench for awhile and watched the activity aboard a large tuna clipper that was making ready for sea. Afterward I went into the nearby baseball park and watched the San Diego Padres play another team from the Pacific Coast League. A bag of peanuts and a coke served as dessert and my birthday cake.

Before I left the Lexington I entered the ship's boxing tournament and fought several matches in quest of the light heavyweight title. After winning a couple of early bouts by quick knockout and one by default when my opponent failed to show up, I was beaten in the semi-finals and eliminated from competition by the current ship's champion, an older, dark-skinned cook.

I had seen him box in one of his earlier bouts and had not been impressed. He fought a marine who had recently reported aboard. This marine reputedly was a

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very classy fighter who'd just won the light heavyweight championship of a San Diego all service tournament. He was, indeed, so good that my eyes were mostly riveted on him. The marine was outclassing the cook when he suffered a deep gash over one eye from a clash of heads. The fight was stopped and the cook awarded a TKO.

Because I fought with the same basic stand-up style and was a boxer-puncher like the marine, I was not overly concerned about meeting the cook. However, when I climbed into the ring with him I discovered that he was better than I thought. He was very cagey like many of the old pros I had sparred with in the gyms back home. Nothing I tried worked very well. To the crowd it may have appeared that I was doing okay but the cook and I knew differently. My shots were either being blocked, partially smothered, grazed, or taken going away. The cook was a master at clinching and tying up an opponent on the inside. With a head gear, large gloves, and three round bouts he could have fought in the navy until he was fifty years old without risk of serious injury.

About the last half of the final round I nailed him good a couple of times. I knew that I'd hurt him by the way he held on immediately. I'd delivered much too little and much too late. Being out of condition I was also so exhausted that I could hardly breathe or throw another punch when the final bell rang. The unanimous decision in his favor was both fair and correct. It was greeted with mostly cheers mixed with a few boos.

Although I had no idea at the time, this bout was my official swan song in the ring. Even though I'd already been boxing for ten years I had no intention of stopping at eighteen years of age but Pearl Harbor would alter many plans.

I made one aborted attempt to resume boxing a little over two years later on the Aleutian Island of Attu. I intended to enter an all-service tournament and in an effort to get back in some semblance of shape I badly twisted an ankle while trying to do my roadwork on an icy airfield taxi strip. Apparently, this idea wasn't as bright as the rare star-studded night. I did some sparring, from time to time, and it finally wound down years later when I was a chief in San Diego. James Rose, AerMic and I conducted a weather school just prior to the Korean War. The purpose was to qualify a flock of seamen in a hurry as aerological strikers. I sparred with some of our students: those few who expressed a desire to beat up teacher. It was all in fun and in accordance with a navy regulation of holding a specific amount of exercise

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and recreation along with classroom studies. I was exchanging punches thusly one afternoon with a student when I suddenly realized roles had been reversed since my early days in New Jersey.

One other event occurred that I might mention. During the period I was attached to the Lexington in San Diego I ran across two shipmates from boot camp. I hadn't known Bob "Frenchy" Bergun prior to boot camp but I had known Ernie "Big Stoop" Talbert. Ernie and I had played football against each other for several years, his being from a neighboring high school in New Jersey.

After boot leave Talbert had gone to the U.S.Navy Submarine School in New London,CT. and he was on a fleet boat at San Diego. Bergun had been sent directly to a "tin-can" based at San Diego.

I had gotten the word that the Lexington was leaving in a week for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton,WA. The three of us decided to pitch one last liberty together before my ship left and we set the date for the coming weekend.

Harry James and his band would be in town and we were anxious to catch the first performance on Saturday evening. We also wanted front row seats at the swing band concert so we didn't even have a beer first but went straight to the large, downtown auditorium. We figured we'd have the rest of the weekend to do some serious drinking later. It was early when we arrived but a line was already forming at the ticket window.

When the doors opened we got three seats in the front row on the left side of the bandstand. When the two and a half hour concert ended, the place erupted into a madhouse. Everyone was cheering for more and applauding the performance. What followed is still a crazy nightmare but typical of the weird things that seemed to happen to me.

Bergun, an autograph hound, wanted to try and get Harry James signature on the program. He jumped up on the stage with a , "Come on", and I followed. I didn't jump high enough, teetered on the edge of the stage, then started to fall over backward. I reached out to save myself from a bad fall and grabbed what turned out to be the large American flag hanging from a pole. My falling momentum caused me to swing out over the crowd, up against a wall then back toward the stage. At this point I let go of the flag, dropped to the floor, and sensibly climbed up on the stage along with many others.

When I got to my feet, someone grabbed me hard around the neck from behind. If this happened back in

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Paterson, NJ., one was about to get four inches of cold steel between the ribs. I reacted instinctively, ducked my head, twisted free and threw a straight right. The punch caught a uniformed San Diego policeman between the eyes. He was wearing glasses which shattered and holding his eyes and screaming with pain he reeled backward.

I didn't have time to recover from this shock because another policeman came rushing at me with a club. Almost instantly I found myself fighting for my life against more uniformed cops, army M.P's and navy shorepatrolmen, many of them swinging nightsticks. I thought everyone had gone crazy and I had no idea why I'd been attacked by the first cop. It seemed the rest were now trying to kill me with clubs so I fought like a madman.

The battle raged across one end of the stage. Chairs, music stands, and sheet music were upset and the musicians were trying to get out of the way and protect their instruments. Numbers and nightsticks finally beat me half unconscious to the deck. I ended up with my face pushed roughly into the wooden floor, a heavy black shoe on the back of my neck, and handcuffed behind my back.

Whistles were blowing and other, small fights between sailors, soldiers, marines, and civilians were apparently being broken up. To avoid anymore trouble and a possible riot I was dragged to my feet and taken into a side room behind the stage.

The army M.P's left and a shouting, swearing argument followed between three San Diego cops and five or six navy shore-patrolmen in charge of a chief petty officer. One cop whose lip was split and his shirt torn, kept pointing his club at me and hollering at the chief, "---k you, we want this crazy son of a bitch."

The navy chief kept insisting that I was under navy jurisdiction, that I was hurt and needed medical attention.

"Let me have the bastard. I'll see that he gets attention."

"Sorry, old buddy...no way," replied the chief.

"Goddamit," snarled the club wielder, "We'll just see about this shit." Then he and the other two cops stormed out the door back into the auditorium.

As soon as they'd left, the chief gave a series of quick, quiet instructions to his shorepatrolmen and they, too, left. The last man was ordered to guard the other side of the door and not let anyone in for at least three minutes. When this man closed the door, the chief hustled me out a rear door that opened on an alley. A

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few seconds later a shore patrol paddy wagon came around the corner and we got in.

"Get going," ordered the chief.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

"Anywhere. Just get the hell outa' here."

Then turning to me the chief said, "I'm going to take the handcuffs off. Don't try anything foolish."

I had a bleeding scalp wound, many abrasions, several facial cuts, my ribs and kidneys ached, and my right arm from shoulder down was numb and hung useless at my side.

The chief opened a first aid kit, poured some hydrogen peroxide on a gauze pad and applied it to my scalp. He told me to hold the pad in place with some pressure.

"Shall I head for the aid station, chief?" asked the driver.

"No," replied the chief, "That's the first place they'll check."

As the chief dabbed at a cut on my cheek he began asking me questions. I told him my name, striker rating and that I was off the Lexington. He suddenly stopped dabbing, looked me in the eye and said, "Why hell, you're not drunk at all, are you? I can't even smell booze on your breath."

I told him that I hadn't even had a beer yet that day and had no idea why everyone jumped all over me unless it was because the first cop thought I was being deliberately disrespectful of the flag.

"What flag?" the chief wanted to know.

When I told him how it must have all started, he muttered, "So that's what happened." He realized that it was just a mistake, a weird, unfortunate set of circumstances. However blameless I might be, I'd have a tough time proving my innocence to the San Diego police.

"If the San Diego cops ever get their hands on you I don't even want to think of what might happen. They're a rough bunch." He knew that the Lexington was leaving for Bremerton on Monday. To the driver he said, "Head for the ferry dock."

To me he said, "We'll take you back to your ship and you turn yorted me aboard. He talked quietly to the officer of the deck (O.O.D.) for a moment then saluted the junior officer with a "Thank you, sir."

"Thanks for everything, chief," I said as he prepared to leave the ship.

"Take care sailor," came his reply as he walked down the gangway.

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I got patched up, healed quickly and never heard another word about the incident thanks entirely to a nameless stranger. The shore patrol chief boatswain's mate had just happened to be one of that rare breed of men who possess all the fine qualities that are so elusive. He had compassion, understanding, uncommon common sense, the ability to assess a situation and make a quick decision. Instead of making a bad situation worse he solved it instantly by cutting through a lot of red tape. He had started out with the navy's tradition of "looking out for its own", that's true, and fortunately for me he had been in a position with enough authority to do what he did.

Whenever I think of this chief and that night it always strengthens my belief that life is one very haphazard journey for most of us. The course of this journey is often changed by just when and where one crosses paths with many strangers, no matter how brief the encounter. As one simple example, think of how a chance remark or a rude morning greeting can effectively sour one's whole day.

Every once in awhile over the intervening years I've seen Harry James on TV, still blowing his trumpet. He must have had many strange things happen on his thousands of band engagements but I'll bet he remembers this incident on a San Diego bandstand in mid August of 1941.

About a week later, after an uneventful cruise up the Pacific coast, the USS Lexington steamed eastward into the Strait of Juan De Fuca. Seattle and Bremerton, WA. were less than 150 miles away. Between Tatoosh Island and the jewel like San Juan Islands the ship's loud speakers blared, "Now hear this...All hands...Make preparations to launch aircraft." Part of our air group was aboard and these planes took off to disperse to nearby U.S. Naval Air Stations while the ship was in the navy yard. Some of the planes flew to NAS Whidbey Island, others to NAS Sand Point, Seattle.

The view was breathtaking as the carrier approached the Seattle-Bremerton area. The rugged mountains of the Olympic Peninsula in all their grandeur were on our starboard while the magnificent Cascades stretched to the horizons on our port. Everything looked so green and clean.

Seattle, a bustling city in its beautiful Puget Sound setting had certainly changed dramatically from the way my Dad described it as looking when he passed through in '98 on his way to the Klondike gold fields. Arriving like this by ship at the gateway to Alaska gave me the

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feeling that I was somehow coming home. I wished with all my heart that my father could be standing beside me.

We dropped the "hook", anchored out overnight, and the next morning many tugs nudged us up to our berth at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. I had the watch the first day. The following day I received orders to report by "first available transportation" to Patrol Wing Four, (PatWing 4), U.S. Naval Air Station, Sand Point, Seattle, WA. for duty. It was the end of August 1941.



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U.S. Naval Air Station, Sand Point, Seattle, WA.
September 1941-February 1942

NAS Sand Point was a beautiful base in 1941. It was located on a peninsula on the northwest side of lovely Lake Washington. One could tell at a glance that the base was well established for the brick and wooden buildings had a comfortable, well kept look. Trimmed lawns bordered by tasteful landscaping separated the various buildings. The base resembled a small college campus rather than a military post and fit in nicely with the sparkling waters of the lake in front and the fir covered hills behind.

The large, brick, operations building was located just inside the main gate. This structure's first deck contained both the NAS and Patrol Wing Four staff offices, personnel offices, conference rooms, and storerooms. Operations and communications were on the second level. A large, well equipped and staffed weather office occupied the entire top or third deck.

The heavily glassed, enclosed weather office space was smaller than either of the two levels below but two heavy steel doors on each side led to a flat, graveled roof area. A knee-high, cement parapet extended around the outer perimeter of this roof area. From this eagle's nest we could often see the magnificent, snow-capped Olympic Mountains.

Although the base sprawled over the entire peninsula it was well planned and laid out. Numerous side streets led to Bachelor Officer's Quarters(BOQ), housing for both Married Officers(MOQ) and Enlisted Men(MEMQ), regular barracks, mess halls, theater, gymnasium, recreation hall, ship's service, barber's shop, library, etc..

The main road leading from the gate sloped slightly downhill toward the lake shore and to the hangars, machine shops, related buildings, and the

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seaplane ramp. Extending from shore to shore across the peninsula was a north/south cement runway that parallel the long axis of the lake.

Seattle Transit bus service stopped at the main gate. It was only a short ride to the University of Washington campus and the University District. This area swarmed with more pretty girls than I'd ever seen concentrated in one place. Downtown Seattle and its many attractions were only a half hour away. At first, it seemed an ideal place for duty.

I discovered that Patrol Wing Four and NAS Sand Point were not necessarily synonymous. NAS Sand Point was a large base but PatWing 4 was only a small, mobile part of it. The Wing used some of the air station facilities, our Wing Headquarters was located there, and it was the peacetime, home base of PatWing 4.

Our assigned patrol area responsibility extended from the Columbia River to Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, and the Bering Sea. The Wing's patrol planes often operated from other naval air stations throughout this realm or with one or more of the small seaplane tenders attached to the Wing when no other facilities were available. These patrol planes, seaplane tenders, personnel, including the weathermen, came and went as patrol wing duties directed. Whenever the Wing weathermen returned to NAS Sand Point, no matter how briefly, they were placed on a watch section to help the NAS weathermen carry out office routine.

In the late summer of 1941, PatWing 4, under the command of Captain Gordon E. Rowe, USN, was composed of only two PBY "Catalina" squadrons: VP-41 and VP-42.* Lieutenant Commander Paul R. Foley, USN was the skipper of VP-41. VP-42's skipper was Lieutenant Commander Norman L. Garton, USN. Each squadron had six PBY's. Most of these were type PBY-5's which were strictly flying boats. A few were the new amphibious PBY-5A's equipped with retractable, tricycle landing gear.

In addition, PatWing 4 had three, small seaplane tenders assigned to it. The USS Williamson and USS Gillis had been converted from old WWI, four stack destroyers. The recently launched USS Casco Bay had

* V denoted heavier-than-air; P stood for patrol.

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been built from keel up as a seaplanetender. Although she displaced only 1695 tons the Casco could handle two to three times the number of PBY's as the Williamson or Gillis with considerably more ease and greater comfort for the ship's crew and flight crews.

When I arrived at NAS Sand Point there were many weather personnel on duty with the naval air station but only three on hand attached to PatWing 4. One of these would be my 'boss' for the next twenty-six months. Lieutenant John F. Tatom, USN was not only the senior Wing Aerological Officer but the only weather officer we would have in the patrol wing during the following fifteen months.

* V denoted heavier-than-air. P stood for patrol.

In addition to his weather duties as Staff Aerologist, Lt. Tatom, at that time, was also the Wing Personnel Officer. He had a desk in the weather office and a small office on the ground floor of the operations building.

The other two Wing weathermen present were Robert R. "Cisco" Calderon, S1c, USN, a classmate from Primary Aerographer's School at Lakehurst, and Lester "Porky" Roberts, Jr., also a qualified S1c, USN striker.

Patrol Wing 4 had three other weathermen but they were on detached, temporary duty in Alaskan/Aleutian waters. Charles C. "Williwaw" Herold, AerM1c, USN, our senior petty officer, and Dominick Zizzi, AerM3c, USN were both on the USS Williamson. Since July 1941, this seaplane tender had been operating between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor, Alaska with six PBY's of VP-42. Wesley V. "Muscles" Strong, AerM3c, USN was temporarily aboard the USS Gillis which was operating in the Southeastern Alaska in the vicinity of Sitka. The Gillis had departed Seattle recently with Strong after returning from the Kodiak/Dutch Harbor area where she'd spent July and August working with the Williamson and part of our air group.

The USS Casco Bay (AVP-12) was still undergoing pre-acceptance trials in Puget Sound waters. George Martin, AerM2c, USN was ship's company aerographer on Casco. Later, in early 1942, J.F. "Killer" Maurer, S1c, USN striker would also be sent to the Casco as ship's company. As such, these two were not considered Wing aerographers.

This classification business of whether an

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aerographer's mate was attached to a NAS, Patrol Wing, or ship was a fine line with us for we all performed the same basic duties and often worked out of the same office. One could also be suddenly switched from one command to another. "Killer" Maurer, for example, became a PatWing 4 aerographer's mate overnight less than a year later after the Casco was torpedoed in the Aleutians. The reverse happened to several others who were either transferred from the Wing to ship's company or from the Wing to a Naval Air Facility(NAF).

The NAS Sand Point, Seattle weather personnel were under command of Lieutenant Commander Legg, USN, a fine, low-key officer. Commander Legg had relieved LtCmdr. Paul R. Drouilhet in mid 1941. Several watch standing junior officers were under Legg.

Ram-rod of the outfit was senior petty officer and office chief, T.J. Bliss, CAerM,USN. No youngster who ever had the traumatic experience of working under T.J. Bliss would find fault with my usage of the word, tyrant, to describe him.

Leading petty officers in the NAS weather office were: Boyd A."Bing"Omang, AerM1c, USN; Joseph A."Jake"Leahy, AerM1c,USN; Raymond Berry, AerM2c,USN; James L. Turner,AerM2c,USN; Forrest E. Medaris,AerM3c,USN; Walter M. "Whimpy" Winfrey, AerM3c,USN, and Frank Pogar,AerM3c,USN. Within a month or so of my arrival Berry made AerM1c while Winfrey and Medaris made AerM2c.

NAS seamen strikers included John K."two-bar"Fogg; Joseph Zaffino, and Robert Denton. Fogg had been in primary school with Calderon and me. Zaffino, a savvy, hash marked seaman striker, was awaiting assignment to primary school, a prerequisite to his making third class petty officer.

Many aerographers reported for duty at Sand Point or passed through between September 1941 and the time I left for the Aleutians at the end of February 1942. One man who always made a watch more enjoyable was Chief John Kaczmarski. Ski was simply fun to be around. He made warrant officer while at Sand Point.

Chief Max White checked in with orders to PatWing 4 and became our leading petty officer. Aerographer's mates first class who arrived during the latter part of this period were: John E. Lynch, Edward S."Duck"Hudson, William C."Professor"House, Emil V. Beer, and John Hartman. Hartman made chief while he was at Sand Point.

Hudson, Lynch, and House arrived to join Omang as

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the leaders of four Aerological Expeditionary Units to be placed on four Aleutian Islands.

Seven ensigns also showed up. Six had just completed a short meteorological course at U.C.L.A.. These men were Max C. Jack, Max W. Mull, Lester P. Mallory, William J. Douglas, Jr., John G. "Mac" McQuarrie, and Burton W. "Smokey" Lindley. The seventh ensign, Basil Frank, arrived about the same time. Frank had not gone through school with the other six and I'm not certain where he received his weather training. They were all ticketed for Alaskan/Aleutian duty but stopped off at Sand Point for practical weather map analysis and forecasting instruction.

Another who arrived over this period of several months was John Howard Curtis, a reservist. Curtis came into the navy as an AerM3c having worked for the U.S. Weather Bureau in Iowa. A huge, belly-laughing, garrulous, back-slapping, ruddy-cheeked man with glasses, Curtis was an inveterate practical joker and agitator. Because of his expertise in teletype procedure Curtis quickly made points with T.J. Bliss. These points were sorely needed by Curtis to offset the wrath his antics often brought.

Our PatWing 4 weather roster increased by two in November 1941 with the arrival of qualified seamen strikers Elzie B. Carey and Richard W. Carter. Other seamen striker arrivals included Ralph G. "Blue Baron" Rayburn, Jesse H. Vowell, Charles S. Patterson, Claude F. Giles, Walter Zamorski, and Sandor Podmanski, all slated for duty at Kodiak. AerM2c Richard D. Ackerman also passed through on his way to Kodiak.

Early in 1942 our Wing roster increased again with the addition of AerM3c Donald N. Livingston, and S1c strikers Emmett L. Smith and Glenn E. "Swede" Olson. At the same time, William H. Stewart, Walter W. Babic, T.O. "Rebel" Hollihand, and R.E. "Preacher" Vernon were S1c strikers who reported from primary school for duty at NAS Sand Point.

My first exposure to T.J. Bliss took place the day I left the Lexington and reported for duty with PatWing 4. From the first moment we got off on the wrong foot. This personality clash became violent in time.

When I handed Bliss my orders his only welcome was, "Jesus, another one." Not having the faintest idea what he meant by this remark, my reaction was equally negative. I thought, "Oh boy! Another one of those creeps." This time might be worst of all because

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I didn't even like this guy's looks.

Bliss was short, fat, bald-headed and he had very pale, steely, blue eyes that pierced right into one's soul. T.J's nose was sharp and his lips very thin. Even when Bliss was calm, which was seldom, he spoke in short, clipped sentences. The thin lips barely moved: the words came from behind clenched teeth.

Chief Bliss turned me over to my new boss, Lt. Tatom, along with my orders and records. Tatom was sitting at his weather office desk and Bliss said, "Here's a new man for you, Lt.Tatom. Unless you have special plans for him I'll put him on watch."

"That will be fine for now," replied Tatom in a deep pitched, slow Alabama drawl.

A graduate of the U.S.Naval Academy, Lt. Tatom had been a line officer for several years before he decided to get into naval aerology. He had received his degree in meteorology at California Institute of Technology. Tatom looked fit. He was somewhere in his mid thirties, about five ten and 180 pounds, brown hair and eyes, ruddy complexion, and a lantern jaw. He put on black, horn-rims to scan my orders and records.

After my brief meeting with Lt.Tatom, Bliss gave me curt directions to the weather barracks several blocks away. His instructions were to get squared away with a bunk, locker, unpack my gear, then report back to him for watch assignment.

When I returned to the office Bliss was conversing with a junior officer. I saw Fogg and another man working up a balloon sounding at the large plotting board and walked over to say hello. Fogg and I shook hands, happy to see each other again. He introduced me to Lester Roberts,Jr. who welcomed me into the Patrol Wing. The three of us were shooting the breeze when Bliss strode up.

"My simple orders were for you to report to me," said Bliss,"not to bother these two men who have work to do. You're on the mid-watch and I don't want you cluttering up the office unless you're on watch or I send for you."

Bliss and I exchanged long, hard looks. Then I turned to Fogg and Roberts and said, "I'll see you guys later."

"I don't think I'd like to meet your friend in a dark alley right now," Roberts said to Fogg after I'd left the office.

That evening in the barracks I asked Fogg,"What

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the hell is it with this Bliss character?"

"I don't know," replied Fogg, "whether or not you have ever prayed to God but today you met him."

I hadn't understood Bliss's first greeting and had taken it personally. I learned that his, "Jesus, another one," referred to his general dislike for Wing aerographers even though he had until recently been one himself. It was nothing personal, except perhaps in my case by now, but because of Wing aerographer's mates unpredictable availability. Part of Bliss's responsibility as office chief was to provide each watch with qualified people to perform all of the multitudinous duties involved. Just about the time he was satisfied with the balance he had achieved, one or more Wing watch standers would, without warning, be detached on temporary duty. In this respect, Bliss could not depend on us. We were constantly dropping in and out of HIS office and he considered Wing aerographers to be little more than gypsies.

Years later when I made chief, I found myself in Bliss's shoes and was fully able to understand this disruptive problem. However, at NAS Sand Point in 1941, we certainly couldn't do anything about it.

Because we had to live with Bliss in the office and perform up to his high standards of excellence, he was also a very large problem for us. We youngsters hadn't majored in psychology but we spent a lot of time trying to figure out what made T.J. Bliss tick.

Bliss invariably arrived at the office madder than hell about something. This helped set the tone for the whole day watch. I learned the reason for this a quarter of a century later. Every morning Bliss and his wife played three games of cribbage over coffee. She always beat him. That it irked him was unfortunate for us.

Several other of T.J.'s traits were topics of conversation. Whenever he got mad, the scarlet color would start at his collar and slowly spread upward in a well defined, advancing line until it had completely enveloped his face and bald head. This process held a fascination that bordered on a hypnotic effect. He never spoke until the mercury had reached the top of the thermometer. There was no real hurry even then, for by that time, he couldn't utter a word. One had better stand by, though, for the explosion that was forthcoming. When Bliss finally felt that he'd regained enough composure so that he could trust himself to speak, the first words came out almost

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unintelligibly. I can't recall ever meeting anyone so tightly wound. Even under normal circumstances his thin lips twitched and his hands shook noticeably whenever he lit a cigarette or poured a cup of coffee.

About a month after my arrival, a small incident occurred between Lt. Tatom and me. To relate this may provide some insight and a small measure of understanding of that which would follow in the years ahead.

Lt. Tatom was held in awe by the junior officers as well as the enlisted personnel. He had an "air" about him. He commanded respect beyond the fact that he was a graduate of the naval academy. He most always spoke in slow, measured, carefully thought out sentences in his rather deep, Alabama drawl. His comments were concise. One listened. Tatom also had a gruff, brusque manner and remained aloof from everyone in the office. He never said, "Good morning" first, and to a cheery greeting he might return a, "'morning." Up to the time of the following incident he hadn't spoken a dozen words to me, these all having been in the line of duty.

One phase of weather work came naturally to me, the entering of signals on the weather map. Speed was important but not as essential as legibility. I was lucky in that I could print clearly. The map analyzers appreciated this and I took pride in this work.

I'd completed the entering and Tatom had been studying the map and had sketched in a few light isobars. A late batch of about a dozen signals came in and Tatom told me to go ahead and enter them. I had almost completed this work while Tatom had been looking over my shoulder to get an idea of the significance of this latest data.

"I understand you've done some boxing."

Surprised and delighted, I answered, "Yes, sir, a little but how do you know that?"

"A pilot from the Lexington was in here the other day and thought he recognized you. There is a smoker coming up in two weeks. Are you going to enter it?"

"No, sir," I replied, "I haven't trained much in several months and I'm not in shape."

His next remark almost floored me for he said, "I understand. I was on the boxing team at the academy."

"Really?" I chirped, warmed up to this surprising conversation.

Before I could add a thing, even his tone of

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voice changed and he said curtly, "Finish the map." He might as well have added, "That's enough of this buddy-buddy crap," for that is exactly what was implied. It appeared that his guard had come down for a split second.

Life was not all work under the watchful eye of Lt. Tatom and the heavy thumb of T.J.Bliss. During off duty hours the aerographers pitched many great liberties together. We also became close friends with some of the aviation machinist's mates and aviation radiomen of Patrol Wing 4's flight crews. These men often joined us on our forays into the University District and downtown Seattle.

Two of the aircrewmembers that made many liberties with the aerographers were Dave Bird from Mount Clemans, MI. and Jack Ramsey who was from Carmel, CA. Both men made aviation radioman third class (AVRM3c) that fall of 1941. Bird, Ramsey, and I discovered that we shared three mutual interests, namely, girls, drinking, and music in that order. Come to think of it, almost everyone I knew, at that time, was a good friend with mutual interests.

Dave Bird was a fine bass fiddle player while Jack Ramsey was an accomplished drummer. I could hum a little. We three frequented the ballroom of a large hotel that stood on the corner of downtown Seattle's 7th avenue and Seneca street. A local swing band held forth nightly and the spacious dance floor was always packed. Jitter-bugging was sweeping the country and most of the sets featured it.

We walked into the Seneca ballroom one evening and the joint was jumping to the band's rendition of Tuxedo Junction. This was followed by In The Mood, and Boogie-Woogie. Some of the jitter-bugging couples were professional in talent and the other dancers gave them room to perform directly in front of the bandstand.

When such a set ended, the musicians caught their breaths as they played the introduction to a dreamy tune and the male vocalist stepped to the microphone. Pulses quickened, if anything, as the dancers held each other close while the vocalist sang....."Skylark, have you seen a valley green with spring where my heart can go a journeying over the shadows and the rain to a blossom covered lane?....."

At the brief intermission, Dave and Jack went up on the bandstand and shook hands with the musicians. Dave was talented enough to regularly spell the base

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fiddle thumper and would lose himself in the pure joy of playing with a band again. On several occasions Jack Ramsey sat in on the drums for a short set. Nobody asked me to hum.

Ramsey was also a very good jitter-bugger and before long he would find himself a girl in the crowd and spend hours dancing. I'd never learned to dance so I mostly stood around off to one side of the bandstand and watched and listened. With urging from Dave or Jack, I'd occasionally muster enough courage to ask a girl to dance but only if the dance floor were jammed. I was foolish enough to think that under such conditions I could fake it. The girls who were victimized quickly found out but most didn't seem to mind. They were enjoying themselves surrounded by happy, young people, and good music. Many offered, "Here, just relax. Listen to the beat, one-two-left foot..." By strange coincidence, a girl was thus instructing me one night while the vocalist was singing,..."Six lessons from Madam Lazonga and you'll discover your hips and your knees. Conchita gives you lesson one, Rosita gives you lesson two but Madam gives you all the rest and her lessons are the best...." "One, two, slide," the girl with me said, "That's fine..now you're getting it."

When the college football season got underway that fall some of us took in a few University of Washington games. For each "Husky" home game a large block of end zone tickets at reduced prices were made available for servicemen on a first come, first served basis.

Leaves had begun to turn autumn hues of yellow, gold, and red. Many of the days were crisp and sunny under bright blue skies offset by fleecy white cumulus clouds. On one such Saturday afternoon we sat shivering in the stands from a cold wind that blew in off Lake Washington as we watched Minnesota's "Golden Gophers" demolish the Huskies with a display of that era's power football at its finest.

In lengthening shadows we filed out of the stadium with the jam packed thousands. Over someone's portable radio a female vocalist was singing, "...You're the ghost of a romance in June, going astray, fading to soon...that's why I say..farewell, to you Indian Summer..."

J.K.Fogg bought a 1929 Chevrolet rumble seat coupe early that fall of 1941. Bliss had been juggling personnel around on the watch sections and I

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ended up on the section with Fogg and Roberts. With J.K.'s old clunker, we three discovered parts of the great Pacific Northwest other than our regular sailor haunts. These adventurous excursions usually began by corralling liberty bound sailors to give us a push. The battery was always dead. Whenever we parked the coupe while on liberty we always tried to find a place on a hill.

On one memorable weekend "forty-eight", J.K., Roberts, and I chugged all the way up to Vancouver, B.C.. On the return trip we spent some time in New Westminster and took a side trip to the world famous Capilano swinging bridge.

Fogg's 1929 coupe was so narrow that it would barely seat the driver and one passenger up front. Fogg always drove so the other two men had to flip a coin to see who got stuck with the rumble seat. Puget Sound in the fall/winter season is not recommended for rumble seats.

One cold, rainy night in late September 1941, Fogg, Jack Ramsey, and I decided to explore the city of Tacoma, WA. I had called heads instead of tails and by the time we rolled into town about 2130 hours I was soaking wet and almost frozen.

We had just parked and were heading for a restaurant to get something hot inside of us when three young ladies all bundled up in rain coats, hats, and boots came walking toward us. They were chatting happily as they came hurrying up the hill. Fogg and Ramsey struck up a conversation with the three girls as they drew abreast. Fogg offered them a ride to wherever they were going.

"All of us," said one of the girls pointing at the tiny coupe, "in that little car? You must be crazy."

With chattering teeth I was in no mood for small talk or romance for that matter and had stepped into the dark shadows of a store front entrance to get out of the biting wind.

The three girls were student nurses in their first month of three year's training at Tacoma General Hospital. They would not be "capped" until the end of a six month probationary period. As "probies" they had a 10:00 p.m. week night curfew. On weekends the Cinderellas could stay out until midnight.

The three student nurses offered to allow the sailors to escort them home on foot. They had not relished the thought of cutting through Wright's Park

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at night alone. One of the nurses took my arm and we all began the long, uphill walk to the student nurses quarters across the street from the hospital.

When we arrived, the girls invited us in for the few moments remaining until curfew. After hanging up our wet coats and hats we were ushered into a warm, well lit, large reception room. Here other student nurses and their dates were either dancing to the music from a jukebox, sitting on sofas, or standing in small groups. An older nurse, a Mrs. Anderson, was both house mother and chaperone.

Once inside this lighted room I discovered to my surprise and delight that the student nurse who'd pulled me out of the doorway shadows was a beautiful young lady. Her name was Jean Roesli and she was a Swiss miss who had grown up on a Puyallup Valley dairy farm some ten miles southeast of Tacoma. She had blond hair, beautiful hazel-green eyes, a lovely, well proportioned body with all the alluring curves in just the right places, and from what I could see, a great pair of legs. In addition to being intelligent she fairly radiated a happy, healthy, charming warmth. I was captivated. That night I fell in love with the girl who would one day become my wife.

All too soon, the jukebox was turned off. Mrs Anderson announced that ten o'clock had arrived and it was time for the guests to say goodnight. As I put on my wet pea coat in the crowded hallway Jean and I exchanged a hurried mutual interest to see each other again. I told her that my chief frowned mightily on personal phone calls to his weather office. She gave me the number of the nurse's home and I promised to call her. We realized in those few moments that it would be difficult to see each other. The student nurses went to classes during the day and also worked split shifts on the hospital floors on many evenings. I was working eight hour shifts at all hours of the day and night.

All liberties, no matter how eventful always ended. It was tough to return to the madhouse of activity at the Sand Point weather office and the semi-permanent ill temper of T.J.Bliss.

Much of the pressure packed work connected with the weather office could be laid directly at the feet of the large number of teletype machines. Bell Telephone and/or Western Union owned, serviced, and repaired the machines. All that we were required to do in the way of maintenance was change ribbons and

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stuff in new rolls of paper whenever the hungry monsters needed these items.

The teletypes hammered and chattered incessantly twenty-four hours a day. We had enough of them so they were never all silent at the same time. Just when it appeared certain that one had died of over-exertion, it would suddenly spring back to life and spew forth one of its multitudinous weather schedules.

Our office was hooked into the U.S. Weather Bureau circuits and we were required to transmit all of our observations in their proper sequence on each specific schedule. To make matters more complex, we didn't follow the same station in each schedule.

The transmitting was done by cutting a perforated teletype tape for each observation, checking the tape on a spare machine for accuracy, then placing the tape in the transmitter head of the proper machine. When it was our turn, someone flipped the switch and our report was fed into the circuit.

Our teletypes were considered to be mechanical monsters by the watch standers. It was a classic struggle of man versus machine. A great amount of time on each watch was spent separating and neatly ripping off the multitude of mixed data coming in. These slips of yellow paper then had to be placed on the proper clipboards for evaluation and use. We were often shorthanded on watch and had many other duties to perform. At busy times the machines could not be tended so the paper would steadily roll out until it lay folded upon itself on the deck. When other work was caught up, most of the watch tackled this mountain of paperwork and eventually pulled even with the machines.

Occasionally, a watch would fail to transmit an observation on schedule. There were dozens of reasons why this could occur but no excuses. Whenever this happened it increased our work load. A man would have to sit at the machine, his hand on the transmitting switch, and wait for the proper lull for insertion of late reports.

By far the worst result of a foul-up of this nature was that T.J. Bliss checked all clip boards every morning. Bad things happened to the watch and man responsible. Mistakes, no matter how minor, reflected on the efficiency of Bliss's office and on him personally. If the offense happened on a night watch, Bliss had the culprit (and sometimes the entire

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watch section) roused from the sack and summoned to the office for an explanation. Extra duty always followed.

About the first of October 1941 a directive arrived from the Bureau of Aerology in Washington, D.C. ordering the organization of four, ten man, aerological expeditionary units which were to be placed on the four isolated Aleutian Islands of Attu, Kiska, Kanaga, and Atka. The units would be under the jurisdiction of Patrol Wing Four. Each unit would be under the command of an aerographer's mate first class. Each unit would be made up of two other aerographers plus radiomen, cooks, and a pharmacist's mate of first class rating or above.

War clouds were gathering and the Word was that we would eventually have to fight Japan. The four navy weather units on isolated outposts would be in extremely vulnerable positions in the event of war. Because of this suicidal aspect all members would be volunteers. I wanted so badly to get away from T.J.Bliss that I volunteered for this duty and was accepted.

Petty officers Boyd Omang, James Turner, Forrest Medaris, Walter Winfrey, and Howard Curtis from the NAS Sand Point office also volunteered and were accepted. Bliss almost had apoplexy. Other volunteers arrived later from various bases and fleet units.

In the early planning stages the unit members would sit in conference during off watch hours. We poured through the General Supply Account Catalogue, our "Wish Book". This thick volume was the U.S.Navy's version of the Sears Roebuck catalogue. The Bureau had authorized us to select from the wish book anything within reason that we deemed necessary for our work, comfort, and survival. Each unit was to be self-sufficient for periods up to six months.

Many enjoyable hours were spent at this sport, a fun part of the deadly serious venture. Our individual lists of items chosen for requisition varied and the lists, which grew like mushrooms each day, soon reached gigantic proportions. Lists were compared, duplication eliminated, and some condensation occurred toward finalization. Even so, we over-ordered to compensate for deletions along the chain of command by budget minded desk ponderers. Rather surprisingly, the lists when finally submitted were approved with few deletions, fewer cuts in

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amounts, and only a few minor changes. It was suspected that the navy was granting last requests to condemned men.

The prospect of going off on an adventure on isolated duty appealed to me. In addition to Bliss, the formal dress, spit and polish inspections, close supervision in a large office, and the regimentation associated with a large naval base would be left far behind. Unit members were trying to decide whether or not to let their whiskers grow in the Aleutians. Some wondered if they were capable of growing a beard.

The tension between T.J. and me had continued to mount and reached a peak at this time. From the very outset, Bliss rode herd on me at seemingly every opportunity. I had never taken so much guff from anybody and was forced to take an enormous amount from someone I hated. I'd learned early in boot camp to keep my violent temper under control, "to keep my nose clean" as the old chief had cautioned, but it took a super-human effort.

Because I refused to knuckle under meekly, Bliss's fury mounted and much extra duty was heaped on Heapo which made the situation worse. I could tell that Bliss was also having a difficult time controlling his temper. I had to control mine. His restraint must have stemmed from a combination of long years of strict navy discipline and the fact that he possessed much more intelligence and character than I gave him credit for. He therefore exercised a lot more patience and tolerance than I realized at the time.

The officers thought a lot of Bliss and from the navy's standpoint he was excellent. He ran a very taut ship. Bliss expected and demanded that not only direct orders but even suggestions be carried out immediately. Instead of jumping to an order like a frightened rabbit, I readily admit that I sullenly dragged my feet. This attitude infuriated Bliss but it was the only feeble defense I had. To me, he was Captain Bligh not Bliss. To him I was the worst of the mutineers. Something had to happen and as is usually the case it came to a head over a small matter.

There was to be an office inspection the following day. As usual, Bliss had the night shift do a lot of the spit and polish work as time permitted. The stand-by dungaree watch would finish in the morning.

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When I reported with this detail, Bliss put me to work completely re-doing the two flights of steps and middle landing that led from our top deck to operations and communications below. This was unnecessary as it had been done by the night shift and required only a rebuffing at the last minute. Bliss readily admitted to me later at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians that he'd given me this task because he knew I'd have a helluva time doing it properly from scratch.

To accomplish the work order I had to start by sweeping, then scrubbing each square inch with hot soapy water, rinse, swab dry, apply another coat of wax, wait for it to dry, then hand polish to a blinding shine. This had to be done during the heavy flow of daytime traffic on the stairs. Aerographers were down and up the steps, radiomen, pilots, and operations personnel all traversed the stairs with increasing frequency.

The worst part was the scrubbing because the hurrying people would first track soapy water from the steps onto our waxed and polished office deck. On their return these same people tracked soapy water onto areas below that were already dry.

Bliss was waiting for this first mess on our office deck and came over to me immediately.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he demanded.

When I told him, what he sure as hell already knew, that it wasn't my fault he said he was sick of my feeble excuses and ordered me to clean up the mess. This further delayed my work. In a great effort to keep the peace I did this several more times without being told.

With the end in sight, it finally happened. The wax was dry and I'd hand buffed the top three steps. Scurrying stair runners could no longer do any harm. I'd paused for a moment to contemplate all that I'd accomplished under adverse conditions. I was looking down below during this short break when I became conscious of someone's presence. When I turned around from my sitting position on the third step, I saw the bottom of navy blue trousers and a pair of black shoes that were at the same level as my eyes.

"Carrigan," said Bliss's sarcastic voice from above, "you just don't like to work, do you? You prefer to sit on your ass, don't you?"

"You're a god damned liar," I replied and waited.

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I didn't have to look up to know that his face was turning beet red. I wondered what he would do. Truly I didn't give a damn. I'd had it. I was still looking at his shoes when his right foot twitched and he moved it around nervously. The thought struck me that he was going to kick me in the head.

"If you kick me," I said starting to rise, "I'll kill you."

There was a very short pause and then he literally screamed, "You son of a bitch, that does it. You're on report!"

Tatom, who'd just made Lieutenant Commander, was analyzing the map and at the outburst he came hurrying over and tried to calm Bliss down. Bliss was purple with rage, sputtering and almost jumping up and down. I thought he was going to have a stroke. Tatom herded both of us out the door to the roof area. The hydraulic cylinder slammed the heavy steel door shut behind us.

"What the hell's going on?" Tatom asked Bliss.

"Sir," Bliss fumed, "I'm putting this man on report for disobedience, incompetence, insolence, insubordination, disrespect, and threatening to kill a senior petty officer." I had the feeling that he was desperately trying to think of more charges.

Tatom surveyed us both for a moment with a searing look that showed both extreme displeasure and disgust. He lit a cigarette and after a long drag turned to me.

"Carrigan, are these accurate charges?"

Since they sure as hell were pretty close, I shrugged my shoulders and mumbled, "I guess so."

"You stand at attention," he ordered icily, "and answer 'Yes, sir! or, No, sir!'"

I snapped to attention and said, "Yes, Sir!" I almost saluted but remembered at the last second that I didn't have a hat on.

Tatom told me to go back in the office. I did so immediately. Except for the chattering of some teletype machines the office was very still and all eyes were turned toward the door. I moved away and just stood there in numbness. I knew that this time it was Bad Trouble. I heard none of the conversation between Tatom and Bliss.

An eternity passed. Bliss came in, still very red-faced and with a look that would kill, he jerked his thumb toward the roof and Tatom. Tatom asked me my version of the incident. When I'd finished he

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asked me several questions which I answered as honestly as I could. Bliss was summoned and we both stood at ramrod attention in front of Tatom. I had no idea what was going to happen to me. Tatom looked at each of us in turn for some time then turned to Bliss.

"I'm going to restrict Carrigan to the base for two weeks and take away all his privileges. He will continue to stand his regular watches and perform any extra duties that you require." After a short pause, he added, "That will be all. You are both dismissed."

A second passed. I didn't know if I should say, 'Thank you, sir,' and I had no idea who was supposed to leave first. The ridiculous vision struck me of someone at court, bowing and scraping as he backed away from the king's throne. Is it extreme nervousness or imbecility that makes one want to giggle at times like this?

I was closest to the door so I left first. It appeared that I'd gotten off almost scot-free. I had no idea why but was overjoyed at my Irish luck. Missing two weeks of liberty, and movies, gym, and such at the base would not be difficult.

To add insult to Bliss's injury, three days later Tatom transferred me temporarily to our new seaplane tender Casco. The ship was still undergoing trials in Puget Sound waters. This was almost too good to be true. For some strange reason, Tatom had turned into a real friend. At least he'd saved my neck and deftly lifted my carcass off a very sharp meat hook. Naively, I thought his actions might have some vague connection with the chat we'd had about boxing. Ignorantly, I wondered if this had created a fine thread of camaraderie that somehow bridged the huge gap between us.

Fifteen months later, Bliss and I had the opportunity to amicably discuss our blow-up at Seattle. Our frank talk took place at the navy weather office at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. Bliss, at the time, was the office chief there. I was an AerM2c passing through on my way back out to Adak. I'd been to the states on a short leave following almost a year of harrowing, advanced PatWing 4 duties in the Aleutians.

The replacement PBW that I was a passenger on from Kodiak to Adak got "weathered in" for three days at Dutch Harbor. After getting squared away with a sack in the transient barracks and making chow call the first day I went to the weather office. I'd seen

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Bliss at the Dutch Harbor office several times earlier the late summer of 1942 when I was flying in and out of Dutch Harbor in PBY's or coming and going on one or the other of our seaplane tenders. At these times our relations were very cold and we barely spoke.

When I walked into his office in early 1943 it was different, he seemed genuinely glad to see me. The upheaval of WWII was changing many things including a few attitudes. We caught up on all the latest news over many cups of jamoke. It was great to be on such good terms with him.

"You know, Carrigan," said Bliss, "in Seattle back in '41, I thought you were the rottenest punk kid I'd ever had the misfortune to run across in my entire naval career. What did you think of me?"

My reply did not cause Bliss to laugh but a twisted smile appeared on his face. At the time of our Seattle blow-up, Bliss said that he had even dared to argue briefly with Tatom during their private conversation on the roof. This, he said, was something he would never have dreamed of doing had he been thinking clearly.

"I was so furious at you," said Bliss, "that had it been in my power I would have had you shot instantly with no damned blindfold and no last cigarette."

"Why did I get off so easy?" I asked Bliss. "What happened with you and Tatom out on the roof behind that steel door?"

Tatom had turned the tables completely on Bliss by quietly pointing out that everybody in the office had heard Bliss call me a son of a bitch and there was a navy regulation that covered this. Furthermore, if Bliss had just required me to rebuff the steps, all that was necessary, especially under the foot traffic, the whole affair might have been avoided. Tatom's two observations had given Bliss pause for thought. He also realized from this conversation that I would probably get off too lightly. This thought infuriated Bliss to the point that he started to argue with Tatom but Tatom had cut him short. Bliss had had no choice other than silence.

"A couple of days later," said Bliss, "when he transferred you to the Casco I thought I'd go out of my goddamned mind."

Bliss and I discussed some of the possible reasons for Tatom's actions concerning this incident. Bliss thought that to Tatom I was not a real problem but just a slight pain in the butt. More importantly,

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he counted me as a "warm body." We were so short-handed that it was better to have almost any kind of a qualified Wing aerographer than none at all. It made absolutely no difference to Tatom whether the man was good, poor, indifferent, or in my case, a little rebellious. Time and experience would prove great levelers.

"Hell, Paul," said Bliss, "it was obvious even then that you were a good aerographer's mate. It was just you're crappy attitude toward authority. Tatom could not condone this but I think he personally admired your guts."

Tatom must have reasoned that it would be senseless, under the circumstances, to have a valued, trained aerographer end up in the brig or a naval prison for striking a senior petty officer.

"This," I said, "would have been a distinct possibility, TJ, had I remained under you at the time."

Bliss believed that it was the main reason Tatom sent me temporarily to the Casco.

"If he hadn't," admitted Bliss, "I would have had you on extra duty every goddamned minute you weren't on regular watch."

Perhaps Tatom realized that he had authorized Bliss to do so.

Tatom's simple solution worked out fine for everybody, save perhaps Bliss. It kept Bliss and me apart, temporarily got me out of everyone's hair, and seemed to be right down my rebellious alley. Tatom must have sensed that I would prefer or be better suited for isolated duty rather than a large office. It also filled Tatom's immediate needs to further train me in seaplane tender/patrol plane operations, our primary PatWing 4 function.

Having graduated from the naval academy, Tatom had studied history. With a knowledge of current world events and "brass talk" thrown in, he must have know that war with Japan was inevitable and close at hand. Tatom knew where the patrol wing would operate and knew the vast problems we would face in the Aleutians.

The rebellious "Black Irishman" was just another teeny-weeny potato but a necessary ingredient that would have to be thrown into the stew pot that simmered on the back of the stove. Sending me off somewhere on my own became a habit. When we arrived in the Aleutians, and Tatom needed a man for some hairy, isolated assignment, it was easy for him to

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choose me. The pattern had already been established.

Several weeks before the Seattle trouble with Bliss that fall of 1941, all of the qualified and recommended seamen strikers, both NAS and PatWing 4 had been alerted to study for their forthcoming examinations for aerographer's mate third class. I was among this group and we'd all studied hard in our spare time. Then the trouble with Bliss happened and I went to the Casco.

After several weeks of conducting operations with the PBY's of LtCmdr. Foley's VP-41 near Whidbey Island and the Straits of Juan De Fuca the Casco came back through the Ballard locks and tied up at NAS Sand Point. Tatom transferred me back to the office.

All of the seamen strikers had passed the third class examination. The men from our patrol wing included Bob Calderon and Lester Roberts while from the NAS, J.K.Fogg and Bob Denton were sporting new "crows" on their sleeves.

The days passed but I didn't dare ask anyone when I might be given the opportunity to take the third class examination. I felt that history was repeating itself. I had fallen behind my Lakehurst classmates Fogg and Calderon.

A short time later a Bureau directive was received at Sand Point which stated that all of the four Aerological Aleutian Expedition Unit weathermen volunteers had to be third class petty officers or above in order to qualify. Because of the trouble with Bliss, my recommendation for promotion had been rescinded. My name was subsequently scratched from the Aleutian Expedition roster. In effect, my punishment was more severe than it had appeared on the surface.

Members of the four units were still revising their long "Wish Book" lists. They were struggling over the armament issue. Most agreed that each unit needed a .50 calibre machine gun. John Lynch kept insisting that he wouldn't go unless the navy issued his unit a 3" field artillery piece and lots of ammunition. The units had to settle for far less than these items of armament and the way things turned out it may have actually saved lives.

While I was on the Casco, Wesley V. "Muscles" Strong, AerM3c returned on the USS Gillis from Southeastern Alaska. Strong was about five feet eight inches tall, a wiry 135 pounds and although on the quiet side he carried a chip on his shoulder. His

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shock of curly blond hair was offset by a pair of blue eyes that twinkled mischievously. "Muscles" was somewhat of a loner, especially on liberty. He loved to drink and when he drank he loved to fight.

Strong would usually return from his whing-ding liberties cut, bruised, and disheveled. He always stopped off at the head and cleaned himself up before coming up to the weather office for a few late night cups of black coffee before hitting the sack. Strong never said much about his escapades but one had the feeling that he had worked off a lot of frustrations and would be content until next liberty. I liked Wes Strong.

"All you kids," Bing Omang told me one day, "will like Chuck Herold your senior Wing petty officer when you meet him."

I wondered. Omang had also been telling me that T.J.Bliss was okay, "Once you get to know and understand him."

Omang was perhaps the most well liked of all the senior petty officers at Sand Point in late 1941. He was tall, slender, brown haired, and his dark eyes were merry. Bing was a Swede from Grand Forks, SD and he possessed a great sense of humor. Omang's clever vocabulary was sprinkled with salty phrases and picturesque in the extreme. He always came to work looking neat in his form-fitting, tailor-made blues, "bright-eyed" and "bushy-tailed" as he put it. Omang was also well liked by the officers and was considered to be a very good "weather guesser". I couldn't understand how he could be so right about everything else and so wrong about Bliss.

Of course, Omang and Bliss had been friends for years and Omang was clearly the only one from which Bliss would tolerate any nonsense. Omang, for instance, might sidle up to Bliss, peer over T.J.'s shoulder and say, "Bliss, according to your handwriting you are practically sexless." Bliss would whirl around in his swivel chair, get red in the face, shoot an unprintable retort and then resume his writing.

When Charles Christopher Herold, AerM1c, USN finally returned from Alaska and walked into the NAS Sand Point weather office I figured that Omang, had indeed, made as bad a mistake about him as he had in assessing Bliss. All I saw was a red-faced, slightly round-shouldered, wiry guy of medium height. His light reddish brown hair was thinning. His blue eyes

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were set rather close together and a pair of glasses rested well down on his sharp nose. He walked with his chin jutting out. Herold was obviously another one of those "take charge" guys and he seemed pissed off at the whole wide world. We all soon found out that his anger was directed at LtCmdr. Tatom and the feeling between them was mutual.

It is not the purpose of this book to air any soiled aerological linen but we are talking about real people and nobody is perfect. In order for the reader to understand what transpired later it is necessary that one know something of what took place beforehand.

Herold was already an aerographer's mate first class in the fall of 1940 while I was vainly trying to avoid crime and punishment in northern New Jersey. Herold had enlisted in the navy in the early 1930's and had been a member of Primary Class #12 at Lakehurst, the "Hindenburg" class. Three and a half years later, on October 19, 1940, Herold graduated with a small select class of eleven other AerM1c's from the advanced weather school at Lakehurst. Upon graduating, Herold, Engwall A. Olsen, Warren L. Price, W.B. Cole, and Harry Cook received orders to five old WWI, four-stack destroyers that were being converted to AVD** class seaplane tenders. This work was being done at the navy yard in San Francisco. Herold's orders were to the USS Gillis. The conversion work would take seven months.

At the time, Captain Wilbur M. "Red" Lockhart, USN, of world wide repute and the top U.S. Navy meteorologist, was in the process of setting up the first Navy Weather Central in San Francisco. Lockhart had the five men transferred to his command at the downtown Federal Building.

In the same way Dr. Sverre Petterson of Norway was acknowledged to be the master of North Pacific weather analysis and forecasting, Captain Lockhart was considered the world's expert on North Pacific analysis and forecasting. Captain Lockhart took the five men awaiting their AVD's and started them on intensive studies of North Pacific weather analysis and forecasting. The daily lessons included hours of critiques and work shop type discussions. Captain Lockhart had the men keep detailed notebooks. At the

Atlantic?

**Aviation Destroyer. Technically, a plane-guard ship.

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end of seven month's study, Captain Lockhart and the men took the completed notes and condensed them into a comprehensive small text entitled, "North Pacific Weather Map Analysis and Forecasting- Thumb Rules." Lockhart gave each of his special students a copy of the text they'd helped put together.

Lockhart's personal instruction included single station analysis and forecasting, the most difficult type of all. The problems involved and the expertise needed to prepare an accurate forecast using only weather data at one's own station as a guide can be appreciated. Captain Lockhart helped pioneer and develop this concept. Great stress, quite naturally, is placed upon the data obtained from one's own upper air soundings.

The North Pacific was Captain Lockhart's "puddle" and C.C. Herold and four other aerographer's mates had the rare privilege of seven months intensive training under the master.

Herold was transferred back aboard the Gillis and she was commissioned and ordered to join Patrol Wing Four in Seattle. Herold moved his wife and two small children from San Francisco to the Sand Point area. Shortly after the ship was commissioned it was discovered that the only enlisted men on board who could type were Herold and Charlie Rice, a first class pharmacist's mate. Herold and Rice therefore were detailed to handle all of the typing normally done by yeomen and storekeepers. They also handled all of the ship's correspondence and records. In addition, Herold was designated mail clerk and guard mail petty officer.

Herold began having gum trouble and an old navy dentist told him to dissolve a teaspoon of Sodium Perborate in his mouth daily. The Gillis finished loading stores and moved to Mare Island to install gun tubes. There, a young navy dentist checked Herold's mouth and found it literally burned to shreds. Two days later he pulled sixteen of Herold's teeth, scraped the jawbones and sewed them up.

Next day, Herold made five mail trips. While returning to the ship about 1730 hours from the last trip, he began to stagger and wobble about then collapsed. The marine S.P.'s in the yard found him and packed him back to the ship on the mail sack. The ship's executive officer, a disgruntled aviator, told the marines to throw Herold in the brig as he was obviously drunk. The marines offered to take him to

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the base hospital as they thought he was sick. They compromised and put Herold in his bunk. Two days later the Gillis put to sea for two weeks of sea trials and passage to Seattle.

Herold had become quite sick and his gums were infected but there was nothing on the ship with which to treat him. When the Gillis arrived at Sand Point, Seattle late in May 1941, Herold got orders to report to Patrol Wing Four for duty. He reported to Lt. John F. Tatom.

There was no dental officer at Sand Point, so the medical officer sent Herold to the Naval Hospital at Bremerton as an outpatient. A dentist took out the stitches and after a week of daily visits had the severe infection under control. As soon as the soreness left, the dentist would take impressions for partial plates.

In large, purple letters on the front page of Herold's health record, the dentist stamped, Not To Be Transferred Outside The Continental U.S. Until Proper Dental Prothesis Are Completed. Herold turned his health record over to Lt. Tatom who was also the Wing Personnel Officer.

At 0730 the following morning when Herold reported for work at NAS Sand Point, Lt. Tatom told Herold, "Go home and pack enough clothes for three weeks. We're going to Alaska." Herold did as he was told. This was in mid June 1941.

Chief T.J. Bliss was attached to PatWing 4 at this time and he and Tatom went north on the USS Williamson, Herold on the Gillis. At the same time, LtCmdr. Norman Garton, skipper of VP-42, flew to Alaska with his six PBY's. The two seaplane tenders and six aircraft would conduct operations between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor. In addition to patrol duties and familiarization with the area's weather and terrain, this work included exploration of numerous bays to determine their suitability for seaplane operations in case of war. Surveys were also conducted to correlate visual and radar navigational fixes with indicated water depths, rocks and reefs on antiquated charts.

Once they reached Alaska, Bliss remained on the Williamson which was to operate in the vicinity of Kodiak. Tatom transferred himself to the Gillis which then steamed to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. Several weeks passed during which time, Lieutenant James S. "Red" Russell, USN joined VP-42 in Alaska

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preparatory to his taking over command of the squadron from LtCmdr. Garton. Russell was given a weather clearance by Tatom for a flight of several PBY's from Dutch Harbor to Kodiak.

After Russell and his PBY's took off, Herold had the audacity to politely question Tatom's forecast in which Tatom had dropped a cold front that had passed through Dutch Harbor the previous night. Tatom's opinion was that the front had dissipated. Herold disagreed and stated that both their own balloon sounding and Kodiak's indicated that the front was still active and lying across Russell's flight path in the vicinity of the Shumagin Islands. Tatom wanted to know what made Herold think he was such a damned expert. Herold told him that he had studied under Captain Lockhart. Tatom's face flushed but he said no more.

Lt. Russell returned with his PBY's some five hours later and told Tatom that he had encountered a strong cold front in the Shumagins. Russell's flight had not been able to get under the front or over it at 18,000 feet. This was the beginning of friction between Tatom and Herold.

A week later, the planes and the Gillis left the Dutch Harbor area and went to Kodiak to join the Williamson. James S. Russell was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and took over as skipper of VP-42. LtCmdr. Norman Garton was given command of the Gillis. The Gillis was ordered back to the states. At the same time, Chief Bliss received orders transferring him from PatWing 4 to the NAS Sand Point, Seattle, as office chief. Tatom was also returning so he and Bliss came back to Seattle with the Gillis. Tatom transferred Herold to the Williamson which would remain in Alaska to operate with Russell's VP-42. Herold had no help with his aerology work until Dominick Zizzi, AerM3c was sent north shortly before I came off the Lexington.

Near the end of September 1941, LtCmdr. K.N. "Knappy" Kivette, USN, skipper of the Williamson, received a dispatch from the navy chaplain at NAS Sand Point. It was an inquiry about a C.C. Herold, AerM1c on board Kivette's ship. Mrs. Herold and her two small children had visited the chaplain. They were without funds and destitute. A disturbing rumor had also reached her that her husband was drinking and gambling his pay away in Alaska.

Kivette called Herold in for an explanation.

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Herold told him that he'd been forced to borrow a few dollars from shipmates for the barest necessities and was in no position to drink or gamble. Herold told Captain Kivette that he had been waiting expectantly for his name to appear on the ship's pay list. A check disclosed that Herold's pay record had never been forwarded to the ship by Wing Personnel Officer, LT. Tatom. Kivette sent a dispatch to the Sand Point chaplain requesting that Mrs. C.C. Herold receive two hundred fifty dollars immediately and have the money credited to the ship's welfare fund.

October 1941 came. Herold's three weeks in Alaska and the Aleutians had stretched into five months and he still didn't have partial plates.

When officer promotions had come through that fall, Kivette had made full commander and Tatom Lieutenant Commander. After the first week in October 1941, the Williamson and Russell's VP-42 were ordered back to Seattle. The seaplane tender arrived on October 19, 1941 with Herold and Zizzi aboard and tied up at the navy pier on Elliot Bay. The next day she made her way through the U.S. Government Locks at Ballard and tied up at the NAS Sand Point. Commander Kivette had Herold put on his dress blues and accompany him to see Tatom.

They found Tatom in his Wing Personnel office. After the two officers exchanged greeting and Tatom had congratulated Kivette on making commander, he turned to Herold, without greeting, and said, "You might as well know now, Herold, that I'm not recommending you for chief."

"Mr. Tatom," said Kivette, "it is of no concern whether you do or not for Commander Russell and I have both recommended Herold for chief and we intend to see that he gets it."

Commander Kivette then asked Tatom for an explanation about Herold's health record and the failure to send his pay records to the ship. He remarked that he hoped Tatom was a better weather officer than he was a personnel officer.

"I'll now turn Herold back into your care," said Kivette as he prepared to leave. "He is welcome aboard my ship anytime."

Herold took the examination for chief shortly afterward, passed, and "put the hat on". None of this helped relations between Herold and Tatom. This was the situation when Herold walked into the Sand Point office and I saw him for the first time.

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I knew Zizzi for only about two weeks because he went on thirty day leave. Afterward he must have been transferred to a different command. Herold made note of the many personnel changes that had taken place at NAS Sand Point and within the Wing during his absence. He also noted that all the Sic of my vintage had been given the examination for third class. Herold asked me the reason why I'd been excluded and I told him about the trouble with Bliss.

Herold was placed in charge of the watch section I was assigned to. He proved as tough a taskmaster as T.J. but he was fair. He had the patience to explain things. If a man was doing some work wrong or the hard way, he corrected the man or showed him the simple way to do it. Herold was a teacher.

Several weeks after Herold's return our watch was on the dungaree work detail. I'd been out on the roof in the balloon inflation area wrestling full and empty helium tanks around while jotting down their serial numbers. When I walked into the office Chief Herold called my name and said, "Come with me." He held a sheaf of papers stapled together and a fist full of sharpened pencils. I followed him below to a small, unoccupied office. Once inside he told me to sit at a desk and then he placed the papers and pencils before me.

"This is your examination for third class," he said, "Don't screw up."

With that he left the room and closed the door. I hadn't been studying because I thought it might be a long time before anyone got around to giving me the exam. However, I passed with high marks.

I thought that LtCmdr. Tatom was my benefactor at the time. I found out years later, from someone who was present in the office that day, that it was Herold's idea to give me the examination. Tatom was drawing the map when Herold approached him and asked to speak.

"What is it?" asked Tatom.

"I've been observing Carrigan's work now for several weeks and I see no problem. He's every bit as competent as any of our third class and I wish to recommend him for the examination."

"If you think he's so goddamned hot," replied Tatom, "give him the exam right now, cold-turkey."

Herold had then asked Commander Legg the O-in-C of the NAS weather office for one of the examinations kept in the office safe.

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For a short while everything at the weather office appeared to be on an even keel. Then about a week after I made AerM3c another blow-up occurred between two weathermen. This time it involved Tatom and Herold. Herold had drawn the afternoon map. Tatom ordered him to change his analysis, repositioning a Pacific low pressure center and its accompanying fronts. Herold offered to enter another complete map so that Tatom could analyze it anyway to chose. This was too much. *the*

Tatom invited Herold out on the roof. Herold eagerly accepted. I was not aware of anything until Lester Roberts nudged me with an elbow and said, "Get a load of this."

Tatom and Herold had both removed their glasses and coats. Tatom was loosening his tie and striding purposefully toward the roof door with Herold right on his heels. They went out onto the graveled area. We all followed. It was unreal. I had no idea how it would turn out. Tatom had been on the naval academy boxing team. Herold was a street fighter who grew up in Youngstown, OH. Tatom was perhaps ten years older. Herold was twenty-five pounds lighter. I wondered about reach? Tatom had a very square, tough looking jaw. Herold was as wiry as spring steel. Being accustomed to boxing, per se, I was actually too busy evaluating the two to be thinking about much else. Perhaps most of those present were also like Romans watching two gladiators enter the arena or like spectators at a bull fight.

Fortunately, before either man could deliver a blow, CDR. Legg and Chief Bliss jumped in and stopped the proceedings. Legg held Tatom while Bliss forcibly restrained Herold. There were some angry threats hurled back and forth and considerable cussing but wiser heads prevailed and calmed down the two combatants.

Patrol Wing Four's aerological section was certainly ready to fight but it remained to be seen if it were ready for all out war. At present, it seemed more a case of the classic, "We have met the enemy and they is us."

Soon after this slightly frightening episode another interesting sidelight was added. Commander Legg, seated at his desk, had been going through his morning mail and dispatches. Tatom was analyzing the map. Legg looked up from his perusal with a directive in his hand.

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"Have you received a copy of this, Commander Tatom?" said Legg. "The Bureau has created the rank of Warrant Aerographer and all commanding officers are requested to submit the names and forward recommendations of qualified personnel without delay."

Tatom swung around in his high stool at the map desk and faced Legg.

"No, I haven't, Commander Legg," said Tatom in a voice that could clearly be heard throughout the office, "but I can honestly say that I have yet to meet the enlisted man that I would be happy to see sitting across from me in the wardroom."

Tote that barge

One day in mid November 1941, Dave Bird, AVRM3c and I made a liberty run to Tacoma. Dave had met a cute student nurse and they had been dating whenever possible. When we arrived at the nurse's quarters we learned that Jean and Dave's girlfriend were both on duty at the hospital and would not get off until late afternoon. We had several hours to kill and spent them at a bar on 6th Avenue. When we got back to the hospital neither of us was feeling any pain.

Contrary to all rules we slipped into the hospital. Our wandering brought us to a line of wheelchairs just begging to be raced. Our two careening chariots were hastily abandoned when an orderly came around a corner at the far end of the long hallway. Dave and I sprinted away in the opposite direction while the orderly hollered for help. As I came torquing around a corner while trying to maintain traction, I bumped into Jean who had no idea I was in Tacoma.

"What in the world are you doing?" she asked. "You shouldn't be in here. My, God, you've both been drinking!"

"Hide us quick," I pleaded, "They're after us!"

Jean rushed to a nearby door, unlocked it and pushed us through into a very dark emergency room. She ordered us to jump into large, dirty linen hampers and covered us up before she left.

I could hear a lot of commotion outside in the hallway and the sounds of people hurrying by in both directions. Dave, in his near-by hamper was desperately trying to smother uncontrollable giggles.

After an interminable half hour or more, Jean

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quietly came back in the room. She ordered us to get out of the hampers, gave us directions to the nearest side exit, and told us in no uncertain terms to never pull a dumb stunt like that again.

Dave and I stood sheepishly in the dark while she berated us. Then we both "Thanked 'er fom the bahdum of 'r 'arts" for being such a good scout and helping us. I was trying to get Jean to repeat the directions for getting out of the place when Dave leaned back against what he thought, in the dark, was a table. Instead, it was a long cart on wheels. When his weight pressed against it, the cart scooted across the room. With a resounding crash it slammed into a large, glass-doored medical supply cabinet. Jangling, clattering noises followed as supplies cascaded off the cabinet shelves. Jean swore and vanished out one door. Dave picked himself up off the deck and we charged blindly out the other door and made our escape with an orderly in hot pursuit. Outside, we melted into the dark shadows of nearby Wright's Park. After catching our breaths we made it down the steep hills to the city's center where we hoisted a few to steady our nerves before heading back to Sand Point. After the escapade, Dave called me Dr. Carrigan and he was Dr. Bird for we had, indeed, "operated" in a hospital emergency room.

I tried several times to phone Jean to apologize but she was either out or on duty. A week later I received a letter from her. During the chase scene at the hospital someone recognized me as being her sailor boyfriend. She was called on the carpet by the head witch and was almost kicked out of nurse's training. Jean did not come right out and say it in the letter but becoming a nurse was so important to her that if this had happened, I'm certain she would never have spoken to me again.

Her letter did say that she didn't want me to, "ever, never again, under any circumstances, come to the hospital." She thought that it would be best if we didn't see each other for awhile. She felt we should cool it. She wanted time to think, time to decide in her own mind and heart if it was just one of those things--just one of those fabulous flings or the real thing. Reading her letter over and over I had the feeling she was really saying, Good-bye, dear and Amen, here's hoping we meet now and then.

I felt bad about this breakup of a romance that seemed so right but a young sailor has many things

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that can captivate his interest.

Several weeks passed and then I received another letter from Jean. "How is everything? We've had a lot of rain lately, haven't we? We're going to take a chemistry class at College of Puget Sound. I don't think you met either of them but two girls quit training. One married a soldier from Ft. Lewis and the other just couldn't take it anymore. I get two whole days off next week-end. We could go roller-skating or something. Maybe you'd like to go with me to visit my grandparents. You would like them. They're Swiss. If you don't have the duty and would like to come down, let me know."

I had the duty. Those green eyes with their s-o-f-t lights...

It was almost a month before I got to Tacoma to see Jean again. The delay was not by choice. LtCmdr. Tatom began sending his Wing aerographer's mates to aerial gunnery school at the NAS Whidbey Island. After completing the course we became qualified aerial gunners and reported back to Tatom at Sand Point.

Tatom had the foresight to realize that if war came it would bring with it radio silence and thus cut off all Pacific ship weather reports. There would be precious few weather reporting stations in the Aleutians as it was. He knew that the only way we would be able to obtain sufficient and accurate weather information would be to fly out and meet it. He also realized that the most efficient way for an aerographer to do this would be to fly as a regular aircrew member manning one of a PBY's two .50 calibre blister guns. In this capacity we would not have to be taken along as extra crew or spare baggage.

A handful of us thus became pioneers in this phase of weather work, namely, "flying the weather" as gunners in wartime. The first U.S. Navy aerographer's mates to do this were: Chiefs Max White and C.C. Herold, plus AerM3c's Bob Calderon, Elzie Carey, Dick Carter, Don Livingston, Lester Roberts, Emmett Smith, Glenn Olson, and me.

Prior to being sent to aerial gunnery school I had been on watch with Herold, Fogg, Roberts, and others. Many adjustments of watch section personnel had been made in my absence and when I returned Bliss placed me on a different section. Two days later, Tatom sent Roberts and two others to aerial gunnery school and Bliss had to transfer me back on watch with Herold and Fogg. T.J. Bliss, on the verge of apoplexy

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from the comings and goings of personnel was heard to hiss, "Jesus Christ! This is like a three-ringed circus. They're trying to turn my office into a goddamned merry-go-round."

Precious little practical training in the taking of radiosonde observations was given at primary school in Lakehurst. The young aerographer's mates at Sand Point that fall of 1941 developed this skill under the instruction and supervision of Raymond Berry, AerM1c who was a radiosonde expert.

This upper air sounding is accomplished by means of a large balloon that carries aloft a small instrument box. Within the box are a dry cell battery for power, a miniaturized radio transmitter, and tiny instruments which report changes in pressure, temperature, and humidity. The balloon is inflated to a known ascensional rate and when released, the small aneroid barometer in the instrument package causes a metal tipped arm to move across a commutator bar which alternately introduces the elements of pressure, temperature, and humidity into the electrical circuit. This information is transmitted as precise tone signals. The large radiosonde receiver in the weather office converts these tone signals into ink traces that are imprinted on calibrated graph paper. This graph paper scrolls out of the receiver at a rate synchronized with the balloon's ascent.

One man worked at the radiosonde receiver table. His job was to draw a straight-edge line across the paper at designated standard altitude levels and determine the true values for pressure, temperature, and humidity for these levels through the use of calibration charts and/or correction tables.

In addition to the standard levels, any sharp change in any of the three elements required a separate level. This occurred whenever the sounding passed into an inversion layer or the balloon and instrument package entered a cloud base and then later emerged at the top.

This data was worked up while the sounding was in progress and the information passed to the second man. He plotted the data on a pseudo-adiabatic lapse rate chart. When completed, the pseudo-adiabatic chart gave a graphic picture of the air mass properties over the station.

A weatherman can select a parcel of air at any given level and move it up and down various colored adiabatic lapse rate lines superimposed on the chart

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to determine weather changes likely to occur with various increases or decreases of temperature, pressure, or humidity. The electrical properties of the air mass can also be determined. The balance or imbalance between negatively and positively charged air is an indication of whether or not turbulence, lightning, and convective currents will occur during the weather forecast period. A radiosonde was a very special piece of weather gear and extremely important for forecasting. Most major stations throughout the world were equipped to take radiosondes. The information was widely disseminated and each large weather office with forecasting responsibilities drew at least one daily upper air chart for the 500 millibar level(18,000 feet).

J.K.Fogg and I had a terrifying radiosonde experience one night when we came within an eye-lash of being blown off the three-storied roof of the operations building.

It was a black, stormy night with wind gusts to twenty-five knots. Rain slashed bitingly across the exposed roof. Our ground check work had been completed. All that remained was to blow up the balloon, attach the red silk parachute, the instrument package and release the sounding. There was a balloon inflation shed where the helium tanks, hose, inflation nozzle, adapter plate and weights were kept. A radiosonde balloon is not a toy balloon. Uninflated it is some thirty inches of limp, heavy, neoprene with a long thick neck. Inflated it is approximately six feet in diameter. This presents a large surface area for a wind to push against. The balloon also has considerable lift for the instrument package weighs ten pounds.

I had inflated the balloon and attached the parachute. The chute was required within the continental limits of the U.S. to reduce the possibility of someone being killed if hit in the head by the instrument package after the balloon burst at high altitude. Fogg left his work at the receiver to come out on the roof and help me with the launch. We brought the balloon out of the shed and the wind buffeted balloon and us around as we maneuvered the monster toward the lee side of the roof. J.K.Fogg, a sandy-haired, blue-eyed wisp of a kid must have weighed all of a hundred and two pounds. When we reached the edge of the roof I said, "Hang onto it. I'll get the instrument." I let go and turned away for

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the thermoscreen just as a heavy gust hit.

"Oh, shit!" Fogg cried out.

I spun around in time to see Fogg pulled up against the low parapet by the thrashing balloon aided greatly by the parachute which the wind had opened. In a bound I reached Fogg and grabbed him about the waist just as he released his hold on the balloon. For a terrorizing split second we both teeter-tottered on the brink as we tried to regain our balance. Shaken, we both staggered back from the edge.

"Jesus, John," I muttered, "thaaaaat was cull...ose!"

"You big dumb bastard," Fogg startled me with, "you could have gotten us both killed!"

"What the hell are you talking about? I just saved your life."

"You know damned well what I'm talking about. Next time you hold the balloon. I'll get the friggin' instrument."

Another balloon was inflated. We followed Fogg's advice and launched the sounding without further incident. We also kept quiet about the whole thing. If word had gotten back to T.J.Bliss we would have received absolutely no sympathy from him. Instead, he would have soundly chewed us out for wasting a balloon, parachute, and helium.

Just prior to Thanksgiving Day 1941, James L. Turner, AerM2c and Walter M. "Whimpy" Winfrey, AerM2c were ordered to pack. Along with Robert Christensen, RM2c, USN and John C. McCandless, S1c, cook, they were being sent north to the Aleutians and the island of Kiska. They would set up the first of the four proposed Aleutian outpost weather reporting stations. The remainder of their unit including an AerM1c, and additional gear and supplies would be sent north later.

These four men were in the middle of the Gulf of Alaska on December 7, 1941. They would spend Christmas 1941 on Kiska in a lonely wooden shack 150 miles from the nearest living soul. It is difficult to get in the Christmas spirit when a howling winter gale threatens to rip the roof off one's shelter.

The days had, indeed, dwindled down to a precious few, November....December, 1941.

Early on the morning of December 7, 1941, Fogg, Roberts, and I went for a drive in "Two-bars" jalopy. We decided to visit Snoqualmie Falls and check off another place on our scenic culture list. We were

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seated in the restaurant above the falls enjoying a late breakfast when the music was abruptly interrupted.

The radio announcer said, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed. Japanese aircraft....."

My world came crashing down. The voice on the radio instructed all military personnel to return to their respective ships and bases immediately. There were few details of the sneak attack.

We had expected to fight the Japanese someday but someday is always far in the future. Someday, had no damned business happening so soon. The suddenness and manner in which we found ourselves at war were numbing. In a state of mild shock we jumped into Fogg's Chevy coupe and sped down the highway back to Sand Point.

I remember that I felt no fear; just outrage. Contempt, too. The Japs must be crazy! We'll crush those little yellow bastards like gnats. How dare they? Let me at them. I couldn't wait.

The prevailing air back at Sand Point was one of quiet, hustle-bustle. Slowly, the news leaked out. Rumors, wild and wooly confused the issue. As the pieces came together, it became clear that our Pacific battleship fleet was destroyed. Many of the ships were either sunk at anchor or badly damaged. How the hell could those little monkeys in their flimsy planes cause so much damage so quickly? Where were our aircraft carriers with our superior planes and pilots? Why didn't the army fighters shoot the attacking planes down? Why weren't we alerted? How could we possibly be surprised like this? Maybe it could happen to some dumb country but not us. It wasn't a hoax. It wasn't a bad dream. Then, the realization began to sink in. Without our mighty battleships it could be a little tough at that. With that many capital ships on the bottom or heavily damaged, it was certainly a helluva way for sailors to enter a war. No matter, we were eager to meet and crush the little men of the Rising Sun with their inferior equipment. Soon enough the opportunity would come when we flew to the Aleutians in our PBYS. Soon enough we would leave the land of our huge conceit and fly into reality.

Patrol Wing 4 immediately stepped up its anti-submarine reconnaissance flights. Some flight crews and ground support personnel (Patrol Service Unit: PatSu) were transferred to several locations along the coast primarily to the small Naval Air

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Facility (NAF) at Tongue Point near Astoria, OR.

Patrol Wing 4's area of responsibility extended from the mid Oregon coast to Attu in the Western Aleutians and on up through the Bering Sea to Nome and thence to Point Barrow on the Arctic Ocean. Even though the strength of VP-41 and VP-42 had recently been increased from six to twelve plane squadrons these twenty-four "Catalina" patrol bombers could not be expected to adequately cover such a vast area. We would be busy!

In groups of two or three, Wing aerographer's mates were sent to Tongue Point for several weeks to fly anti-submarine reconnaissance patrols. We were also alerted to be ready to head for Alaska and the Aleutians at a moment's notice. Some of the NAS weathermen were ticketed for transfer to Kodiak and Sitka. Aleutian Expeditionary Unit members were awaiting the arrival of their remaining personnel and most of their equipment.

Even in peacetime the number of trained weathermen had never been sufficient to satisfy all of the navy's commands. Aerographers were assigned to particular kinds of ships and bases in relation to priority needs. Each aircraft carrier and seaplane tender required weathermen. Battleships would settle for whatever they could get, these aerographers usually being assigned to the flagship. Cruisers could hope and normally the flagship of a cruiser division had a few aerographers aboard. Destroyers were out of the question. Each NAS, NAF, and Naval Operating Base (NOB) also required aerographers as did each patrol wing. Every icebreaker had an aerological complement aboard. There was always an Antarctic expedition in progress while another was in the planning stage. Countless aerological personnel have spent much time in the Antarctic from the beginning of exploration there. Weddell Sea, Bellinghausen Sea, McMurdo Sound, Ross Ice Shelf, Marie Byrd Land, Palmer Peninsula, South Shetland Islands, and Little America are NOT strange names to navy weathermen. Don't forget that then as today, the U.S. Navy was operating all over the globe.

T.J. Bliss was convinced that NAS Sand Point, Seattle was far down the wartime priority list. He was losing watch standers almost daily and few replacements were being sent to him. Bliss decided to do something about it by hatching his own batch of weathermen. He went through the NAS Sand Point

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personnel files and selected what he believed to be five suitable eggs. These five seamen were turned over to Raymond Berry.

Berry set up a simplified curriculum to quickly train the men to be of some help in the office. This instruction included the rudiments of synoptic and hourly weather codes, taking observations, and recognition of teletype weather reports by classification so this data could be ripped off and filed on the appropriate clipboards.

The youngsters were very bright. W.R. Bennett, a happy, always smiling, blond, blue-eyed kid was from Portland, OR. George "Rocky" Newmeyer, a tall, rangy, rather serious boy was from New Mexico. His ambition was to become a forester and he already had some college credits when he enlisted. James S. Rose, a pleasant, handsome, dark-haired, dark-eyed, husky young man with a nice smile was from Phoenix, AZ. Newkirk, a well built, curly brown haired boy, originally from a midwest farm, rounded out the first four. I know these men became excellent weathermen. The fifth man probably turned out okay as well but I never saw him again after Seattle.

This fellow was close to six feet tall, lean, and wiry. He had black eyes, and straight black hair combed and parted almost in the center. We suspected that until recently, he had been packing one hundred pound sacks of sugar up a mountain to his old man's still back in Tennessee. His speech was so difficult to understand that one had to hang on his every word to get the gist. He too, was very bright but as he put it, "I ain't dumb. I jes don't know nothin'." I also suspect that he was a lot smarter than anyone gave him credit for and enjoyed his practical jokes.

After each day's class, the five kids were brought up to the office for practical training under Berry's close supervision. This led to a hilarious incident one afternoon that I will always cherish.

Chiefs Bliss and White were chatting when Berry brought his charges up to the office. They had been attending school less than a week. Bliss was justifiably proud of the rapid progress they were making; thanks to the excellence of Berry as an instructor.

As the group trooped in, Bliss called the five over to his desk and said to Max White, "Go ahead, Max, ask them any questions you'd like. You'll be amazed."

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Unfortunately, Max directed his first question to the recent mountain boy and asked, "Son, what is a millibar?"

The boy scratched his head and replied, "Well, Sir, Mr. Chief White, back home we-uns got black bars'n we got cinnamon bars but ah nevah heered tell o' one o' them thar millybars."

A moment of stunned silence followed during which Bliss turned purple. Max started laughing so hard the tears rolled down his cheeks and he almost fell over backwards in his swivel chair. Through contorted lips, Bliss hollered for Berry. The five students began night classes that evening.

Changes were also taking place within Patrol Wing Four's chain of command. Most notably, Captain Leslie E. Gehres, USN checked in to take over command of the Wing from Captain Gordon E. Rowe, USN. Captain Gehres appointed Lieutenant Commander A.R. "Daddy" Nash, USN, as his new PatWing 4 Staff Operations Officer. Nash had been Executive Officer of VP-42 under Norman Garton then later James S. Russell. LtCmdr. Tatom was relieved of his duties as Wing Personnel Officer so that he could devote full time to his weather work.

Early in January 1942, Chief Herold, Bob Calderon and I were sent to NAS Tongue Point to fly out of that base with the PBY's of Russell's VP-42. Herold prepared the daily flight forecast and gave the aircrews their weather briefing. The three of us "flew the weather" on a rotation basis. Between flights we stood office watches with the members of Tongue Point's weather office. Commanding officer of this group was Lieutenant Commander William J. Dimitrijevic, USN. Others included a Chief Adams and R.R. Henry, AerM1c who was a cousin of movie star, Jane Russell. A stir of excitement swept through the office one day when Henry received a letter from her. There were several others including a S1c named Anderson, and an AerM3c, whose name I've forgotten, who lived off the base with his wife and two children.

For about a week after our arrival at Tongue Point patrol operations were conducted with daytime takeoffs and landings. Wing Commander Gehres then issued an order that he wanted his PBY search planes two hundred miles off the coast by first light. This necessitated night takeoffs from the Columbia River. Prior to the war, most of our flights had been training exercises carried out in daylight. I'd

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personally never flown in the dark. Flying anti-submarine and weather reconnaissance patrols out of the mouth of the Columbia River in the dead of winter quickly brought home to us all just one of the many terror-filled hazards of war.

Winter rains brought much debris, including huge tree stumps and large logs, down the swollen, muddy river. Numerous, constantly changing sand bars in the silt-laden mighty river caused dangerous whirlpools and tricky currents. The ebb and flow of the tide moved all of the debris around in unpredictable fashion. To hit a piece of driftwood during either a takeoff or landing could prove disastrous.

Before night takeoffs a patrol vessel ran up and down the proposed takeoff path to clear the river of these dangers. In the dark and on those swirling waters it was comparable to trying to find and pick up pebbles with a manure fork while blindfolded. The gesture was appreciated but it did little for our morale.

The fresh water content of the river presented an additional hazard when the air temperature was at or below freezing. Sheets of spray froze on the windshields which made it impossible for the pilots to see. Takeoffs under these conditions were made blind on instruments. Prevailing winter winds at the mouth of the Columbia River are such that we were usually clawing for altitude as our PBV passed low over the lights of Astoria, Or.

LtCmdr. Russell, skipper of VP-42, set up a pilot's training program on the spot. Blind takeoffs AND LANDINGS were practiced in daylight. The first pilot wore a hood and his co-pilot read off the necessary data to him while standing by the dual controls in case of emergency.

On the blind landings each pilot and co-pilot of VP-42 learned to "feel" for the water surface: "feel" for that first loud crashing hiss that sounded like a ruptured steamline and reverberated through the flying boat as the thin aluminum skin of the hull made contact. Russell's foresight in this training method stood us in good stead for that which was to take place shortly in the Aleutians. His wise anticipation undoubtedly saved lives.

Around the first of February 1942, Calderon and I were ordered back to NAS Sand Point with VP-42 which was relieved by VP-41. Chief Herold remained at Tongue Point where he was joined by AerM1c Ed Hudson,

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Sic Elzie Carey, and new arrival, Sic Walter W. Babic.

One of Hudson's patrols out of Tongue Point resulted in a sad sight that remains etched in his memory. His PBY rendezvoused with a slow moving convoy far off the Oregon coast. Protected by screening destroyers, three of our old battleships badly damaged at Pearl Harbor were heading for repairs at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Hudson's PBY flew anti-submarine cover all that day circling the burned, twisted, gutted hulks.

Later, Dick Carter and several other men were also sent to Tongue Point along with Chief Max White who relieved Herold. In this way a number of Patrol Wing Four's aerographer's mates gained valuable training and experienced the hazards of flying out of the mouth of the Columbia River that winter of 1941-1942. All were lucky except one.

Toward the end of February 1942, L. Rusek, AerM1c, USN reported for duty with PatWing 4. Tatom sent him immediately to Tongue Point where he was to take Herold's flights for one week in order to familiarize himself with taking over water weather observations.

Rusek was at Tongue Point only a few days when during a night takeoff his PBY either hit a piece of driftwood or caught a wing tip float in the surging water. The plane disintegrated and all hands were killed. Whether one is scared of dying or not makes no difference....'ol man river....he jes keeps...jes a rollin' along.

After this tragic accident night water takeoffs ceased and Tongue Point patrols were curtailed for a time. Our main search base shifted to a Canadian airfield on Vancouver Island. In mid March 1942, operations out of Tongue Point were resumed. By then, VP-41 had received the majority of its new PBY-5A's. These amphibians used the adjacent Astoria Airport runway for night takeoffs then upon return from patrol made daylight landings on the Columbia River. Dick Carter recalls that when he and Max White checked in at Tongue Point, torn, twisted pieces of wreckage from Rusek's PBY had been recovered and placed in the hangar---a sobering sight.

Later still that early spring of 1942, Chief Max White, AerM3c Donald Livingston, and Sic Emmett Smith were among those sent to Coos Bay on the southern Oregon coast. Here they operated with one of our seaplane tenders while flying long range patrols off the sheltered waters of the bay. Occasionally, one of

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VP-41's PBY's returning from patrol could not land because of wind whipped water conditions and had to set down at a nearby U.S. Army Air Force airfield.

Around mid February 1942, new arrivals Bill Stewart and Don Livingston were assigned to my watch section. It did not take long for us to become good friends. Stewart began telling us of his plans to sail the South Seas after the war. His droll humor and enthusiasm were infectious. In Don and me he quickly found the two eager extra hands he needed to complete his crew. The three of us had dreamed, like many before us, of someday sailing to these paradise islands.

Stew, however, was not just dreaming; he was going come war or high water. Stewart had been making serious plans for years. He had studied celestial navigation, owned a sextant, and was proficient in its use. He was an accomplished sailor and surprisingly already owned the vessel for the voyage. The old wooden ketch was moored at a marina in Virginia.

We would be equal partners. Stewart would teach us to sail and navigate. Our weather backgrounds would be a plus. To make ends meet we would carry copra between the islands. This main source of income could be supplemented by carrying other cargo as well including the occasional passenger. After a few years of hard work and long hours to pay off the boat we could follow a more leisurely pace.

Stewart had sailing direction books and nautical charts for his chosen waters in the Cook Islands. He even knew the names of two copra companies doing business in that area. Obviously, Stewart was intelligent and had been thorough in his research and planning. To him it was no longer a dream but a sound business venture awaiting its proper time.

There would be lots of work to do on the boat. This included a complete copper sheathing of her bottom to protect the hull from Toredos worms. There would also be a considerable investment of capital which we would somehow acquire. Stew believed that he could borrow or raise enough money to provision the boat and get us away from the dock. Don and I assured him that we would start saving our money to pay for our interest in the boat and our share of provisioning. A real plus was that our minority cruises were up at the same time. We could start work on the boat together. To youth, finances are merely details, ~~not~~ worries. Besides, we had a war to win

not

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first then we'd be off...riding our private rainbow, sailing around the sun having laughs, having fun...what a deal.

In late February 1942, Bill Stewart went home on a short emergency leave. When he returned, he shocked us with the news that he had married his childhood sweetheart. That was the good news. The bad news was that he'd sold OUR ketch. He tried to explain but Don and I wouldn't listen. All we knew was that he'd gone stark raving mad and in the process shattered our dreams. We were so mad at Stewart that neither of us spoke to him for a week.

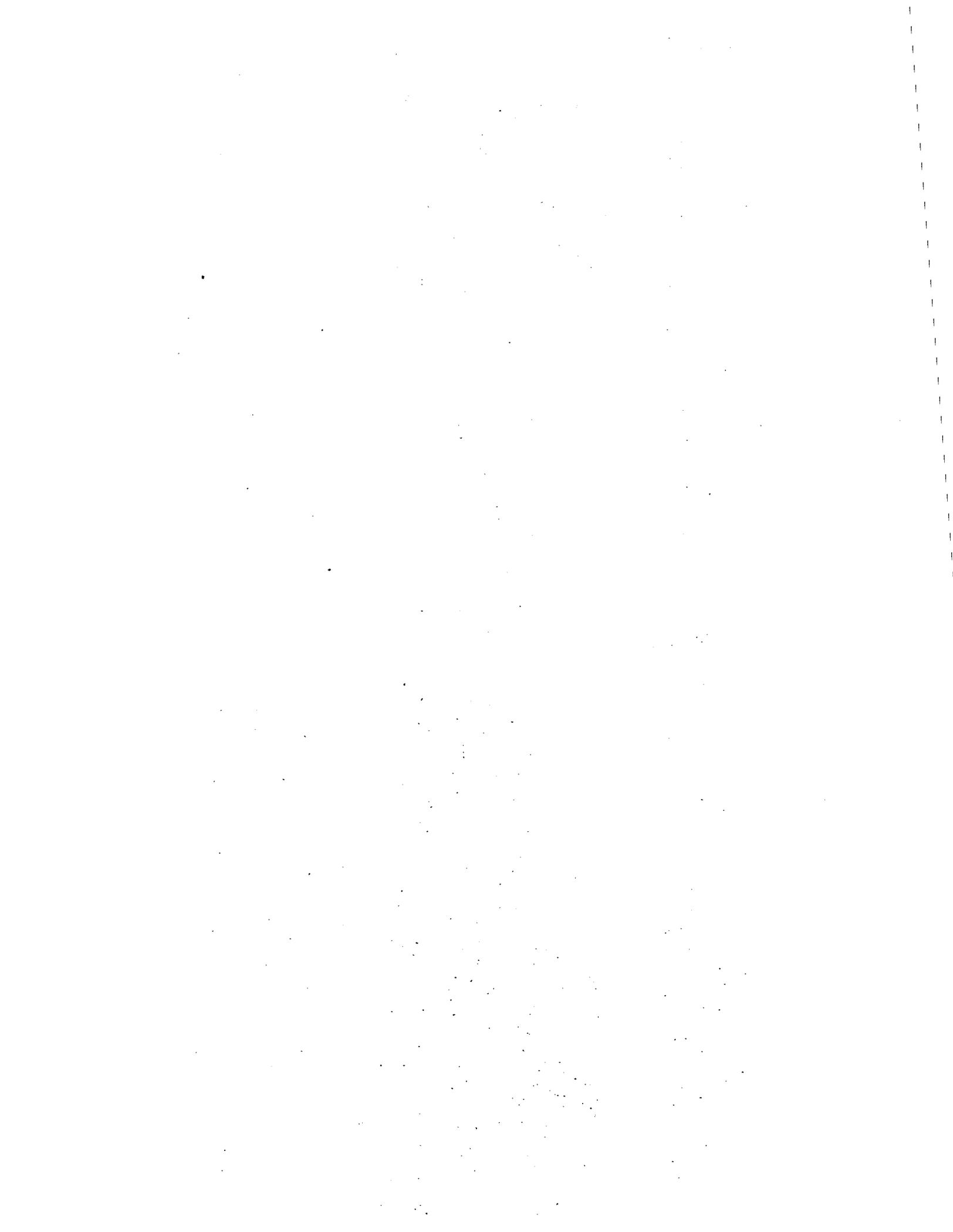
It was also toward the end of February 1942 that Lester Roberts received temporary duty orders to the USS Williamson which promptly got underway for Alaska/Aleutian waters. Roberts, who'd only recently made AerM3c, would be the sole weatherman aboard Commander K.N.Kivette's ship for several months.

A few days after the Williamson sailed, Bob Calderon and I received orders and flew north to Kodiak with a six plane section of VP-42's PBY's. Commander James S. Russell had received orders from Wing Commander Gehres to commence reconnaissance patrols out of Sitka, Kodiak, Cold Bay, and Dutch Harbor.

VP-42 was still receiving some new PBY-5A's. When these aircraft had been checked out and training completed they would join us in Alaska. The remainder of the Wing, including VP-41, the Gillis, Casco, additional PatSu personnel, and Wing aerographers would follow in due course. The other Wing aerological personnel, including LtCmdr. Tatom, were not destined to arrive in Alaska until the end of May 1942 when Captain Gehres and his staff moved Wing headquarters from Seattle to Kodiak.

Seattle had been blacked out at night since Pearl Harbor but these were also dark days for our country. Imperial Japanese Forces were reported over-running all opposition, seemingly at will, throughout the Philippines and Southeast Asia. In February 1942, the sleeping giant of our industrial might was slowly awakening. The desperate years of 1942-1943 still lay ahead of us.

My orders and departure happened so quickly I did not even have time to reach Jean by phone to say goodbye, let alone kiss her. It was a sad, bitter-sweet time for people in love.



The PBY "Catalina"

Before I fly to Kodiak, Alaska in a PBY it is high time the reader becomes familiar with the plane. During the next twenty-seven months in Alaska and the Aleutians I would spend a great deal of my time flying in PBY's and they are an important part of this tale.

This will be more of a general rather than technical description of the PBY. It is based on a non-expert's collection of memories, impressions, observations, and from snatches of conversations overheard between the technical experts that piloted and crewed them. Although I would log over 1200 hours in PBY's it was in the capacity of blister gunner and weather observer. As such, I was too occupied to bother about all of a PBY's finer points.

PBY was the U.S.Navy's designation. The P stood for Patrol, the B for Bomber, and the Y identified the manufacturer as Consolidated-Vultee Aircraft Corporation.

The PBY "Catalina" is the most widely used flying boat ever built. It was also the principle patrol bomber of Allied forces during WWII. Its origin dates back to 1927 when the U.S.Navy decided it needed a new patrol bomber of all metal, monoplane configuration that would be capable of flying nonstop directly to Panama, Alaska, and Hawaii. The contract for development of such a plane was awarded to Consolidated Aircraft Corporation of Buffalo, NY., a forerunner of today's Consolidated-Vultee (ConVair) division of General Dynamics at San Diego, CA.

The first experimental model, designated XPY-1 was flown in February 1928. Many years of model changes, streamlining, and increased horsepower followed until model PBY-5 came off the assembly line at Consolidated's new plant in San Diego and was accepted by the U.S.Navy in September 1940.

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The PBY-5's that we entered WWII with had a wingspan of 104 feet. This large, parasol wing's surface area was 1400 square feet; the same as a floor 14 feet wide and 100 feet long. The plane was 63'10" long and its height measured 18'10". Power was supplied by two Pratt-Whitney "Twin-Wasp" radial R-1830-82 engines which developed 1200 takeoff horsepower each. These power plants gave the PBY-5 a top speed of 189 mph at sea level. Cruising speed was 110 mph. Stall speed was 72 mph. Service ceiling was 21,600 ft. and rate of climb for the sedate lady was a slow 940 feet per minute. Empty, the plane weighed 17,400 lbs. Gross weight was 26,200 lbs and maximum overload was set at 33,389 pounds. 1750 gallons of fuel, carried in two wing tanks, gave the PBY-5 a maximum range of 2895 miles but this was reduced considerably if the plane was loaded to maximum overload with bombs, depth charges, and/or a torpedo.

Four 500 pound bombs, four depth charges, an aerial torpedo, or a combination of these were suspended from external wing mount racks. If a torpedo was mounted under one wing, two bombs were carried on the opposite side to partially compensate for the heavier weight of the torpedo.

The PBY-5A was the amphibian version of the PBY-5. It was equipped with retractable, tricycle landing gear. This configuration added approximately one ton of weight. Top speed, service ceiling, rate of climb, and range were all reduced in the PBY-5A. Cruising speed remained the same. The navy began taking delivery of PBY-5A's in the late fall of 1941.

Wartime modifications, on a continuing basis, were made on both the PBY-5 and PBY-5A. Armor plating for the pilots, blister gunners, and fuel sump was added. Some of our PBY's came equipped with twin .30 calibre machine guns in the bow turret instead of the original single gun. To compensate for this extra weight the wing fuel capacity was reduced to 1475 gallons. Nonetheless, by early 1943, the PBY-5A's empty weight had increased to 20,910 pounds, gross weight to 33,975 pounds which approached the maximum military overload limit of 35,420 pounds. Sea level top speed had dropped to 169 mph, service ceiling to 14,700 feet, and rate of climb to only 525 feet per minute. This meant that it took a late model PBY-5A almost twenty minutes to reach an altitude of 10,000 feet. Maximum patrol range, however, was still well over 2000 miles and bombing range with a full load was

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approximately 1800 miles. The late model PBY-5 continued to have better overall performance figures than the PBY-5A because it did not carry the extra ton of weight associated with the tricycle landing gear.

The fuel consumption rate of the Pratt-Whitney "Twin-Wasp" engines was rather miserly which enabled the PBY to stay aloft for about 20 hours at normal cruise settings under favorable wind and weather conditions. On lean carburetor mixtures and with reduced power and throttle settings a PBY could remain in the air slightly over 24 hours.

The PBY had a single hull, single tail, and single, high, parasol wing. Gracefully flared, the bow of the hull curved upward to a rather blunt, squarish nose. A nose turret began just a few feet aft of this snout. The nose turret gun was on a cylindrical mount and could be operated by sliding open a flat, overhead hatch and establishing one's self within the ring of the gun mount. This small "greenhouse" was also the bombardier's compartment. Access to the nose compartment was made in between the two pilots and under the connecting cross member of the dual steering yoke. Because our navigator's doubled as bow gunners and bombardiers the bow compartment was unoccupied except in combat.

Three or four feet aft and above the nose turret were the windshields of the double cockpit. This was also expansively glassed in the front, sides, and overhead. A large panel above each pilot could be opened by sliding it backwards. This overall cockpit design provided excellent visibility and let in a great deal of natural light.

The cockpit was equipped with dual instrumentation and dual controls. Dual, hand steering controls were mounted on a single yoke in the form of an inverted "U". The vertical columns of this yoke each had a small, oblong, spoked, open at the top, steering wheel. When a pilot pushed the whole yoke assembly forward it moved both of the hinged elevators of the horizontal tail downward which lifted the tail up and resulted in the plane assuming a nose down attitude. When either pilot pulled back on the yoke the elevators moved upward which forced the tail down and the attitude of the plane changed to nose up. To bank or turn left, the pilot turned his steering wheel left. This moved the main wing's right aileron down which lifted the wing while the left aileron went up forcing that side of the wing down. A turn of

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either wheel to the right reversed the movement of the ailerons. Each pilot also had a set of foot pedals that controlled the movement of the vertical tail rudder for left or right turns and straight flight.

Set in the trailing edge of the rudder and each elevator was a trim tab. These trim tabs were simply miniatures of the parent part. Their fine tuning adjustment was controlled by means of two tiny knobs in the cockpit, one for the rudder, one for the elevators. The trim tabs were used after the PBV reached altitude and level flight on the desired course at the chosen carburetor mixtures and power and throttle settings. The tabs corrected for any slight imbalance in load distribution, and/or wind drift factor and made it easier for the pilots to maintain a level flight attitude and straight course.

In print I've seen the PBV referred to as a Cat, Awkward Pelican, Ugly Duckling, and Blue Coffin, to name a few but the majority of pilots and aircrewmembers that I flew with called the plane a Yoke Boat. The remaining few referred to it as a P-boat. Yoke Boat derived from both the unusual dual steering assembly which was reminiscent of an oxen's yoke and the fact that the small oblong steering wheels themselves were also known as yokes.

A structural bulkhead behind the pilots separated the cockpit from the navigation-radio compartment. The navigator's area was on the port side. It consisted of a built in chart table, chart stool, drawers for charts, shelves and cubby holes for navigation publications, and a built in wind drift instrument. Light from the cockpit flooded this compartment and there was also a small, rectangular, plexiglass side port above the chart table.

Across the compartment aisle was the radioman's domain. He had a small built in desk and chair, a typewriter, morse code key, shelves for radio manuals and code books. Clustered around him were the radio transmitter, radio receiver, and radio direction finder (RDF). A flat, solid panel hatch, approximately two and a half feet square, was located in the overhead above the center aisle.

Beginning at the rear of this compartment the top part of the fuselage swooped upward about four feet to form the front of the narrow, wing-width console or support to which the massive, fuel loaded parasol wing was fastened. This support was known as the tower. It must have been hell for stout because the only

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other support for the 104 foot wing consisted of two wing struts on each side. These began just outboard of the wing mounted engines and angled down at about 45 degrees to where they fastened into the hull on either side of each wheel well(PBY-5A).

Inside this high, narrow tower was another compartment. It was the home of the plane's crew chief, the aviation machinist's mate. This man, commonly called the "mech", was an experienced petty officer with a rating of second class or higher.

The mech's tower was similar to another cockpit lacking only pilot flight controls. He sat in a comfortable seat with a complete cockpit instrumentation panel in front of him. In addition he was surrounded by a maze of gauges, dials, valves, switches, and levers. The mech could start and stop the engines, control the power and throttle settings, change propeller pitch, regulate fuel flow and carburetor mixture, and do everything short of fly the plane. From his tower vantage point the crew chief could view each engine through small side ports. This total forward area described thus far was known as the flight deck.

At the rear of this cockpit, navigation-radio, tower area and almost directly below the after wing struts, the bottom of the hull began to slim down. A moderate break in the keel line occurred at this point and it was the rear terminus of the flying boat's planing hull section. This break was known as the "step". This step was below the waterline and therefore not visible when the PBY was at rest on the water.

Another bulkhead and hatch separated the navigation,radio, tower area from the next compartment. This section was perhaps twelve feet in length. It contained four canvas, fold down bunks with mattresses. There were two on each side of the metal catwalk that formed an aisle. Our PBY bunks were usually piled high with parachute packs and harnesses, sleeping bags, spare blankets, extra flight clothing, extra "Mae West" inflatable life vests, and personal hand bags. Emergency gear such as rations and first aid kits were kept in this compartment along with extra coils of line and spare smoke bombs, die-markers, and flares.

Moving aft one passed through another bulkhead hatch into the after-station. This became my home away from home. In the afterstation were the two gun

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blisters, each equipped with a Browning, heavy, .50 calibre, air-cooled machine gun.

The Plexiglas blisters were large and bulged out of each side then upwards above the top line of the fuselage where they curved back in. Here the port and starboard blisters came within a few feet of meeting overhead. Visibility from these protruding gun tubs was excellent. With the blister opened for action it provided a gun platform that was half out of the plane.

Wind slashed through crevices into the after-station even when the blisters were closed and locked. Surprisingly, it never seemed much breezier or colder with the blisters open. In the raw, roomy chamber it was usually the same temperature inside the plane as out.

Each gunner had a small, fold-down, jump seat which faced aft. We didn't always know where we were going but could tell where we'd been. On the bulkhead behind each gunner's seat was a tier of belted ammunition in cans along with his earphone jack, oxygen mask, oxygen hose and valve, containers holding smoke grenades, and flares.

The .50 calibre machine guns were massive pieces each mounted on a stout swivel stand of convenient height. A curved, heavily padded butt fit snugly against the gunner's shoulder. Both hands were required to train and fire the gun. One hand gripped the pistol grip at the trigger; the other hand clasped a handle grip that extended out on the left side of the gun. An excellent, light gathering, telescopic sight was mounted on the gun. The rear end of the scope had a large, rubber, eye shield. The scope sighted down the barrel and through a slot in the three-quarter inch armor plate shield which was mounted just forward of the breech mechanism.

To keep from falling or being thrown out of the plane when the blister was open and the gun swung out for action, each gunner wore a heavy harness belt that was snapped onto the gun mount.

These guns could be elevated, depressed, and swung back and forth to cover almost as much as one could see. Factory installation included a light aluminum conduit framework that limited this arc of fire so that a gunner would not inadvertently hit his own main wing or tail surface. These frameworks were removed in the Aleutians because it was determined they were too restrictive. This was both good and

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bad. Part of the tail assembly and the large portion of the main wing outboard of the struts then came within the line of fire. In the excitement of battle, with a Japanese Zero float fighter flashing in and away, a gunner had to know instinctively when to let up on the trigger. A careless gunner could literally shoot himself down.

The rear portion of the after-station was used to store the two rubber life rafts, regular anchor, sea anchor, coils of line, and miscellaneous gear.

All appointments in the after-station were spartan. It was mostly two kids, two guns, and hopefully enough ammunition. It was an isolated, lonely place seemingly far removed from the rest of the crew on the flight deck.

Under the rear of the after-station there was a pronounced break in the hull line. This point was the rear terminus of the hull's waterline and part of this break was visible when a PBY rested on the water. From this point aft the fuselage narrowed markedly and the bottom portion swooped up gracefully to the high tail.

Still another bulkhead and hatch separated the after-station from the tail section compartment. This was the ventral, .30 calibre machine gun position. A trap door at the bottom swung inward and upward. The machine gun, on its hinged mount could then be swung down into place to command a small arc of fire below and behind the plane. This gun was fired from a prone position. A cushion was laid over the metal deck stringers and the gunner had to harness himself in to keep from falling out. This gun was seldom used in the Aleutians other than checking it out each flight to make certain it was firing properly. We did not carry a tail gunner per se and if this gun had to be used, one of the blister gunners or other aircrewman fired it.

Some fifteen tons of PBY displaced considerable water and the plane sat rather lowdown. To takeoff, the PBY had to be powered up and out of this squatty, plowing attitude and sufficient speed attained to get the hull planing. This planing point was referred to as "getting up on the step" or simply "on the step." Full takeoff power and wide opened throttles were applied and maintained until the pilot could lift the flying boat off the water.

During the takeoff run the main concern was to hold the nose down so that the plane would not lift

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off prematurely before flying speed had been reached. My understanding from "shop talk" was that the reverse was true upon landing. Increasing friction with the water at that time coupled with rapid deceleration had a tendency to bury the bow. Such a mishap would result in either a sudden stop crash or an end swapping flip.

How one took off and landed depended upon wind and water conditions. Light wind chop conditions were best. Glassy smooth water was bad for it made it difficult to break the adhesive suction effect. Reaching takeoff speed was a pure bitch in moderate swell or heavy wind chop. The PBY could be powered up onto the step in a moderate of heavy wind chop but as the bow slammed into each successive white cap it slowed the plane. If full power was not sufficient to overcome this restraining effect of the waves we could not get airborne. The hull and the crew took a helluva pounding in any such attempt. This type of takeoff or attempt always reminded me of a puffin trying to fly after it had eaten too many fish.

Takeoffs in long, undulating swell conditions were even hairier. A PBY could come off the upslope of a swell and be temporarily airborne before flying speed had been reached. The PBY would flounder and settle. How hard or how lightly the plane slammed back down into the next swell depended upon the pilot's skill, and luck. If it were deftly done, the takeoff could either be continued, or aborted. If the plane hit hard and/or out of kilter it could end in a crash. This could be the result of the plane porpoising, burying the bow, ripping the bottom out, or catching one of the two, lowered, retractable wing tip floats, or the wing tip itself in the sea. Catching a wing tip or float caused a PBY to cartwheel in spectacular fashion.

Most of the bays and coves we operated from in the Aleutians were selected for their sheltered qualities; none, however, could be immune from all winds and waves. In a prolonged takeoff run, in foggy weather, one could also run out of room in a bay. Water takeoffs, in general, were a helluva way to go to work every morning.

It was extremely difficult to pull a PBY out of a steep dive. The controls became so immobile that they appeared to be locked. On a dive of this nature it took the combined strength of BOTH pilots horsing back on the yoke to get the plane's nose up and pull

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out of the plunge. This almost superhuman effort was the kind that made the muscle cords of the neck stand out and the pilots' knuckles turn white.

At speeds over 150 mph or in moderate to heavy turbulence, a PBY's huge, parasol wing, outboard of the struts imitated a seagull's wings: it began to flap noticeably. In early June 1942, during the first two weeks of the Aleutian Campaign of WWII, we used our PBY's for the first time as dive bombers. It was discovered that the 1400 square foot wing also had a tendency to come unglued and rip off from the stress of pulling out of a dive at speeds over 250 mph. This was not an aeronautical engineering fault but simply a case of using the plane for something other than its designed purpose; long range patrol.

A PBY was no fishing boat (although it was used as such on occasion) but it could take a surprising amount of pounding punishment in the sea before rivets started to pop and seams opened. The hull of the PBY-5 was more durable and seaworthy than the hull of the PBY-5A with its retractable landing gear wheel wells. All models were equipped with bilge pumps and we also carried buckets for bailing.

On patrol duty a PBY normally carried a crew of seven. These seven were the first pilot (Patrol Plane Commander: PPC); second or co-pilot; a navigator who was usually also a second pilot and doubled as bombardier/nose gunner; the crew chief who was an aviation machinist's mate; a first radioman; and two blister gunners who were also usually second radioman and second machinist.

In spite of the few unsettling idiosyncracies mentioned, the PBY was considered to be a very safe, durable, and dependable aircraft. It was roomy and comfortable. The crew could stretch their legs and walk about through well lit compartments. The navigation/radio, bunk/storage, and after-station all had ample headroom.

In the Aleutians, as in other theaters of WWII, the PBY was called upon to perform dozens of difficult tasks for which it was not designed. It performed the majority of these extra duties admirably and they will be touched upon later.

The reader has had the tour. From bow turret to tail, this was the PBY we flew in.

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North To Alaska U.S. Naval Air Station, Kodiak, AK., February-March 1942

A section of six VP-42 PBY's took off from Seattle for Kodiak at the tail-end of February 1942. Bob Calderon and I were aboard separate PBY-5's. The squadron had recently received several PBY-5A's. When these aircraft had been checked out and pilot familiarization with the new amphibian completed they would join us. Skipper Russell and his staff would fly north with these planes when the logistics of moving his entire squadron to Alaska were completed.

It might be noted that six days before Pearl Harbor our PBY's were loaded with live bombs and depth charges. On December 7, 1941 our patrol wing had only three PBY's of VP-42 scattered throughout all of Alaska and the Aleutians. By early March 1942, the twelve PBY's of VP-42 represented almost one half the total U.S. bomber strength in Alaska.

The U.S. Army 11th Air Force had about a dozen out-dated B-18 twin-engined bombers at Elmendorf Air Base in Anchorage. A few early model B-17 Flying Fortresses were undergoing cold weather testing and modifications at Ladd Field, Fairbanks, AK. There were also two LB-30 four-engined bombers which were the early version of the famed B-24 Liberator.

With this scant number of bombers, a guy would have to think twice before starting a revolution in Central America, and, yet, it represented our total bomber strength with which to defend Alaska and the Aleutians after three months of being at total war with Japan. Our country's priorities simply were elsewhere.

The first leg of our flight took us to the Naval Air Facility (NAF) at Sitka in southeastern Alaska. Here we refueled and spent the night. One PBY and crew

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would be left here to patrol out of this base along with a plane and crew already stationed there. The following morning our flight of five PBY's took off directly across the Gulf of Alaska for Kodiak.

In addition to the two PBY's at Sitka, skipper Russell would station four at Kodiak, two would operate from a seaplane tender at Cold Bay near the southwest end of the Alaskan Peninsula, while the remaining four would patrol out of the U.S. Naval Operating Base (NOB) at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

After an almost six hour, uneventful flight across the Gulf of Alaska, the northern end of Kodiak Island came into view. Cape Chiniak was on our port bow and we droned past this prominent point. Once inside the large outer bay we executed our recognition maneuver and prepared to make our final approach and landing in small Woman's Bay where the naval air station was located.

I gazed down at Kodiak. I had never seen such a lonely, forbidding place. High, jagged, snow plastered mountains plunged straight down into icy waters. The blinding white of the snow was in sharp contrast to the stark blackness of the water. Locked in the vise-grip of winter, Kodiak had a deadly stillness about it. It looked like a helluva country to fight a war in.

Kodiak, I knew, was our northern bastion against the rampaging might of the Japanese Empire. The tiny, forlorn base I was looking down upon surely was only a small part of this fortress? Please, tell me this is true? It was not. What I saw---was it!

My PBY landed and taxied slowly toward the seaplane ramp; slowly, because of the two inch thick broken sheets of ice we were nosing through. A crash boat had criss-crossed through the ice layer that had formed near the shoreline of the sheltered bay. After the long over-water flight from Sitka it would hardly do to rupture the hull and sink ingnomiously a few feet from the cement ramp.

A beaching crew was ready in their rubberized suits. They waded out chest deep to secure the dolly wheels of the beaching gear to our plane. What these navy crews went through in Alaska is a story in itself. After the half-frozen crew had attached the gear, our PBY, so graceful in the air, waddled out of the water and up the ramp like a fat duck. We had arrived safely at Kodiak.

Kodiak, the largest island in Alaska, is roughly

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seventy-five miles long on its north-south axis and thirty-five miles wide. It is situated approximately two-hundred fifty miles southwest of Anchorage. The island lies off the east coast of the Alaskan Peninsula and is separated from this by treacherous Shelikof Strait. The eastern coast of Kodiak fronts on the Gulf of Alaska.

The island's rugged coastline is indented with innumerable small bays, coves, and fiords. There are numerous closeby, off-shore islands, especially on the north side. The largest of these is Afognak. Narrow, twisting, rock-studded Kupreanof Strait separates Kodiak and Afognak. At lower elevations, Kodiak, Afognak, and the other islands are heavily timbered with Sitka Spruce.

Kodiak's interior is a jumbled mass of sharp peaks and tiny valleys with no inter-connecting mountain passes. Over the years, gold prospectors have penetrated the interior in places. Some never returned. I doubt if there is much of the mountain mass that has been explored even to this late date. A census taken when I was back up there for a two year tour of duty after the war disclosed that the Kodiak bear population outnumbered the human. At that time, 1946, there were about 5,000 people living on Kodiak.

Throw in the usual assortment of dangerous, uncharted rocks, reefs, and sinister, submerged pinnacle peaks encircling the islands and one has a complete picture of primitively picturesque Kodiak, circa anytime.

The dominant feature of the naval base was the huge hangar at the head of Woman's Bay. The seaplane ramp and parking apron around the hangar were connected with a long taxi strip which led to the concrete runway quite some distance away.

Operations was located in the hangar. The weather office occupied a corner of the top deck of this building. Kodiak's navy weather office had only recently been moved into these quarters having previously been located in a portion of the nearby enlisted men's barracks.

Within the hangar were various small offices. The rear portion of one upper deck was partitioned into chief's quarters, along with barracks for weathermen and the Wing's flight crews. These quarters were all roomy, warm, and comfortable.

Calderon and I reported for temporary duty at the weather office. We were issued mess passes, assigned

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bunks and lockers in the hangar barracks, and placed on watch sections.

There were many civilian workmen on the base. These people labored for either Siems-Drake Puget Sound Construction Co. or Morrison-Knudsen Co. Both outfits were constructing additional warehouses, barracks, other buildings, fuel storage tanks, ammunition dumps, gun emplacements, piers, etc. Winter storms and freezing weather had drastically slowed much of this work.

The navy's cluster of buildings perched expectantly on the edge of the bay. Three towering mountain peaks ringed the area on the inland side. Old Woman Mountain rose abruptly immediately behind the hangar; Pyramid and Barometer Mountains were farther inland off the end of the runway. All three cast gloomy shadows across the base by early afternoon.

The U.S. Army's Fort Greely, which was nothing to write home about either, was nearby.

All in all it seemed a terrible place at the time but Kodiak would be fondly remembered as heaven by comparison to other places I would later be stationed.

It was six or eight miles to the town of Kodiak depending on whether or not one cheated and used the taxi-strip and runway or went all the way around by road.

Either way, one faced about five miles of treacherous, chuckholed, icy, twisting, mountain road that had been blasted out of solid rock halfway up sheer cliffs. The cliff face meandered along another bay on which the town of Kodiak was situated.

It took a lot of guts to make the round trip to town to sample Kodiak's doubtful pleasures. Entertainment was low in quality but high in price.

The town, like the base, was not impressive. It contained a Russian Orthodox Church; a school; a bank complete with bear skins on the walls and just inside the entrance, a huge stuffed Kodiak bear standing on its hind legs; Kraft's Mercantile which extended out over the water on pilings; one dime store; a soda fountain; a couple of curio shops; two movie houses; and several houses of pleasure. Every other building in greater downtown Kodiak seemed to be a bar or tavern.

A hodge-podge of about forty, mostly ramshackle, wood houses stood forlornly on a muddy hillside overlooking the dreary business district. The unpaved streets were a quagmire. You couldn't stay clean even

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if you stayed sober.

Perhaps twenty-five small fishing boats were tied up at the slightly rickety dock area. These were salmon purse seiners, halibut long-liners, and Dungeness crab boats. There was no U.S. King crab fishery at the time. The Japanese fished for these ugly, spidery crustaceans but we did not consider them edible. It was reported that the Japanese used tangle nets to catch them.

Base bus service ran into town. This method of transportation was downright dangerous because the bus sometimes slid off the icy road. There were no guard rails along the cliffs and if these mishaps had occurred at the wrong places it was a long, long way down to the water. The bus, however, was preferable to the town's wild taxi service. While patiently waiting to take a payload of celebrating sailors or soldiers back to the base, some of the hack jockies apparently passed the time by nipping at their own jugs. To save time so they could hurry back to town for another fare, many of the taxi drivers used the runway and taxi strip, especially at night. This was against all base regulations but it cut off several miles and offered the drivers a wide, smooth surface where they could make time.

On the run from town the taxis would drive onto the runway near its inland end and speed down it until it joined the taxi-strip near the ocean end. After negotiating this glazed right angle turn onto the taxi-strip, another straight shot of about three fourths of a mile brought them to the base proper.

One night, in a blizzard, a taxi load of seven revelers missed the turn and plunged to their deaths in the sea off the end of the runway.

Usually, after one blast in town, just to say they'd been there, most of the base personnel stayed home. Calderon and I were in this category. We pitched one tame liberty, bar hopping and drinking beer at two bits a glass, viewing the dismal sights, then called it quits. We enjoyed the beer but the alarming, daylight bus ride in and the Indianapolis Speedway type taxi ride back late that night just weren't worth repeating.

Bob Calderon's full name was Roberto Rosendo Calderon. He pronounced his last name Coll-dah-rone. He was from Albuquerque, New Mexico and insisted that he was of Castilian Spanish descent. We kidded him that he was undoubtedly a descendant of one of Pancho

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Villa's banditos and instead of his forefathers owning a large land grant they had probably swam the Rio Grande.

Bob was of medium height and build with dark curly hair, dark eyes, and a swarthy complexion. Originally, we called him, "Blackie". He kept insisting that, "Carrigan's blacker than I am." Eventually, we nicknamed him the "Cisco Kid" which was later shortened to Cisco.

Calderon was intelligent, a little on the reserved, quiet side but he had a fine sense of humor. He was a good shipmate and well liked by everyone who worked with him.

When Cisco and I reported at Kodiak that winter the senior aerological officer was Lieutenant Commander Howard B. "Hutch" Hutchinson, USN. In addition to being the O-in-C of the NAS Kodiak weather office, Hutchinson was also the Executive Officer of the naval base.

Watch standing officers under Hutchinson were: Ensigns R.G. Hadfield, USNR; Burton W. "Smokey" Lindley, USNR; Lestor P. Mallory, USN; Warrant Aerographer William G. "Wild Bill" Lindeman, USN; and Warrant Aerographer Fred Berry, USN. Lindley and Mallory had passed through Seattle a month or so earlier. Lindeman and Berry, both long time chiefs had recently made warrant officer. Lindeman had retained his position as head honcho office chief.

Most of the enlisted weather personnel had been at Kodiak for several months or longer. Over half of them having come north around October 1941. The enlisted group included: Joseph A. "Stinky Foot" Leahy, AerM1c, USN; Richard D. "Dutch" Ackerman, AerM2c, USN; Jesse Harding Vowell, AerM3c, USN; Ralph G. "Blue Baron" Rayburn, AerM3c, USN, (Rayburn wore the only pair of blue tinted glasses any of us had seen); Charles S. "Pat" Patterson, AerM3c, USN; Frederick B. "Fatty" Wall, AerM3c, USN (the kid from boot camp who had the brains to ask the chief yeoman where the navy primary weather school was located); Vernon Gaston "Frenchy" Moyer, AerM3c, USN who was also a primary school classmate of mine; Walter F. "Iron-head" Zamorski, AerM3c, USN; Claude F. Giles, AerM3c, USN; and S1c striker, Sandor "Count" Podmanski. USNR.

There were also two U.S. Army enlisted weathermen attached to the navy weather office. They were Sergeant C. Call, USA, and Corporal K. "Goose" Gosevisch, USA.

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The navy had sent some misfits to ninety day schools to make them meteorologists extraordinaire. This group included both reservists (sometimes called "feather mercants") and regular navy people, some of whom had retired and others who had been passed over for promotion time and time again for this or that reason. Many of these "ninety-day wonders", as they were often referred to, developed into excellent weathermen and forecasters. A few, however, were complete busts. One lieutenant commander who showed up at Kodiak as Commander Hutchinson's assistant was a nice quiet drunk.

Our seaplane hangar was also home for the base radios which were located in one corner of our weather office. One was an old, standard, short-wave radio transmitter and receiver which the radiomen used for our weather schedules. The other set was a 200 watt, in-shore frequency, voice transmitter and receiver operated by the weathermen. We called this our "Fish Broadcasting Network" or "Fish Net".

This antiquated civilian radio equipment and the loose weather network had been set up by Wild Bill Lindeman and his cohort, Lieutenant Commander Carl "Squeaky" Anderson. The voice equipment's power range was capable of reaching along the Alaskan Peninsula and its offshore islands, dependent as always on atmospheric conditions. By means of our Fish Net we received scattered hourly weather reports from old friends of Squeaky Andersons. These were native and Caucasian fur trappers who plied their isolated, lonely, winter trade; skippers of fishing boats operating in the area; and various fish cannery managers and caretakers. Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) employees stationed at native villages along the peninsula and in the islands also sent us weather reports as did the B.I.A. tugboat captain who carried supplies, passengers, and mail between the native settlements. We often called these agency people, boats, and trappers to request special weather reports to supplement the meager coverage of southwestern Alaska.

Our Fish Net was the only radio link many of these people had with the outside world. The weathermen frequently acted as liaison receiving and relaying personal messages, forwarding requests for supplies, etc. This radio setup was also used for emergencies.

During my short stay at Kodiak, our

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weather-guessor's Fish Net was invaluable in one emergency situation. A call was received from Bill Pierre, the trapper, reindeer herdsman, and caretaker of the fish cannery at Alitak in Lazy Bay at the far southern tip of Kodiak. A pile-driver had overturned and a man was seriously injured. Lt. Cmdr. Russell immediately dispatched one of his PBY's to the scene and the man was flown back to the hospital at Kodiak.

All base communications were handled through the weather office radios. There was no direct radio link with the naval base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. It was not an efficient wartime communications system.

This Mickey Mouse communications arrangement was not typical--it was better than most. The war caught us woefully unprepared in this department along with everything else. Communication problems would continue to plague our efforts throughout the Aleutian Campaign of WWII. Inadequate equipment, especially in the beginning, was only one of the problems. Other difficulties were frequent poor transmission and reception because of atmospheric conditions; lack of organization, proper liaison, understanding, or cooperation between the various branches of service. Unfortunately, communications are as vital to a military operation as bullets.

The blame for Alaska's lack of proper communications facilities and equipment, along with much else, can be laid on many doorsteps including the apathy of the American public. Our country had fought WWI; sang, danced, and drank its way through the Roaring Twenties, and then experienced the Crash of 1929 followed by the Great Depression. No Congressman or Senator would dare propose an increase in the military budget and then have to return home to face his constituents.

Between wars, military appropriations are always cut to the bone. The available money is fought over tooth and nail by vying military branches. Bitterness and jealousies result from this infighting behind the scenes at our capitol. When war inevitably erupts, material is pitifully short in supply and the jealousies and bitterness which years of peacetime politics fostered are carried over into wartime.

At one time the U.S. Navy had a good communications system in Alaska. Its center was in Cordova. Stations in the network were at St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs, Dutch Harbor, Seward near Anchorage, and Ketchikan in southeastern Alaska. The

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Army took over this communications system in 1925 and included Seward and Cordova in their Army Alaska Communications System. St. Paul, Dutch Harbor, and Ketchikan communications were eliminated.

The U.S. Navy's roots and interest in Alaska and the Aleutians dates back to our country's purchase of Alaska from Russia. In 1866 a navy lieutenant was sent to St. Paul Island to administer the U.S. Government's newly instituted Fur Seal Protection Act.

The navy had also recognized the strategic importance of the Aleutian Islands. These foggy islands, however, were remote, the weather severe, and supply and maintenance costs in peacetime were too prohibitive for the navy to establish any primary airfields west of Kodiak.

After 1925, and through the 1930's, navy operations were limited by lack of appropriations and were mostly confined to weather and aerial surveys.

I've mentioned Lt. Cmdr. Howard B. Hutchinson as being one of our country's earliest and foremost meteorologists. We were fortunate to have men of his calibre trained, available, and at the right place at the right time. At Kodiak, Hutchinson had seen to it that he was backed by two other outstanding navy weathermen. These were William G. "Wild Bill" Lindeman and Fred W. Berry both experienced former Chief Aerographer's Mates who had recently made Warrant Aerographer. Commander Hutchinson and W/O Lindeman had both spent several years in the Aleutians during the 1930's with U.S. Navy weather/survey expeditions.

Because of Hutchinson's and Lindeman's intimate knowledge and experience with Aleutian weather they had been sent to Kodiak early in the fall of 1941 when war with Japan appeared imminent.

Lindeman had enlisted in the navy on April 7, 1924. He had transferred from quartermaster to aerology in 1925. That year he graduated with the last Primary Aerographer's class held at Anacostia. Lindeman and Fred Berry had both been "pigeon keepers" early in their naval careers.

Wild Bill Lindeman's sidekick at Kodiak in early 1942 was Lieutenant Commander Carl E. "Squeaky" Anderson, a bonafide colorful character in the history of mankind. Anderson had been a civilian since his naval service in WWI until the fall of 1941 when he found himself in the navy again. Squeaky, a name derived from his high pitched, loud voice, was shanghied by the navy because of his knowledge of

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Aleutian waters. He had been a small boat skipper in the area since shortly after WWI. His ventures and adventures included owning and operating numerous fishing vessels and a fish cannery; buying fish and purchasing furs from trappers throughout the Alaskan Peninsula, Aleutians, and Bering Sea.

Squeaky and Wild Bill had not met back in the 1930's but Lindeman had heard many stories about Anderson. The two had become fast friends at Kodiak. They were both wild Swedes and two of a kind, kindred spirits in everything including "spirits".

Squeaky Anderson spent a great deal of his time, both day and night, in our weather office mainly fussing over his pet project, the Fish Net communications. This was more than a loose weather reporting system for Anderson and Lindeman had also set it up as an early warning/intelligence network. All those in the network were to keep a sharp eye out for suspicious activities, enemy submarines, and enemy aircraft.

Quite often at night, Anderson and Lindeman would sit around up in the hangar barracks and tell tall tales to us youngsters. Squeaky readily admitted that the reason he knew those waters so well was because the U.S.Coast Guard had been chasing him around the islands and through the treacherous passes for years. When a Coast Guard officer was told of Squeaky's sudden appointment to Lieutenant Commander in the U.S.Navy his face paled and he reportedly remarked, "My God! I hope they don't send him westward, he'll kill all the sea otters!"

We won't go into some of the activities Squeaky told us he'd been engaged in at various times. He insisted, however, that all of the fishermen and trappers with whom he'd had dealings with trusted and liked him. They called him "Honest Carl". This, I believe.

Squeaky Anderson and I also crossed paths many times later on at Dutch Harbor, on the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis, at Adak, and finally, Attu. Carl Anderson would one day make Captain and would go down in history as the legendary "Beach Master" of the Pacific. His special skills were first recognized during our occupation of Adak on August 30, 1942. His genius for surmounting unsolvable problems has no parallel. He had a very special knack for getting materiel into a beach, then perhaps more importantly, getting it off the beach to keep the area clear and

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supplies moving inland. It took a lot of cussing and shouting in his piercing, thick Swedish accent but he saw to it that his men accomplished one miracle after another throughout the WWII campaigns in the Aleutians, and South and Central Pacific.

Understandably, I treasure the memory of those nighttime "bull sessions" with Squeaky Anderson and Wild Bill Lindeman at the Kodiak hangar barracks. There is one other Kodiak memory, however, that I've been trying to forget for thirty-nine years.

It took me exactly five days after my arrival in Kodiak to get into trouble. On the fifth night I threw the naval base, Fort Greely, and the town of Kodiak on battle stations alert.

There was one man in the office, and one man only, that I didn't hit if off with. He was Claude Giles, AerM3c. To me he was obnoxious and the feeling must have been mutual. On weather office watch he persistently ordered me to do this or that even though we both held the same rating. We got into a few beefs over his bossy attitude.

I can't recall what it was about but on the fourth day in the office I said to him, "Giles, if you're gonna keep this crap up you're going to have to hold your hands stretched out in front of you like this, with the hands close together, palms up and fingers spread."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because," I replied, "I'm gonna hand your f---ing head to you."

We started to get into that night in the barracks but before much damage was done, others broke it up and prevented mayhem. This set the stage for the drama that was to unfold the following night.

In addition to our other duties the aerographers were assigned a liquid cooled, .50 calibre machine gun as our battle station. This sand-bagged pit with its flanking rifle positions had been hacked out of the side of Old Woman Mountain directly behind the seaplane hangar. The position was reached by a switch-backed dirt road.

The machine gun was at the same level as the hangar roof area on which the weather office thermoscreen was located. The distance was perhaps one hundred yards. We stood four hour watches on the machine gun.

On this particular winter night I had the midnight to 0400 gun watch. It was freezing cold and

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I bundled up accordingly. In pitch darkness I picked my way up the short, steep dirt road to the spur that led off to our position.

We did not follow strict military procedure in relieving the sentry watch. As the site was approached, the man on duty was supposed to hail, "Halt! Who goes there?" To which one replied, "Friend." The sentry was then supposed to say, "Give the password." The password for the day was then given at which time the sentry ordered, "Advance, friend, and be recognized."

We weathermen did not go through this routine at Kodiak, at least not up until this incident, because each man knew who was at the pit and this man knew who his relief was.

When I noisely approached the machine gun nest the weatherman on duty casually asked, "Is that you, Carrigan?"

"Yeah, Rayburn," I answered, "I'm afraid so."

"God! It's cold," said the Blue Baron as he handed me the rifle and ammunition belt.

"Well," I replied, "You can hit the sack now and you'll be warm and cozy in no time."

"See you in the morning," said Rayburn as his half frozen feet carried him stumbling away over the uneven ground.

We did stay alert on watch. Sleep was out of the question. One would have frozen to death. We had to keep moving constantly to fight the creeping cold that always won out in the end.

One 30.06 rifle and ammo belt was passed from sentry to sentry. Our other rifles and ammunition were kept locked in the hangar armory to be issued when and if needed. The ammunition boxes for the .50 calibre machine gun, however, were stacked in a corner of the pit and were represented by a shapeless mass covered with an old tarpaulin. One full can of belted ammunition was mounted on the gun but the shells were not started in the breech. A tarp also protected the machine gun.

The 30.06, our badge of authority while on sentry duty, was placed within easy reach rather than held. I usually laid it on top of the sand bags. If it was raining or snowing we tucked the rifle under the machine gun tarp. The cloth ammo belt with its pouches of loaded clips was normally draped over the machine gun barrel.

Time almost stood still. It was as if the bitter

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winter cold had somehow slowed down all clock mechanisms. Noises were magnified. Occasionally, a balky jeep, car, or truck engine would whir, catch, sputter, then die; another try and it would burst into life. The vehicle would then slowly move about guided by the feeble illumination of its "cat's eyes", black out driving lights. Off in the distance I could hear the steady hum of a diesel generator. Any distractions were welcome for they helped time pass and took one's mind momentarily off the numbing cold.

At 0100 I heard the heavy steel door on the hangar roof click shut. I watched a red-lensed flashlight make its way toward the thermoscreen. I knew that one of the aerographer's mates on the mid-watch was taking the hourly weather observation. The faint light flicked about as the man took the thermoscreen instrument readings. After a few moments, the light waveringly went back to the roof door then disappeared.

When the door clicked and the light appeared again at 0200, I vaguely wondered what in heck I would do if the light were the enemy. The night was so black I doubted if I could even line up gun sights on the flickering, feeble red light. To satisfy my curiosity I decided to find out. Reaching out, I grasped the rifle, laid it across the sandbags and hunkered down behind it as I put the butt firmly against my shoulder.

I put the front bead on the light and was moving my head slightly up and down trying to line up the rear sight. My gloved finger had automatically gone to the trigger. The stillness was shattered by the roar of the 30.06. A red tracer bullet, the size of a baseball, **WHAA-WHAAAA-WHAAAAAAAAAED!** directly at the thermoscreen, missed it, and streaked on across the base.

I stood there stunned. For a second I thought a hundred other guns had fired for the echoes of the report came thundering back from the mountains.

The base air raid siren, located on the hangar roof, started to wail and reached its ear-splitting peak. This thing could wake the dead and could be heard in the town of Kodiak. To say that all hell broke loose would be a gross understatement. Lights came on all over the base, the strict black out rules apparently no longer holding validity. All types of vehicles were soon rushing in many different directions. I'd poked a stick into a giant hornet's

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nest.

There were, of course, many sentries on duty at various gun positions all over the navy base and at the army's nearby Fort Greely. It didn't take long for people to zero in on the source of the tracer bullet. A string of bouncing vehicles soon came charging up the side of Old Woman Mountain to converge on the machine gun pit.

The siren continued its piercing wail as a large group of angry people gathered around me in the dark. Flashlights were shined in my face. The rifle and ammo belt were confiscated and I was hauled roughly away to a jeep. The procession headed for the hangar and the operations-weather office.

I found myself in the custody of the Provost Marshall. In the excitement I never learned whether this major was a marine from our base or an army officer from Fort Greely. There was a great deal of shouting and confusion until someone finally sounded the all clear signal and the damned siren was turned off. The base settled down but not in the room where I was.

Everyone was highly pissed off. Wild Bill Lindeman was livid and I thought he was going to have me shot on the spot. Several officers fired questions at me simultaneously. Finally, it was Lindeman who seemed to take charge. He gave me a chance to explain exactly what happened and why. He questioned me about how we relieved each other on sentry duty. Other aerographer's mates were brought in to testify. Under this grilling one fact emerged: No one ever checked the gun; it was simply handed from sentry to sentry.

The investigation then took an odd turn that puzzles me to this day. For some reason I had few further questions directed at me. Nobody seemed the least concerned that the tracer bullet had almost decapitated a man. Instead, the focus of attention turned to where this shell had come from and not who'd placed it in the chamber. All of the clips in the ammunition belt were checked and found to be full. Why the question of where the extra tracer shell came from was so paramount I'll never know.

This mystery was never solved. The incident was closed and soon forgotten by most. No punishment was meted out to me except a ferocious ass chewing by Wild Bill. This gave me a glimmer of how he got his nickname.

The unfortunate aspect and strangest twist to

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this story came to light during the investigation that night. The Provost Marshall asked that the aerographer's mate who'd almost been killed step forward for questioning. It turned out to be Claude Giles!

Giles stated that he happened to be looking in the rough direction of the machine gun pit when the 30.06 went off. He didn't even have time to react. The fiery, whooshing ball of red flashed over his head, missing him by a scant two feet.

Giles did not mention our trouble and I certainly hadn't volunteered any information about it. The choice of words in my threat to him had almost been prophetic. I'm sure that Giles was convinced I'd tried to blow his head off and perhaps he'd decided not to press his luck any further.

Word spread, "Don't ---k around with the Black Irishman unless you want to get killed in a hurry." This incident was the first of many wild stories circulated about me during the following twenty-seven months in the Aleutians. Some of the stories were true; most were figments of imaginations. Even the tales that had some basis in fact were embellished with each telling until they became outrageous. The tale spinners, in due time, no longer knew the difference between truth and fiction. It seemed to matter little to them. These tales, however, caused me problems in the years that followed.

Claude Giles and I served together for several months about a year later. We had no further confrontations. I generally ignored him because I had no use for the man. I assume he preferred to give me a wide berth.

These were grim days for our country during WWII. As enlisted men, we were not told anything officially. All that the men required during wartime were orders which were to be obeyed without question. Junior officers were almost in the same boat. The top echelons of command knew of the critical situation but bad news certainly should never be relayed to the men. It would be bad for their morale and some might panic. So it was strictly, Shades of India for us or 'Into the valley of death....'.

Scuttlebutt, bits of carefully selected official releases, Tokyo Rose and her nightly broadcasts, month old stateside newspapers, snatches of static-riddled broadcasts picked up in the radio shack late at night all added a few pieces to the puzzle. Even with so

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little information sifting down to us it was clear our country and her Allies were losing the war at that point.

Our Pacific battleship fleet had been virtually destroyed on December 7, 1941. Between then and Christmas 1941 the rampaging Japanese Empire's forces had over-run all of Indo-China and Thailand. Guam Island had been captured, Wake Island had fallen and so had Hong Kong. Scuttlebutt had it that the mighty British battleship Prince of Wales and battle cruiser Repulse had been sunk. If true (and it was) they had been the only major Allied ships west of Midway Island in the entire Pacific Ocean. By February 7, 1942, Japanese forces had occupied Manila, Singapore, and Malaya. On February 10, 1942, ten Allied ship had been sunk during the disastrous Battle of the Java Sea. Up to this time, the largest warship that the Imperial Japanese Navy had lost was a destroyer. It didn't look good for our side.

Patrol Wing Four's "Catalinas" continued to fly sector search patrols out of Kodiak, Sitka, Cold Bay, and Dutch Harbor. Lt. Cmdr. James S. Russell and his VP-42 had a lot of territory to cover with only twelve PBV's. The Pratt-Whitney engines had to be majored after nine hundred hours. Because this work could not be done by our small seaplane tenders or at Dutch Harbor, the planes had to be flown to Kodiak or the states for overhaul of this magnitude.

As Wing aerographer's mates, Cisco Calderon and I flew a lot but NAS aerographer's mates also logged considerable time flying in March 1942 out of Kodiak and Dutch Harbor as they would continue to do throughout the Aleutian Campaign. At most Naval Air Stations or large Naval Operating Bases the weather office was usually issued several sets of "Flight Skins." These were rotated on a monthly basis among the senior petty officers, these usually being the chief and first class aerographer's mates. Quite often a set made its way down to an AerM2c or 3c. These people flew as extra crew not having been through aerial gunnery school. I point this out because under this setup and with periodic advancement in rating it becomes apparent that before his tour of Alaska-Aleutian duty ended, almost every navy weatherman had at least a taste of the perils of flying combat patrols.

It might be noted that during the month of March 1942 when Calderon and I were flying out of Kodiak

ships

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there were no completed airfields southwest of Kodiak.

We "flew the weather" while conducting anti-submarine and reconnaissance patrols. These assigned sector searches radiated outward from Kodiak like the pie-shaped panels of a Japanese fan. Most were to the southwest, south, and southeast out into the Gulf of Alaska. One sector circled to the northward toward Anchorage, covering the entrance to Prince William Sound and thence southwestward along the Kenai and Alaskan Peninsulas. This flight took us past Katmai Volcano and the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. Another sector flight took us from Kodiak westward a short distance to the Straits of Shelikof then southwestward along the Alaskan Peninsula toward Cold Bay.

Occasionally, a crisp winter day dawned crystal clear. Under a pure white blanket of snow and an unbelievably blue sky, the rugged Alaskan Peninsula with its towering volcanic peaks was a sight of such raw beauty that it almost took one's breath away.

If weather conditions were favorable for dreaded "Williwaws" we patrolled far enough offshore to avoid them. At other times I thoroughly enjoyed these inshore patrols for we nosed into various bays and scouted most of the major islands at close range. There were numerous native villages and/or fish cannery settlements scattered throughout the region both on sheltered bays of the peninsula and the offshore islands.

A typical patrol of this nature took us down the Straits of Shelikof and into places such as Chignik, Mitrofanina, and Ivanof Bay. On the outward leg we'd check Korovin Island, Sand Point on Popov Island, and Squaw Harbor on Unga Island, these three all being islands of the Shumagin group. Our PBY would continue southwestward to Dolgoi, Belkofski and King Cove all close to towering Mount Pavlof and Cold Bay.

Sometimes we'd fly into Cold Bay, land and taxi close to the seaplane tender Williamson to deliver a mail pouch which was transferred to one of the tender's boats. On the beach at Cold Bay there was a tent city located in the mud. A great deal of heavy construction work in the form of earth moving was going on at the time. Word was that the army was building a secret airfield.

Cold Bay was a desolate, dreary place and I was always glad when we took off again. I wondered how Lester "Porky" Roberts, Jr. was doing aboard the

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Williamson as the only weatherman handling the forecasts for several PBY's but I never had a chance to see him.

On the outward flight we also occasionally landed at Sand Point in the Shumagins. Once it was to drop off high priority operational dispatches that had missed the daily mail plane that flew the Kodiak to Dutch Harbor run. Another time it was to offload two navy enlisted passengers and their gear. There was a small detachment of personnel stationed at the Sand Point, Naval Auxillary Air Facility (NAAF). Our PBY's could also obtain fuel at Sand Point if needed. Fuel was also available from the Williamson. If for any reason we needed fuel and couldn't make it into either Sand Point or Cold Bay there was an emergency fuel cache on Dolgoi Island. This was just off the coast from the Alaska Peninsula settlement at Belkofski. Dolgoi had a small sheltered bay and the fuel barrels were stored in the open above high water mark at the head of the bay. There were no facilities or people whatsoever at Dolgoi. To fuel, it was necessary to inflate a rubber raft, get ashore, roll the barrels down to the water, float them out to the anchored plane and pump gas by means of a hand pump with which each plane was equipped. Dolgoi, I would guess, was one of the first truly self-service gas stations.

Leaving the Cold Bay area we would fly seaward to check out Sanak Island and its small settlement. On the homeward flight we would circle the outer islands of the Shumagins: Nagai, and Big and Little Koniuji. Winging northeastward brought us to the Semidi Islands and Chirikof thence northward over the Trinity Islands to the south tip of Kodiak. From Alitak our flight progressed up the east coast of Kodiak past Old Harbor, rounded Cape Chiniak and landed back at our base.

These patrols, except for being conducted in mostly bad winter weather, were uneventful. After the war, it was learned that Japanese I-class submarines were reconnoitering our area but we did not see them. To avoid detection the enemy submarines undoubtedly were at submerged periscope depth during daylight and ran on the surface at night to charge their batteries.

During the third week in March 1942 our new seaplane tender USS Casco Bay came north and stopped briefly at Kodiak enroute to Dutch Harbor. She'd been accepted by the navy, commissioned, and was on a shakedown cruise. At the same time, Calderon and I

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received temporary duty orders by radio dispatch from Commander Tatom in Seattle which transferred us to Wing operations at Dutch Harbor. Our orders were to fly the weather out of that base. Transportation to Dutch Harbor would be via the Casco.

During March 1942 the Japanese war machine had gobbled up Java and Burma. What was left of the British Asiatic Fleet had been driven out of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. For the most part, Dutch Fleet units had also been destroyed. Japanese forces had landed on the island of New Guinea and a Japanese army was struggling over the rugged Owen Stanley Mountains to attack Port Moresby on the south coast of New Guinea. Across narrow Torres Strait from Port Moresby lay Australia. Scuttlebutt had it that Darwin, Australia had been heavily bombed several times by Japanese planes.

USS Casco Bay- Kodiak to Dutch Harbor

In snow showers and restricted visibility, the Casco got underway for Dutch Harbor near the end of March 1942. George Martin, AerM2c and Fred Maurer, S1c, both ship's company, were the only weathermen aboard. Calderon and I would lend them a hand by standing weather office watches on the trip.

Our voyage was delayed for six hours when the ship sideswiped a small wooden boat in the confining, rock- studded channel of Kupreanof Strait. This fishing vessel sank but its three man crew was plucked from the icy water and taken to Kodiak. Our cold, rough trip began anew. This time, after negotiating narrow, twisty-turny Kupreanof without mishap, the ship plunged southwest through heavy seas in Shelikof Strait.

A brief stop was made the following day at Sand Point in the Shumagins to drop off several navy personnel and some supplies. The ship continued toward Dutch Harbor via Unga Strait which separates the Shumagins from the Alaska Peninsula.

The Pavlof Islands were in sight when the chillingly urgent clanging of General Quarters(GQ) sounded. No matter how many times one hears this shattering sound, one is never ready for the shock. As men raced to their battlestations they always wondered if it were a drill or false alarm but had to assume it was the real thing and death was close at hand.

Radar had picked up a formation of aircraft coming directly at us from the WEST at an altitude of 12,000 feet. Seven specks soon came within visual range. They were twin-engined bombers flying in a tight "V" beneath a broken middle cloud deck of altostratus/altocumulus. Although still a long distance away, they did not look like PBY's. Besides, VP-42 did not have that many planes operating to our west. Even

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had this been a possibility, it would be unlikely for the PBV's to be flying east in tight formation.

They could be U.S. Army 11th Air Force planes but our understanding was that their heavy bombers were all based over 500 miles to our rear on the mainland. A signalman was orderd into action on the port wing of Casco's bridge located a few feet forward of our office weather deck. In crisp fashion he worked the shutter handle on his powerful signal lamp. His urgent, Morse Code blinks were asking the rapidly approaching planes for the day's recognition signal. His repeated query brought no answer.

We will have to assume, you and I, that a radio signal was also sent from the ship on the assigned U.S.A.A.F aircraft frequency. This method of communicating with the bombers also failed. Communications, as noted, even among homogenous outfits was an inadequate patchwork; between army and navy it was almost nil at this time. Because of what followed it is a certainty the bombers had neither heard nor seen us.

Casco's skipper HAD to make a decision. He could not wait until the bombers were overhead because by then the bombs would already have been released if the aircraft were Japanese.

At the last possible second the order was given to "Open Fire!" Simultaneous salvos from the forward turrets of the pitching, rolling ship, exploded below and to port of the lead bomber. The planes did not waver and kept coming as they would if locked in on a bombing run. Our turret guns went to individual rapid fire. Black flak appeared to burst among the planes. For a few incredulous seconds I thought we had shot them all down. Like an erupting Fourth of July star shell, the tight "V" formation disintegrated into seven planes diving steeply away in as many different directions. Several additional turret rounds were fired and one of the 40mm. Bofors anti-aircraft guns on the boat deck hammered away briefly before the cease fire order was given.

Perhaps we ceased fire because someone identified the bombers as "friendlies." Perhaps the ship received a frantic radio message cussing us out. I was not on the bridge and therefore not privy to that information.

Whatever the reason, we secured from GQ and continued our voyage. Scuttlebutt passed through the ship that the planes were 11th Air Force B-18 bombers

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returning to Elmendorf Air Base, Anchorage. They had taken advantage of decent weather to make a familiarization flight down the Bristol Bay side of the Alaska Peninsula and return on the Pacific Ocean side.

Fortunately, we did not shoot any down and likely did not hit any. This was probably because of a combination of rough seas, and lack of experience by Casco's gun crews and fire control. If this incident had occurred five months later after the ship was seasoned, the results could have been tragic.

On the other hand, if Casco's skipper had waited too long and the bombers had been enemy, our ship might have been sunk with the likely loss of several hundred lives.

Command decisions can be difficult.

The bomber crews had undoubtedly been shaken up and were mad at the ship. Casco's officers and crew were upset with the bomber crews for not being more alert. Their inattention had placed us in an alarming situation. Army-Navy relations certainly weren't sweetened by this incident.

Although Casco's firing at U.S. bombers was a spine chilling experience for those involved it is mentioned here for a specific reason. It was the first of at least a half dozen such incidents of which I'm personally aware. Some others did end in tragedy.

These "incidents" happened throughout the war, in all theatres, in all branches of the service, under a thousand different circumstances. Sadly, they are inevitable. In wartime they are also much more widespread than the general public would dare imagine. The very nature of war demands that they occur. To survive, one must often shoot first and ask questions later.

Accidents such as these are always hushed up if possible. Quite often, even military outfits in the general area of their occurrence did not learn of them. The War Department simply notified a mother by telegram that her son had been killed.

The only notable exception to this, that I recall during WWII, was the shooting down by our own guns of a large number of gliders packed with U.S. troops. This happened at night in 1944 during the battle at Anzio, Italy. The loss of life was a thousand or more. This was of such giant proportions that word of it got out and was much publicized. We heard about it way out in the Aleutians, half a world away.

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A few months after the incident between the Casco and the B-18 bombers those frequently troubled Aleutian waters really became seas of turmoil. Japan had brought the war to North American shores. I remember thinking at the time that I would not want to be in even a U.S. submarine. By then we had depth charged many a "possible" enemy submarine with our patrolling PBY's. Fortunately, the "possibles" turned out to be mostly whales along with several Japanese submarines.

Flight crews were briefed before takeoff by the Air Combat Intelligence (ACI) Officer on the general location of our own boats which were operating in those same waters. This information was usually a case of, "S-35 was last reported here", (pointing at the map and giving time, date, latitude and longitude). The time could be twenty-four or more hours old. The general impression was that one could never be quite certain where a U.S. boat might pop up from the depths simply because of wartime emergency reasons of its own.

So, in the Aleutians besides the awesomely bad weather, torturous terrain, and the enemy, we always had "accidents" to worry about.

After the two and a half day passage from Kodiak the Casco's bows came knifing into the outer reaches of large Unalaska Bay. Even though our voyage to Dutch Harbor could hardly be termed uneventful thus far, it was not over yet.

The Dutch Harbor U.S. Naval Base and adjoining Fort Mears U.S. Army base were on small Amaknak Island. Other vessels were tied up at the naval base docking facilities. One small cargo ship was anchored out waiting its turn to unload. The Port Director ordered the Casco to tie up temporarily at the Aleut village of Unalaska. Narrow Iliuliuk Bay separates this ancient mainland settlement from Dutch Harbor. The old wooden finger pier we'd been directed to was only about a mile from the naval base.

A reserve Lt(jg) had the bridge watch and was conning the ship. Word was that he'd been in the navy a short time. He had, however, found the time to proudly let it be known that he'd been commodore of a yacht club power squadron in Newport, RI.

Calderon and I were outside the ship's weather shack and watching the activity as the seaplane tender slid through the water on her approach to the long, slender pier. The officer of the deck(O.O.D.) was

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standing far out on the wing of the bridge as he judged our speed and distance. Periodically, he gave confident orders to the helmsman and engine room.

It was rumored later that the ex commodore may have attempted to impress people with his skill. Some thought his idea was to zoom up to the pier as he would have done in a yacht, then by last moment maneuvering of helm and engines deftly lay the ship gently alongside.

I did not notice a crisis approaching. I was intent on observing a gathering crowd of curious onlookers along the waterfront. There were also several small knots of men positioning themselves along the pier to receive our mooring lines when heaved.

Cisco turned to me and said, "Jesus, aren't we coming in awfully fast?"

A second later the collision alarm sounded. Both engines were thrown into full reverse. Screws bit savagely into the water. A huge, boiling wake churned around the ship's stern. Instead of slowing down, the only immediate effect was that the Casco began to jump up and down. Officers and crew were running fore and aft. Orders were being shouted. The civilians on the pier were fleeing pell-mell from impending disaster.

The ship was only making a knot or so when it struck the pier but the force was devastating. Pilings snapped like toothpicks. With a domino like ripple, four by twelve inch deck planking, twenty feet long, popped off as though they were merely piano keys. Many of these huge timbers were thrown high into the air.

"Look out downtown Unalaska. Here we come," said Calderon. We ran for the weather office, slammed shut the heavy steel hatch, and dogged down a couple of handles.

For another minute or so, the ship continued her hippityhopping motion amid loud snapping, crunching, scraping noises. When things quieted down we went back out on deck.

The outer third of the finger pier had been utterly destroyed. This was testimony enough that our yacht club commodore had badly misjudged the handling characteristics of our 1695 ton seaplane tender.

From beginning to end, our trip to Dutch Harbor had been more a shake-up than shake-down cruise. It was not a true indicator, however, for the ship and her crew would compile a distinguished Aleutian record before she was through.

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Calderon shook his head in awe as he surveyed the damaged pier. Two sailors high up on the boat deck picked up a section of heavy, splintered planking and threw it over the side.

"First," said Calderon, "it was the fishing boat, then the bombers, and now this. Hell's Bells, at this rate, all the Nips have to do is sit back and watch us destroy ourselves."

That afternoon we said goodbye to Martin and Maurer. Along with seven other sailors and two junior officers who'd also been passengers on the trip, we climbed into a launch for the short ride across Iliuliuk Bay to Dutch Harbor.

U.S. Naval Operating Base (NOB), Dutch Harbor,
Alaska

March-April 1942

Dutch Harbor was not the end of the earth but on tippy-toes one stood a chance of glimpsing it from there. Unalaska's onion topped Russian Orthodox Church steeple was also proof that the area was not quite God forsaken. Nonetheless, it was a forlorn place which seemed even more bleak to Calderon and me than had Kodiak earlier.

Casco's launch deposited us at the small-boat landing. Leaden skies began to swirl and boil. It started to snow and blow. We trudged around in the slushy mud with our hands full of all the gear we possessed while trying to find the weather shack. We asked directions from half a dozen people all of whom appeared to be civilian workmen. None had the foggiest notion where the navy weather office was located. Out of the snowflakes appeared a man wearing a few items of navy issue foul weather clothing. He waved vaguely in the direction of some large wooden barracks and warehouses as he passed and said, "I think it's over there someplace."

The office was a wooden shack that fronted on the "boardwalk". This raised, wooden walkway extended a short distance into the base from the main dock area. There were no paved roads or other walkways on the base. Vehicular traffic had churned the snow and mud into the usual quagmire.

Calderon and I reported to Ralph P. Darr, CAerM, USN for temporary duty. As the only two Patrol Wing Four aerographer's mates present, we were to be assigned to separate weather office watch sections in order to help out and keep busy when we weren't flying weather/search patrols.

O-in-C of the small, navy weather office was

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Commander Thomas C. Thomas, USN, who like Commander Howard B. Hutchinson at Kodiak was also the Executive Officer of NOB Dutch Harbor.

The office weather staff was few in number, so Calderon and I were welcome additions. There were no other officers other than Commander Thomas and only four enlisted men besides Chief Darr. The four were: Robert D. Darden, AerM1c, USN; AerM3c's, Kenneth "Shady" Lane, USN and D.C. "Red" Morrow, USN, both of whom were in primary class at Lakehurst with Calderon and me; and A.B. "Swede" Hultman, S1c, USN. A fifth man, L.R. "Little Shoes" Upton, AerM3c, USN would arrive shortly from the states via Kodiak aboard the navy frigate USS Charleston.

Calderon and I were added to the watch list, assigned bunks and lockers with the other enlisted weathermen in a nearby barracks, and issued chow passes to the navy mess hall.

Several thousand civilian construction workers far outnumbered the three hundred or so navy personnel. These workers had their own mess halls and the majority was quartered in triple story barracks adjacent to ours. The remainder lived on an old steamship, the SS Northwestern. This venerable ship's ocean going career was over. With bilges ballasted with cement, she was firmly secured to shore and permanently beached. Her generators supplied additional power for the naval base.

Construction projects of all kinds were in progress throughout the navy base and the U.S. Army's Fort Mears. Side-by-side, the bases were located on the southern, relatively flat lobe of four mile long, one mile wide, Amaknak Island. Amaknak's northern lobe was Mount Ballyhoo. This mountain, although only 1700 feet high, was steep sided and it was a towering presence because of its proximity.

Dutch Harbor itself is on the eastern side of Amaknak. It was formed by the island's two lobes along with a mile long sand spit that extends southward into small, Iliuliuk Bay from Mount Ballyhoo's northeastern base. Amaknak Island is located about six miles inside the entrance of large, Unalaska Bay which opens to the north and the Bering Sea.

The center of the naval base was in the dock area. Here were the wooden barracks, mess halls, and warehouses. Many smaller wooden and metal buildings housed both navy and civilian shops for electrical, machine, and maintenance work along with

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administration offices and public works departments. Squeezed in here and there were Quonset huts and shacks such as our weather office. Navy officer quarters and mess as well as chiefs' quarters were on slight rises inland and on the western perimeter of the crowded center of the base.

Patrol Wing Four's large metal seaplane hangar, cement apron and ramp were a quarter mile away along the harbor toward Mt. Ballyhoo. A cluster of large wooden fuel tanks stood on a small knoll between the dock area, beached Northwestern, and the seaplane hangar.

A short distance inland from the base proper was a small sugar loaf hill. This knob was all that separated the naval base from the Army's Fort Mears to the west. Perched on the top of this hill was the U.S. Navy Communications Station. This sounds imposing but it was simply a small wooden building set in a deep revetment, surrounded by sandbags and clearly identified by several tall steel towers. Nearby and part way down the north side of the hill, facing the entrance to Unalaska bay, was the sandbagged bunker of the U.S. Navy Command Post.

Scattered around the hill's sides were many recently erected Quonset huts. Many sandbagged gun emplacements had been prepared and others were being built. Most, however, did not yet contain guns.

From this hilltop one could look down on the complex of the Dutch Harbor NOB. Patrol Wing Four's seaplane hangar was directly below to the north as was Mt. Ballyhoo and the entrance to Unalaska Bay. To the right was the base and dock area. To the left, about due west and about seventeen miles away was the magnificent volcanic cone of 6680 foot Mount Makushin. Below in this direction was Fort Mears with its row upon row of large, white painted barracks. The Aleut village of Unalaska was a mile to the southeast and across a narrow sliver of water at the head of Iliuliuk Bay. Jumbled, snow covered mountains and jagged peaks of Unalaska Island's interior stretched away to the southwest.

Dutch Harbor was no different from other Aleutian Island settlements or Kodiak, for that matter: a cluster of stubborn civilization grimly hanging on, perched on the only available fairly flat parcel of land, on a bay, ringed by precipitous mountains.

A Bit of Geography, History, Flora/Fauna and Weather Lore

Because we have reached the Aleutians and the remainder of this narrative takes place there, it will help the reader if we take a brief familiarization tour of these mysterious, fog shrouded islands.

The Aleutians are the northernmost of a chain of islands that rims the extremely deep waters of the Pacific basin from north through west. Mostly of volcanic origin these islands include the Philippines, Ryukyu Islands, Japanese Islands, and Kurile Islands. All of these, including Siberia's Kamchatka Peninsula and the Alaska Peninsula, are noted for their active volcanos which periodically erupt, and for frequent earthquakes many of which create seismic tidal waves,--'tsunamis'--.

The eastern end of the Aleutians begins on the west side of Isanotski Pass, (False Pass), which separates them from the southwestern tip of the Alaska Peninsula. Like the blade of a scimitar, they curve westward in a thousand mile arc toward Kamchatka. They terminate at the Aleutian's westernmost island of Attu. This arc forms a dividing line between the deep waters of the North Pacific Ocean on the south and the shallower waters of the Bering Sea on the north.

There are four major island groups within the Aleutians. From east to west they are: The Fox Islands, Andreanof Islands, Rat Islands, and Near Islands. There are also four lesser groups, namely: The Krenitzin Islands, Islands of Four Mountains, Delarof Islands, and Semichi Islands. Perhaps one hundred twenty-five large and small islands make up these various groups. In addition there are numerous individual, named islands both large and small not included in the above groups. Hundreds of tiny islands more properly classified as rocks/reefs--are also present.

Following is an east to west listing of significant Aleutian Islands with their highest peaks and volcanic cones in brackets:

Krenitzin Islands: Tigalda (1682'), Avatanak (1635'), Rootok (1545'), Akun (2620'), Akutan (3275').
Fox Islands: Unalga (722'), Sedanka (2130'), Unalaska (Mt. Makushin 6680', 3745', 3300', 2145'), Umnak (Mt. Okmok 3519', 6510', Mt. Vsevidof 7100').
Islands of Four Mountains: Kagamil (2910'), Chuginadak (3840'), Mt. Cleveland 5675'), Carlisle (Mt.

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Carlisle 5283'), Herbert (4225').
Yunaska Island (3119'), Chugulak Island (3750'),
Amukta Island (3663'), Seguam Island (3458', 2900').
Andreanof Islands: Amlia (1900', 2100', 1880'), Atka
(Mt. Korovin (5030', 4760', 2575'), Umak (2045'),
Little Tanaga (1747'), Great Sitkin (5710'),
Kagalaska (2495'), Adak (Mt. Moffett (3924',
2222'), Kanaga (4287'), Tanaga (5925', 4753').
Gareloi Island (5160').

Delarof Islands: Ogliuga, Skagul, Kavalga, Ulak (5
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Rat Islands: Semisopchnoi (4007'), Amchitka (1225'),
Rat(1125'), Little Sitkin (3897'), Segula
(3884'), Kiska (4004').

Buldir Island (2175').

Semichi Islands: Shemya, Nizki, Alaid (662').

Near Islands: Agattu (2080'), Attu (3100', 2844',
2900').

Unalaska, Umnak, Amlia, Atka, Adak, Kanaga,
Tanaga, Amchitka, Kiska, Agattu, and Attu are
considered as the large Aleutian Islands. They range
in length from Kiska's 25 miles to 80 miles for
Unalaska. The larger islands are generally extremely
irregular in shape because of the numerous fiord like
bays that indent their rugged coastlines. Unalaska,
for example, ranges in width near its middle from four
miles to twenty-five miles. An average width for the
major islands might be twelve miles.

At extreme ends of configuration are
Semisopchnoi and Amchitka. Surprisingly, they are
only thirty-five miles apart. Amchitka is relatively
low and flat except at its northwestern end. Although
it is forty miles long it has a fairly uniform width
of only about four miles. Nearby Semisopchnoi, on the
other hand, is a circular, four thousand foot mountain
peak with no deep bays indenting its average twelve
mile width.

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The Aleutians lie almost totally between the latitudes 51 degrees and 54 degrees North. If one were to fly around the globe in this narrow belt one would pass over the tip of Siberian Kamchatka; through the Sea of Okhotsk; catch the northern tip of Sakhalin Island; nip northernmost Manchuria; pass north of Mongolia and the Gobi Desert; cross the Steppes of U.S.S.R.; pass slightly south of Moscow; north of Warsaw, Poland; over Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Dublin; across the North Atlantic Ocean south of Iceland and Greenland; make landfall on the North American Continent near Goose Bay, Labrador; touch the south end of Hudson's Bay; fly over Lake Winnepeg; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Banff, Alberta; emerge over the North Pacific Ocean between Prince Rupert, B.C. and the Queen Charlotte Islands; then fly across the Gulf of Alaska back to Dutch Harbor.

Although these are northern latitudes, the temperatures of the Aleutians are moderate and the range small. The winter average is about 33 degrees Fahrenheit and the summer 50 degrees. Temperatures as low as zero have never been recorded in the Aleutians. These uniform temperatures of the Aleutians are caused by the warming waters of the great Kuroshio or Japanese Current that flows eastward south of the Aleutians.

Although treeless, the Aleutians are not barren. Grasses, plants, and wild flowers in profusion spring to life at the lower elevations in late summer. This vegetation fairly explodes. Mother Nature seems to try to pack a full year's growth into the short available season. The islands also abound with animal life. Countless seabirds of many kinds make the Aleutians their permanent home. Various other birds by the millions stop over briefly in the Aleutians on their yearly migrations.

Surrounding seas contain a large variety and great numbers of fishes, mollusks and other invertebrates as well as whales, seals, sea lions and sea otters. It was this abundance of animal life and the assurance of a food supply that attracted the first Aleuts to settle in these islands. This food supply was sufficient to support, at one time, an Aleut population estimated at 20,000 to 25,000.

In the early 1740's, Vitus Bering, a Danish explorer in the employ of Russian Czar, Peter the Great, sailed from Kamchatka on a voyage of discovery during which he found the Aleutians. Bering's voyage

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was quickly followed by those of the Promyshlenniki, adventurous, ruthless fur hunters from Kamchatka and Siberia who were seeking riches. During the next half century, the Promyshlenniki swept over the Aleutians like locust and carried their terror as far east as Kodiak. Everywhere they set foot they raped, pillaged and persecuted. Peaceful Aleuts by the thousands were murdered. Surviving Aleuts were enslaved. White man's diseases were introduced which further decimated the Aleut population.

When I reached the Aleutians in early 1942, the resident native population was less than one thousand. About seven hundred of this number lived in the eastern Aleutians and in the Pribilof Islands of the southern Bering Sea. There were native villages on the Pribilof Islands of St. Paul and St. George; Trident Bay on Akutan Island; Biorka on Sedanka Island; Unalaska, Makushin, and Kashega on Unalaska Island. Farther west there were less than two hundred. About seventy natives lived at Nikolski on Umnak Island, approximately the same number at Nazan Bay, Atka Island, and about forty at Chichagof on far off Attu.

There were no longer any established Aleut villages in the 550 mile stretch between Nazan Bay, Atka and Attu. A few hardy native fur trappers, however, pursued their winter trade on some of the larger islands between.

Islands of the Bering Sea have a place in this story so they should be located for the reader. North from the Aleutians one first encounters tiny Bogoslof Island; the island of mystery. This active volcanic peak is located about sixty-two miles west of Dutch Harbor and twenty-seven miles due north of the northeastern tip of Umnak Island. St. George, southernmost of the Pribilofs, is about 210 miles northwest of Dutch Harbor. Fifty miles beyond is St. Paul Island. Nunivak Island lies about thirty miles off Alaska's mainland and approximately 225 miles north-northeast of St. Paul. One hundred seventy five miles almost due west of Nunivak is St. Matthew Island. About 200 miles north of St. Matthew and 150 miles southwest of Nome is St. Lawrence Island. Tiny King Island lies approximately 100 miles north-northeast of St. Lawrence. Last we come to Little Diomedes Island which sits in the middle of the Bering Strait and about 75 miles northwest of King Island.

Native Eskimos inhabit Little Diomedes, King, St. Lawrence and Nunivak. St. Matthew Island was

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uninhabited. The natives on St. Paul and St. George are Aleuts. Their ancestors had been forcibly removed from Aleutian Islands in the late 1700's by the Promyshenniki and placed on the previously uninhabited Pribilofs to harvest sea otter and fur seal pelts.

About five months out of each year the Bering Sea is locked in pack-ice from the vicinity of the Pribilofs north. Pack-ice or bergs seldom, if ever, come within two hundred miles of the Aleutians.

The reader should not be misled by the seemingly mild range of temperatures in the Aleutians. The warmer waters and moisture laden air associated with the Japanese Current meet the relatively drier air of icy winds blowing off eastern Siberia and the much colder waters of the Bering Sea in this region. There is also a smaller, ice-cold, Oyashio Current that sweeps southwestward out of the western Bering Sea down along the east side of Kamchatka Peninsula and the Kurile Islands. The collision of these contrasting forces creates a perfect weather factory which produces dense fog, rain, snow, sleet and winds frequently well in excess of 100 knots (115 mph). Winds over 200 mph were recorded at Attu in early 1945.

In addition, the Aleutians are plagued by "Williwaws" which are sudden downdrafts of cold, dense air. These sharp edged gusts rush down the lee side from mountain peaks and passes. Winds can be almost calm one moment then be shrieking over 100 knots the next. Williwaws are created when cold, dense, heavy air becomes dammed up behind mountains. Forced aloft, small parcels spill over through saddles much the same as water would flow over a low portion of a dam. In their haste to seek sea level, these small packages of dynamite accelerate downward from the heights until they hit the surface where their energy is expended in what can only be described as the destructive force of an explosion. Williwaws are most prevalent in the fall, winter, and spring.

Fog, rain, sleet and snow accompanied by violent winds can occur during any season. It is for this reason that, in weather circles, the Aleutians are generally considered to have the worst weather in the world. It is granted that this fact plus their remoteness might make the Aleutians an intriguing place to visit briefly but it was a cheerless, unpleasant place to live and an exceedingly difficult place to wage war.

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Born of violence, troubled, restless, the Aleutians have been described as a fiery necklace on the exposed throat of Alaska. During WWII they also became a two-way bridge of stepping stones between Alaska and Japan.

The only sizeable U.S. Force west of Dutch Harbor on April Fool's Day, 1942, was a small U.S. Army Engineer Corps detachment from General Simon Bolivar Buckner's Alaska Defense Command. These men and their equipment were based on the northeast tip of neighboring Umnak Island some forty miles to our west. Ostensibly, they were civilian workmen under contract to the fictitious Blair Packing Co. but instead of building a fish cannery and related facilities on Umnak, the engineers were feverishly constructing another secret fighter airstrip. One hundred-eighty miles to the east of Dutch Harbor another group of "civilian" engineers of the equally fictitious Saxton and Co. were constructing a fighter strip at Cold Bay.

Lest we forget, six-hundred-fifty miles west of Dutch Harbor on lonely Kiska, were four men of our navy weather detachment: Aerographer's mates Turner and Winfrey, radioman Christensen, McCandless the cook, and their mascot dog "Explosion". These four men spent Christmas 1941 on the island and had already endured four isolated months living under the shadow of Kiska's forbidding volcano.

Patrols Were Endurance Trials

Calderon and I stood weather shack watches and flew on long, lonely search patrols to gather vital weather information. Our dog-leg sector searches fanned out westward from Dutch Harbor. One sector took us along the north side of the Aleutian chain over the Bering Sea. Another brushed the same volcanic peaks on the south or North Pacific side. Others probed far out over the trackless ocean wastes to the northwest and southwest.

In spite of being bundled up in heavy, winter, fleece-lined, leather flight pants, jackets, boots and gloves, the aircrews returned half frozen from these reconnaissance patrols. This was especially true for the two blister gunners. Insidious, creeping cold began on one's extremities and slowly penetrated to the very bone marrow. It was not unusual to endure the last half of a patrol with uncontrollable shakes and

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chattering teeth.

Icing conditions, snow, rain, sleet, savage winds, fog, poor visibility and ceiling frequently occurred on the same turbulent flight. A typical patrol droned for six hours just above the vicious, storm-tossed, cold grey waves on the outward leg, made a ninety degree turn at the end, flew another hour or so on the short cross leg, then made another ninety degree turn to start the long, homeward leg. These patrols of thirteen or more hours were by means of dead-reckoning navigation. Without use of celestial navigation, with no check points between and using only the courses flown, indicated air speed, estimated wind drift, and distance covered, the navigator had to lead us precisely back to Pillar Rock and the dangerously narrow, rocky entrance to Unalaska Bay. I always hated the implications of the meaning of the term "dead-reckoning" navigation. This was especially true after I overheard one of our navigators answer someone's curiosity with, "Oh, you know, I reckon I'll get us back or I reckon we'll be dead."

Another Stern Chief Aerographer's Mate

Chief Ralph P. Darr proved to be a real taskmaster. He was also bald-headed like T.J. Bliss. Most dismaying, from our standpoint, was his almost constant presence, figuratively and literally. His living quarters were a small room attached to the Dutch Harbor weather shack. Being absent only at chow times, Darr put in long hours in the office.

Darr was an excellent weatherman, an "old timer". Commander Thomas, engaged primarily with his urgent duties as base executive officer, pretty much let Darr run things as he saw fit. And, you'd better believe me, Darr, regular navy, ran things **HIS** way!

There was a plus to this situation of which I was not aware until several years later. No one ever questioned the watch standing ability of an aerographer's mate who had served under Chief Ralph Darr, or Chief T.J. Bliss.

An Air Of Increasing Tempo

Things started happening rapidly in April 1942. Our new, AVP class USS Casco Bay came into Dutch

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Harbor again along with the older AVD USS Williamson. An arrival of still older vintage and new addition to PatWing 4's small fleet was the USS Teal a quasi-seaplane tender of the Bird Class. This class seaplane tender, so called because they were named after birds such as Teal, Avocet, Pelican, etc. had been converted shortly after WWI from small tug type minesweepers. They displaced 840 tons and had a dazzling top speed of ten knots. They had been used in 1918-1919 to sweep the thousands of mines with which the Allies had blocked the German U-boats from the northern exit of the North Sea.

When the increasing size of patrol planes outgrew the facilities of the Bird type vessel, no other type of ship was available to replace them. As a temporary substitute WWI, flush deck, four-stack destroyers such as the Williamson and Gillis were converted to seaplane tenders and designated AVD for aviation destroyer. The Bird class tenders were relegated to roles such as supply, support, and transportation with a designation of Aviation Tug(AVT).

Our other three Aleutian tenders, although small, were fairly fast and were considered adequate mobile bases for patrol plane operations of a limited nature. By crowding, the Casco could handle a twelve plane squadron while the Williamson and Gillis were busy servicing four to six planes apiece.

The navy also considered these small seaplane tenders great training commands for promising skippers, especially on decision making and small ship handling.

It was also excellent training for the crews because they had to "make do" and be innovative out on isolated duty. None of our tenders had aerological officers on board at this time; only aerographer's mates performing the duties as "acting" aerological officers. Martin and Maurer were still ship's company on Casco and Lester Roberts was still temporary duty aboard the Williamson. No aerographers were on the USS Teal.

A "Gang" arrives at Dutch Harbor

On April 14, 1942, the armed transport USS Ulysses S. Grant(AP29)¹ left Seattle bound for Dutch Harbor. On board were supplies, U.S. Army troops, three of the seven aerological ensigns mentioned

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earlier, and the remainder of the enlisted men of the four aerological expeditionary units. The U.S. Grant arrived April 22, 1942.

It was like old home week when the weather personnel came ashore. Our tiny boardwalk weather shack became crowded overnight with the arrival of Ensigns Mull, Jack, and McQuarrie, and enlisted men Hudson, Omang, Lynch, House, Beer, Medaris, Curtis, Stewart, Babic, Vernon, and Hollihand. Upton also arrived about this time coming ashore from the gunboat USS Charleston on which he had been a passenger. Ensigns William J. Douglas and Basil Frank reported for duty a few weeks later.

Chief Darr wasted no time taking advantage of this sudden wealth in manpower. Before the newcomers could unpack he had them all on watch sections. Even with all these people on hand, Cmdr. Thomas would not let anyone except Chief Darr put out the forecast. This speaks volumes for Darr's ability.

Mountains of crated gear for the four island expeditionary units was off-loaded from the U.S. Grant. These crates were all stenciled with markings indicating Aerological Units 1, 2, 3, or 4. Weathermen became stevedores until this gear was sorted and stacked separately in a nearby warehouse. Stenciled crates and boxes for additionally proposed isolated weather units began to arrive. Most of this gear showed up piece-meal at odd times by odd means. It was sorted and stacked in the warehouse accordingly.

In addition to the original sites of Attu, Kiska, Atka, and Kanaga it had recently been proposed to place weather units on St. Paul and St. Matthew Islands, Nome and possibly other isolated spots as well. Ultimately, an ensign was to be in command of each weather reporting unit after it was established. Tentative assignments for four of the ensigns were already known. Max W. Mull was slated to be in charge of the Attu unit; John G. McQuarrie, Kiska; Burton W. Lindley, Nome; and Max C. Jack, St. Matthew Island. The Japanese would shortly knock most of these weather plans rudely into the proverbial cocked hat.

A Preventable PBY Crash

On April 23, 1942 tragedy struck our patrol wing. One of VP-42's PBY's crashed on takeoff with the loss of four lives. Wing Commander, Captain Leslie E.

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Gehres, USN, was present on an inspection tour from his headquarters in Seattle. He wanted to see how the advance elements of his Wing, the scattered units of Lt. Cmdr. James S. Russell's VP-42 were getting along. Gehres flew north to Sitka where Russell went to fetch him for the flight to Kodiak, then out to Dutch Harbor.

They arrived at Dutch Harbor late on the afternoon of April 22, 1942, the same day the U.S. Grant came in. Russell suggested to Gehres that it would be good for morale if our leader were to ride along on a combat patrol. To avoid favoritism, Russell also suggested that Gehres should select his sector and flight crew at random. Gehres agreed completely and said he would make the flight the following day.

Russell's concern about our flagging spirits can best be illustrated by a morale chart posted in the operations shack of our seaplane hangar. The curve began high enough upon our arrival at Dutch Harbor, then dipped until the monthly beer ration arrived at which time it would take a sharp upward turn. Each succeeding peak, however, was lower than the previous one. Finally, the curve had plummeted off the chart, continued on down the bulkhead and was presently enscribed across the deck.

That Wednesday night of April 22, 1942 it turned bitter cold. Temperatures dropped into the low twenties. Snow flurries accompanied by gale force winds interspersed with extremely violent Williwaws hit the Dutch Harbor area. Chief Darr had anticipated this and issued gale warnings and the approach of a strong cold front from the west.

When Russell and Gehres arose the next morning, they stepped out into a frozen world. Blowing snow had plastered the planes and in the clear areas, ice had formed on everything. It was still blowing hard and a second, stronger front was approaching. Russell cancelled all scheduled flights for that day. He and Gehres went back inside and sat down to breakfast.

Several PBY's had already been warmed up at the seaplane ramp when the patrols were cancelled. Ensign Frederick A. "Andy" Smith, USNR, and his crew were ready to go and were disappointed and a little frustrated. They might have been the crew chosen by Gehres. Ensign Smith talked the duty operations officer into letting him make an inshore patrol to at least check out the local area. Upon receiving permission, he decided to get it over with and

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proceeded to take off immediately.

A loaded PBY weighs some fifteen tons. In order to quickly lift this much inert weight up out of the water and onto the planing step of the hull for takeoff, it is necessary that the pilot open up the throttles of the Pratt-Whitney, "Twin-Wasp" engines to full power. This causes a very characteristic roar.

Russell heard this sound. Knowing exactly what it meant, he rushed outside. The roar abruptly ceased and was replaced by the unmistakable hiss of fire. Smith's plane had crashed into the sand spit which curved out from the left shoreline and extended halfway across the bay. In his haste, Smith had not removed the clear ice from his wings and tail surfaces. This changed the airfoil which in turn reduced the lift below that which was needed to get airborne.

Smith had aimed to the right of the spit to allow himself plenty of room for takeoff. But each time he momentarily lifted the PBY off the water, the strong cross-wind set the plane toward the end of the spit. On his last attempt he was well inside the hook at the end of the spit. He could have chopped the throttles and mushed to a safe stop but this was not Smith's nature. He chose to try and lift off one more time and failed.

Russell ran to another warmed up PBY and taxied across to the burning plane. He broke out a rubber life raft, pulled the inflation toggle and jumped in. Because the cold had stiffened the folded rubber, the raft inflated slowly. Russell, half submerged, was forced to paddle frantically with his hands, not only to reach the wreck but to keep from sinking.

Three of Smith's crew members in the gun blister area aft were miraculously alive and not seriously injured. The four up forward on the flight deck were charred corpses. Both armor-plated pilot's seats had been wrenched loose on impact and had pivoted 180 degrees.

Four live bombs carried by the plane had been torn loose. Three were found clear of the burning PBY. The remaining one was located partially in the fire. Without hesitation or regard for personal safety, Russell, with the help of a few crewmen, secured a line to the bomb which was quickly dragged out of the flames and away from the searing heat.

Captain Gehres arrived huffing and puffing after hurrying the long way around on foot.

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"You might have been on that plane," said Russell somberly.

"That's right," reflected Gehres.

With a feeling of desolation I stood on a small rise with a group of weathermen and watched Smith's PBY burn. I'd flown with this pilot and crew several days earlier. The aerographers who flew alot also realized that one of us might have also been on that plane.

Killed in the crash with Ensign Smith were co-pilot, Ens. Glenn R. Van Bramer, USNR, Navigator, Ens. John B. Carroll, USNR, Plane Captain, Harold Day Cunningham, AMM2c, USN.

The following day, the weather improved sufficiently for search patrols to go out and Gehres made his flight.

Commander Russell had once told Ensign Smith, "You are one jump ahead of the undertaker." Russell had repeatedly cautioned Smith to observe and follow all prescribed safety doctrines. Smith had broken one of Russell's cardinal rules: Make certain that all snow **and ice** are removed from both wing and tail surfaces before attempting a takeoff.

On one flight, Smith had unknowingly taken off with the extra large (for Aleutian operations) anchor, a length of chain and a heavy coil of line still resting on top of the outside fuselage between the two gun blisters.

Russell was already airborne in another PBY when Smith joined him. Russell looked over and to his horror saw the anchor. To avoid panicking Smith, Russell did not mention the anchor. Instead, he gave him calm, clear, precise orders to make a wide circle and return to base executing a smooth let-down and landing. After he grimly watched Smith safely carry out these orders, he called him again on the radio and chewed him out about the anchor.

If the anchor had become dislodged in flight, an eventual certainty, it would have ripped off the tail assembly and the plane would have crashed. It was Smith's responsibility as Patrol Plane Commander (PPC) to insure that all gear was properly stowed and the plane ready for takeoff. Careless, impetuous pilots are not long-lived, especially in the Aleutians.

The Weathermen Construct A Defensive Position

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Toward the end of April 1942, the aerographers at Dutch Harbor were set to work digging a zig-zag trench complex for our battle station. This position was atop the nearby high hill and adjacent to the communications shack. We labored on this pick and shovel project most daylight hours whenever we weren't on watch or flying until it was completed.

After a time, we had it fixed to our satisfaction. It was neatly but extra heavily sandbagged. A small section, also sandbagged, was roofed over with timbers to form a bunker. This timbered section had not been authorized but was a comfort added on our own. It enabled us to take brief turns in out of the weather and warm ourselves with coffee. There were many piles of stacked lumber at construction sites about the base. Whenever we passed these unguarded stacks we simply pretended we were civilian workmen and shouldered lumber of needed dimension for our own construction job.

Wooden entrance steps were built which led from the rear or radio shack side down into the doorless roofed over section. A space eighteen inches high between the roof timbers and sandbags provided a good view from the small bunker. The two sides of the bunker were also open and led directly to the sandbagged, zig-zag trench sections.

The commanding height of the navy weathermen's fighting trench gave us a 360 degree, eagle's eye view of the entire area.

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Japanese Strategy Sets The Stage

During the spring of 1942 the U.S. and her Allies were faring badly. In Africa, German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, "The Desert Fox", had recaptured Benghazi, Libya. His formidable Panzer divisions were advancing toward Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt. Hard pressed British, Australian and New Zealand troops and armor were fighting desperately to keep these cities from falling into German hands.

In the Atlantic, deadly German U-boats had sunk almost five hundred Allied ships. Many of these attacks had been within sight of U.S. east coast cities.

In the Pacific, Corregidor fell on May 6, 1942. Huge, longrange Japanese I-class submarines¹ brought the war to the very shores of the U.S. Pacific coast. They had not only sunk several cargo ships but had shelled forests and installations along coastal areas of the Pacific Northwest. Twenty-five shells had been fired into an oil refinery complex at Santa Barbara, California.

Imperial Japanese Forces were drunk with success from smashing victories everywhere they had struck. U.S. Pacific Forces were like a staggered fighter caught by a lucky punch in the opening seconds of round one. On the defensive, trying to weather the round, we were groggy, off balance and frantically trying to anticipate where the enemy would strike his next blow.

From the very beginning, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had decided on a policy of saving Great Britain and our European Allies first. The Pacific area would have to wait for help. An attempt would be made, however, to try to hold a line stretching from New Guinea in the

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south, through Samoa and Midway Islands with the northern end anchored at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

Japan's High Command was divided on policy and tactics at this stage of the Pacific War. One army faction put forth a plan to consolidate the huge territory already captured. Another army faction pushed for an immediate invasion of Australia before consolidating. This group pointed out there was little to stand in the way of success. Was not the American Pacific Fleet crippled almost to the point of being ineffective? Had not Imperial Japanese Forces all but destroyed the combined British and Dutch Naval Forces in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans? Were not the Australian and New Zealand troops fighting in far off Africa? Australia's defenses were weak; there would be no more opportune time to strike than now.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, IJN, the brilliant naval strategist who had master-minded the Pearl Harbor attack, believed that Japan could never win a prolonged war with the United States. Our tremendous resources of raw material and manpower; our industrial might would eventually overwhelm the Japanese Empire. This had been the precise reason why Japan struck the first crippling blow at Pearl Harbor. The American aircraft carriers had not been present on December 7, 1941 and had therefore escaped the trap. The four, large U.S. aircraft carriers posed too great a threat, in Yamamoto's opinion, for the assured success of any further plans toward the invasion of Australia. In Yamamoto's opinion it was imperative to destroy what was left of the remaining units of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, especially the aircraft carriers.

Yamamoto therefore proposed a third plan that would accomplish this while at the same time be looked upon favorably by the army faction which proposed consolidation. The plan involved using almost the entire Japanese Imperial Fleet.

The Yamamoto plan combined carrier task force airstrikes against the Aleutian Islands and Midway Island with invasion forces. Gigantic in scope and complexity, the details for the Aleutian-Midway Operation were brilliantly drawn up by Yamamoto's senior Air Operation Officer, Captain Kameto Kuroshima, IJN.

These plans called for a Northern Force under command of Vice Admiral Boshio Hosagaya, IJN to strike

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a crushing blow upon the U.S. Naval Base at Dutch Harbor one day prior to the attack against Midway Island, 2000 miles to the south.

This Dutch Harbor striking force would be comprised of the fast, light, aircraft carriers Junyo² and Ryujo³ with a combined complement of eighty-two attack planes. Junyo and Ryujo would be accompanied by heavy cruisers Takao and Maya plus three destroyers and an oiler. This carrier task force commanded by Rear Admiral Kukuji Kakuta, IJN was designated the Northern Second Mobile Force.

Hosagaya, with his mainbody of the Northern Force would stand by 400 miles to the south of Attu in support. Hosagaya's force was comprised of his flagship heavy cruiser Nachi, cruisers Abukuma, Kiso, and Tama, nine destroyers, three troop transports, a screen of six submarines, and two seaplane carriers, the sister ships Kamikawa Maru and Kamikama Maru⁴.

After the attacks on Dutch Harbor by the Second Mobile Force, Admiral Kakuta would take his carrier task force westward to support Hosagaya's invasion and occupation of Adak first and Kiska and Attu the following day.

Yamamoto expected Junyo and Ryujo to be tantalizing bait that would lure the much larger American aircraft carriers out of hiding to rush to the defense of the Aleutians.

Spearhead of the Midway attack group was the Kido Butai (The Striking Force). This large carrier task force had been the scourge of the Central, South Pacific, and Indian Oceans since the beginning of the war. The Kido Butai was under command of Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, IJN as it had been since prior to Pearl Harbor. For the Midway-Aleutian Operation the Kido Butai was comprised of the fast, large aircraft carriers Kagi, Akagi, Soryu, and Hiryu screened by two fast, modern battleships, three cruisers and twelve destroyers.

Nagumo would launch his Midway attack planes from a position several hundred miles to the northwest of the island. After Midway's defenses and installations were destroyed, the Kido Butai would be free to ambush any U.S. aircraft carrier task force that had ventured toward the Aleutians to pounce on Junyo and Ryujo.

The Midway Invasion Force under Vice Admiral Nobutake Kondo, IJN, was divided into three groups which included a light carrier, cruisers, destroyers,

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transports and oilers. In order to confuse the prying eyes of any U.S. submarines and mask the true destination, these groups would assemble and sortie from different ports and rendezvous seven hundred miles west of Midway Island.

The Main Force, a mighty armada under Commander in Chief Admiral Yamamoto would take a support position northwest of Midway and several hundred miles behind the Kido Butai. This Main Force consisted of Yamamoto's flagship Yamato, a new 64,000 ton superbattleship, accompanied by six other fast battleships, an aircraft carrier, four cruisers, and twelve destroyers.

The combined Imperial Fleet Units for the Aleutian-Midway Operation included twenty admirals and one hundred thousand men. It mattered little to Yamamoto whether the American Fleet chose to defend the Aleutians or Midway. Either way he would engage them with an overwhelming force.

With the destruction of the remnants of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the capture of Midway and the Western Aleutians, the Japanese High Command would be able to follow any policy it chose with impunity. Japan would have strengthened a patrol line stretching north from New Guinea in the Solomon Islands, through the Gilbert and Marshall Islands to Midway in the Central Pacific with the northern end anchored in Adak and the western Aleutians. Adak, to the nearest degree, is on the same meridian as Midway. A wedge would be driven into the heart of the vital Lend-Lease supply line that ran between Alaska and hard pressed U.S.S.R.

The Kido Butai could roam at will striking devastating blows at Hawaii, Alaskan cities, and against prime targets along the Canadian and U.S. Pacific coasts. High on the list would be the Boeing Aircraft plant in Seattle and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash. Australia and New Zealand could be invaded with little opposition.

Under these circumstances Yamamoto believed that the U.S. would likely sue for a separate peace in terms that would allow the Japanese Empire to retain what they had already conquered in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. This was precisely what Japan wanted from the beginning: the raw materials and the "rice bowl" of Indo-China, Philippines, Southeast Asia and Malaysia to support her economy; an economy that had

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become heavily industrialized after western powers had brought the island nation into the shock of the modern, twentieth century after 200 years of isolation from the outside world. Japan had few raw materials of her own and had become dependent on obtaining these through trade or aggression. The military ruled Japan at this time in her history and had for some years so she had chosen to acquire these raw materials by means of war instead of trade.

Within the Japanese General Staff there was too much opposition to Admiral Yamamoto's Aleutian-Midway Plan and it was rejected. Instead, the General Staff chose to go ahead with plans to invade Australia.

On April 18, 1942, Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, USA, led his flight of sixteen Mitchell B-25, twin-engined bombers on a surprise raid on Tokyo and several other Japanese cities. These bombers were launched from the deck of Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, Jr's aircraft carrier U.S.S. Hornet which had penetrated undetected to within less than seven hundred miles of Tokyo. This fact was not learned by the Japanese until after the war. A few Japanese officers believed that the bombers could have been launched from an aircraft carrier. Others believed they might have come from Midway Island. Midway, however, was far beyond the range of the B-25 and it was almost an impossibility that large, twin-engined army bombers could or would be launched from a navy carrier. President Roosevelt announced only that the B-25's had taken off from a secret U.S. base named "Shangri-La." The consensus of the Japanese High Command was that the planes must have taken off from a base somewhere in the Western Aleutians.

The sacred soil of Japan had been defiled by enemy bombs. Further such attacks had to be prevented. In light of this startling development, opposition to Admiral Yamamoto's Aleutian-Midway Plan suddenly crumpled. It was imperative that the Western Aleutians be occupied by Japanese forces.

On May 5, 1942, Imperial General Headquarters issued Navy Order Eighteen authorizing the Aleutian-Midway Operation. It directed the Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet to:

"Invade and occupy Midway Island and key points in the Western Aleutians in cooperation with the Army to prevent enemy task forces from making attacks against the

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homeland.....Destroy all enemy forces that may oppose the invasion."

The main objective of these orders was the invasion of Midway and the Aleutians but to Yamamoto the main goal was to set a trap for the remaining American aircraft carriers.

The Battle of the Coral Sea took place a few days later. In this action on May 8, 1942, the U.S. aircraft carrier Lexington, my old ship, was sunk and the carrier Yorktown badly damaged. Erroneously, the Japanese Naval High Command believed that the Yorktown was sunk. Yamamoto was certain that he now had only the carriers Enterprise and Hornet with which to deal. This belief further heightened Japanese anticipation of another smashing victory for the Midway-Aleutian Operation.

Commencing about the middle of April 1942, U.S. radio intelligence began picking up a large volume of Japanese Naval radio transmissions. This traffic increased during the middle of May 1942. The vast Japanese armada began to assemble in Northern Japanese waters with the exception of the Midway Occupation Forces the staging area of which were Guam and Saipan in the Marianas Islands. We did not know, in early May 1942, the reasons for the volume of enemy radio transmissions; only that it indicated increased Japanese activity on a massive scale.

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A Few Dutch Harbor Activities Prior To The Japanese Attacks

Oblivious of the overwhelming forces Japan was massing against the Aleutians, the Dutch Harbor navy weathermen went about their duties. It was about this time in early May 1942 that we were issued 30.06 Springfield rifles, bayonets, full bandoliers of ammunition and those funny little, flat World War I "Doughboy" steel helmets.

Logically, the weathermen had been chosen to operate the base air raid siren. Our office was centrally located, equipped with telephone, teletype, radio and men were on duty twenty-four hours a day. Word to sound the alarm was received from the Naval Command Post.

This ear-splitting, brain-numbing siren was mounted on a tall pole immediately outside our boardwalk weather shack. The alarm switch could be reached in two steps from our doorway. This added responsibility kept watch standers busier than one might expect. False alarms and subsequent "All Clears" increased. Beginning in early May Dutch Harbor also conducted standard pre-dawn and pre-dusk air raid drills.

Navy Weather Unit Placed On Kanaga Island

Around the first of May 1942, Forrest Medaris, AerM2c, USN and Howard Curtis, AerM2c, USNR, along with two radiomen and a cook were taken out to far off Kanaga and put ashore with the crated gear for one aerological unit. John Lynch, AerM1c, USN, who was slated to be in charge, and the rest of the unit would follow at a later date.

Kanaga is approximately four hundred-eighty miles west of Dutch Harbor and two hundred-twenty miles east of Kiska. This places Kanaga roughly in the center of

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the 1000 mile chain of Aleutian Islands.

Kanaga was set up early because there were several frame buildings belonging to the Kanaga Ranching Company. Dating back to the early 1920's, these buildings had been leased by navy weathermen during the 1930's¹ and had been used periodically since that time for their primary purpose as a base for blue fox fur trappers.

These facilities at the head of a small bay on Kanaga's southeast coast included a pier in disrepair, two small houses, and a large warehouse. A power plant and heating plant were located on the first floor of the warehouse. The second story was used for weather/radio office, barracks, mess and kitchen.

Life In A Dutch Harbor Bat Cave

Navy enlisted weather personnel had originally been assigned a small area in one of the crowded barracks buildings. The arrival of so many additional aerographer's mates off the USS U.S. Grant on April 22, 1942 necessitated further quarters arrangements.

Eight of us were assigned to share living quarters with eight radiomen in a recently constructed Quonset on the hill. This hut was located adjacent to the communications station. On the opposite side of the radio shack was our zig-zag fightin' trench. Having to dress and go outside to reach the nearest head/washroom made it unhandy. Being so close to our sandbagged trench was a definite plus. It was only about a two-hundred yard walk down hill to the weather shack and messhall. This new location was much handier for those of us who flew regularly for it was a much shorter hike to the seaplane ramp.

Omang, House, Hudson, Lynch, Babic, Vernon, Calderon and I lived in this particular barracks hut. The first six were members of expeditionary weather units waiting to be placed on islands to the west. As such they were under the jurisdiction of Patrol Wing Four. Calderon and I were Wing aerographers but also present on a temporary basis. In effect we were all transients.

Existed, might be a better word than living for the overcrowded hut soon resembled a bat cave. Every square inch of space became cluttered with seabags, hand bags, laundry bags, footlockers and seachests. Regular clothing, foul weather clothing, fleece lined winter flight clothing hung everywhere. Muddy boots of

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all sizes and descriptions were scattered about. Dungaree shirts and trousers, woolen "long johns", socks and skivvies were hanging on makeshift clothes drying lines stretched from bunk to bunk.

A small arsenal also made our hut resemble a guerrilla camp. Rifles, a Thompson submachine gun, webbed belts, ammunition belts, bayonets, and pistols in holsters hung or were propped in handy places. It was difficult to clear enough space to play poker or shoot craps.

We weren't all "born" slobs; with sixteen men in a hut there simply was not enough room to properly stow everything.

A Classic Example Of, "I Didn't Know It Was Loaded."

In addition to being issued the standard 30.06 rifle, Omang, House, Hudson, Lynch, and most of the radiomen had also been issued the heavy, .45 calibre automatic service pistols.

This weapon is technically a gas operated, semi-automatic. Cartridges are contained in a clip which inserts upward into the heavy stock of the pistol grip. Escaping gas from each fired shell operates the mechanism which ejects the empty shell and moves a new cartridge into firing position. You merely have to keep pulling the trigger to continue firing until the clip is emptied.

One evening in the crowded confines of the hut we experienced a classic case of "I didn't know it was loaded." A radioman was seated by the oil heater while he cleaned his pistol when the gun accidentally discharged. The errant bullet missed his left knee by an inch and blew the oil flow control valve off the stove. Inside the tin hut it sounded more like a bomb had gone off and someone hollered, "Jap attack." The headlong scramble that ensued can well be imagined.

Equally startled, the radioman jumped up waving the still loaded gun all around the room finger still on the trigger and hammer cocked. Despite the confusion, it was Boyd Omang who realized what had happened. He grabbed the automatic away from the rattled radioman before it went off again. Luckily no one had been hit and the shot was muffled inside the hut so the base was not thrown on a needless alert.

The Four-Wheeled Commode

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Weather office transportation at Dutch Harbor was not the critical need it was at most other bases. From the standpoint of the watch most everything was within easy walking distance. A lone jeep had been acquired but it was for officer use. A duty that required some form of transportation was the daily forecast delivery route. Most department heads, both navy and civilian, were within a quarter mile of the weather shack. Exceptions were Patrol Wing Four Operations in the seaplane hangar and Standard Oil Company's dock and tank farm.

Because of our low transportation priority the weather office had been issued a beat up old Crosley scooter. A light pipe framework had been welded to the already boxy contraption to support a tin roof. This gave the driver dubious protection from the elements. Omang promptly dubbed this rig our "Four-Wheeled Commode."

Typically, every organization believed it should be included in the forecast delivery route. Departments within departments began requesting they be added to the forecast list. Individual officers began requesting that copies be delivered promptly to their quarters bright and early each and every morning. Assistant civilian supervisory personnel who had no official need of a daily forecast got into the act. Chief Darr quickly put a stop to this nonsense and drew a reasonable line.

Red Morrow was the official "steady" driver of the Commode which vehicle did not have brake one. Navy motor pool mechanics told Red repeatedly they were too busy keeping vehicles running; stopping was his problem. "Besides," said a mechanic, "if we fix your brakes, pretty soon everybody will want brakes."

Red, tall and gangling, wore high, leather, hobnailed boots.

To stop the contraption he simply dragged his feet.

Some Disappeared Without A Trace

Tragedy struck our Patrol Wing again on May 9, 1942. Ensign Edwin R. Winter, USNR of VP-42 and a crew eight took off on a routine PBY patrol south of Dutch Harbor on that date and never returned. No clue to their fate was ever learned. Whatever the cause it most likely happened quickly for no emergency radio message was received from Winter's PBY.

Listed as missing with Ensign Winter were

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co-pilot, Ensign Edwin C. Sindel, Jr., USNR; Navigator, James T. Crumpton, AP1c, USN; Plane Captain, Robert Hiram Welch, AMM2c, USN; Ervin E. Trampe, ARM2c, USNR; Leo C. Vozak, ARM3c, USNR; Veryl R. Holman, AMM3c, USN; John F. Purvis, S1c, USN; and Robert L. Smallen, AMM3c, USN.

On or about this date the Japanese seaplane carrier Kamikawa Maru escorted by heavy cruiser Kiso was operating 120 miles south of Kiska. On May 10, 1942, Kamikawa Maru launched several seaplane photoreconnaissance missions to scout the islands of Adak and Kiska. Adak's weather was poor and the few photographs obtained showed little except barren hills with no U.S. installations. The plane sent to Kiska ran into dense fog and no photographs were taken.

Apparently, there was no connection between these Japanese Aleutian operations and the disappearance of Ensign Winter's PBY. Winter's patrol area was several hundred miles east of enemy operations. Japanese records also fail to mention any encounter by these two enemy warships or their aircraft with a PBY.

PBY Reconnaissance Flights To Bering Sea Islands

The most interesting flights for me during this period were on a patrol that took us northward into the Bering Sea. We checked out St. Paul and St. George in the Pribilofs, Nunivak Island, and St. Matthew. On one flight we continued on to Nome on the Alaska mainland where our PBY was refueled and we spent the night. On our return trip the following day we circled tiny, steep-sided King Island and scouted the extensive shoreline of large St. Lawrence Island.

To my surprise, King Island Eskimos were cliff dwellers for the small cluster of shacks that made up their village were all perched on a cliff face. Many of the huts were stilt supported. Other shelters took advantage of small excavations that appeared to have been sculpted out by natural forces over the eons and adapted for use by the enterprising Eskimos. King Island is near the southern entrance to narrow Bering Strait which connects the Arctic Ocean with the Bering Sea. I assume this location offered good fishing and hunting and was the sole reason Eskimos chose to live there.

Millions of seals and sea lions perched on the shores, rocks, and reefs of the Pribilofs and some of the other Bering Sea islands. Most of the time we flew

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in the narrow space between waves and low cloud base and would pass closeby above these herds. The roar of the plane's engines panicked the herds. The result was spectacular. With a great, urgent commotion the seals and sea lions would slither, scamper, flippety-flop and gallop, sometimes over each other in their haste to plunge into the safety of the sea. Then as we winged on our way thousands upon thousands of curious heads would pop to the surface to watch our huge, noisy, bird of prey soar away.

Please don't be misled that this sector patrol out of Dutch Harbor was in any way a joy-ride for nature studies. Its primary purpose was to look for any signs of enemy activity in those waters or on the Bering Sea islands. Navy weathermen were sent mainly to the westward from which direction the storm systems and weather fronts approached.

Half a dozen times I was sent along on these Bering Sea patrols to either check or repair weather instruments. On one such job I carried a portable aneroid barometer to run a calibration check on a particular island's barometric instrument. This island's pressure report habitually appeared to be many millibars too high and seldom fit the pressure pattern of our weather map. This assignment took three tries over a period of a week before it could be accomplished. Seas were too rough the first two times for our pilot to attempt a landing. On another job I installed a three-cup anemometer rotor assembly atop a mast to replace one that had been carried away in a violent storm.

Occasionally, radio gear on one of the islands malfunctioned and a navy radio technician was sent on the patrol to correct the trouble. These Bering Sea islands furnished vital weather reports and were also part of our early warning network. Wartime conditions and military priority took precedence. We could not wait for the proper agencies, whether they be Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Weather Bureau, Alaska Communications System, or whichever, to make the semi-yearly visit by ship to correct communications or weather instrument failure. Our PBY's with "trouble-shooters" aboard were the only feasible means of quickly rectifying problems of this nature.

It was always an adventure to land and go ashore. It was a rare opportunity to visit briefly with the natives and with the Caucasian couples who were on these islands as employees of the B.I.A.. The husband

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was usually the minister and his wife the schoolteacher. They handled the radio transmitter and receiver which was located in their quarters. These teams also took and transmitted weather reports for a small retainer from the U.S. Weather Bureau. Their weather reports helped to fill a few gaps in the vastness of Bering Sea's 876,000 square miles.

The Aleut village on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs differed greatly from the Eskimo villages on the islands farther north. St. Paul's buildings had been constructed by the U.S. Government.

They were sturdy frame buildings set on cement foundations. Eskimo dwellings were primitive by comparison. Many were similar to an Aleut barabara which was a large, single room dwelling, partially below ground to protect it from wind and roofed over with a framework of lumber, driftwood, and sod. Usually, a long, low passage provided the only access.

The Ivory Trader

Each plane crew member always saw to it that he had an ample supply of cigarette cartons and candy bars in case the PBV stopped that particular day at some Bering Sea island, especially an Eskimo island. These items were traded to the natives in exchange for exquisite ivory carvings, equally beautiful muk-luk boots, or fur trimmed parkas. The B.I.A. couples told us that money was of no use to the natives because our highly prized items could not be purchased on the islands. This barter system was therefore simple and agreeable to both parties.

All of the many different types of ivory carvings were magnificent handcrafted examples of this unique art. Much of the Eskimos' spare time during the cold, dark winter months was spent on this work.

There were figurines of the various sea mammals and creatures of the region but my favorite, and a real "hot" item back at Dutch Harbor, were the carved ivory cribbage boards. A scene depicting some native pursuit was etched on most boards. This could be a native harpooning a seal, a native patiently waiting behind a blind at a blow hole, a boat load of hunters in a umiak chasing a whale whose tail was arching out of the sea. Hunting walrus or polar bear was etched on some of the other cribbage boards. Each board had a small compartment on one end which had a tight fitting, sliding lid; the carefully matched ivory pegs

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were contained within.

These elegant cribbage boards could be obtained for a couple of cartons of cigarettes or a combination of cigarettes and boxed chocolate bars. Cigarettes and candy bars cost us very little through ship's stores.

I envisioned myself becoming the big ivory trader. Upon our return to Dutch Harbor the cribbage boards sold like hot-cakes at twenty to twenty-five dollars apiece depending on the elaborateness of the etched scene. The profit was tremendous and I thought I was one helluva smart businessman. The demand for cribbage boards grew so great that I began to take orders. This led to some frustration for I could not always deliver the goods. Several times I was assigned to a weather flight into the Bering Sea but we did not come near any of the islands. As the hours droned on during one such patrol I grew so bitterly disappointed that I tore into my barter larder. I munched so many Hershey bars that I felt sick to my stomach.

I traded with an Eskimo for a fabulous piece of ivory art that I shall never forget. I had dickered with him for the object on a previous flight and had first "dibs" when it was completed. Most likely the Eskimo had an opportunity to trade it before I was lucky enough to get back to that island but he had kept his word and waited patiently for my return.

This carving was a seven dog sled team complete with sled and driver. Harnesses and traces were all authentic and the driver even held a whip aloft in his right hand. Most astounding was that it had all been carved out of one large piece of fossil ivory including the base on which a native scene was etched on each beveled side.

I made a killing on this. I held my price firm at eighty-five dollars, cash, no I.O.U's please. A civilian worker heard about the piece, came by and gladly, (hurriedly too, I realized too late), plunked down this staggering sum without even trying to haggle. I kicked myself for not asking at least a "C" note. Jeeeeeeez! How dumb was I? These ivory works would be almost priceless today. How was I to know this at the time?

I kept intending to set some aside and send them home. My Dad would have treasured them. They would have brought back fond memories of his seven years in Alaska during the Klondike gold rush days, especially the final two years spent in the Nome area.

There seemed to be no hurry. Still, I vowed to do

it next trip, next batch but the lure of quick riches made me greedy. Besides, most of my profits were being lost at poker, black-jack, or craps. A streak of bad luck seemed to hit me just when things were looking up. However, it only took a couple of bucks to purchase more cigarettes, more poge-bait(candy), for more ivory, for another bankroll which led naturally to more gambling. It was a vicious circle.

The supply of goodies seemed inexhaustible. The natives were busy turning out items and the traders of the patrol wing provided a ready market for their wares. We had a virtual monopoly for it was impossible for other sailors, soldiers, or civilians to reach these islands. We thought it could go on forever.

Most Bering Sea Natives Had Never Seen An Airplane

Travel and supply by means of aircraft, beginning shortly after WWI, was pioneered and accepted by frontier spirited Alaskans long before it was adopted in the continental U.S.. Air transportation was not yet essential in the states because of the vast network of roads and railroads; two things Alaska lacked. Alaskans therefore viewed the airplane as heaven sent for it enabled them to traverse vast distances, over huge, glacial mountain ranges in a matter of hours when travel could be impossible on the ground. Before the coming of the airplane these same trips took days, weeks, or months by steamer, dog team, canoe, or on foot, and often a combination of all four means.

Understandably, air travel in Alaska was confined to the coastal and interior sections of the territory. Here, famous, early bush pilots such as Carl Ben Eielson, Noel Wien, Harold Gillam, Art Woodley, Ray Petersen, Art Crosson, Russ Merrill, Jack Jefford, Bob Reeve and many others plied their dangerous trade. They flew mail, passengers, mining equipment, miners, trappers, furs, and anything else they could to make ends meet.

Over the years, there had been a number of mercy flights out over the pack ice but these volunteer search and rescue missions had been to the far north in the Arctic. Prior to WWII, these bush pilots had no reason to fly over the Bering Sea. It is a fact that in the late spring and early summer of 1942, many of the isolated Bering Sea islanders that we flew over and visited had never heard of the airplane let alone

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seen one. The size of our PBV and the roar of engines was an incredible sight to these natives.

Our visits were therefore festive occasions. We were a new, unexpected link with the outside world. Unfortunately, it had taken a World War to bring this about. And, we of Patrol Wing Four were the one's who underwent the cultural shock.

Virtually every living creature in the village turned out to greet us. I had never seen so many dogs per capita as there were on some of these Bering Sea islands, particularly those to the north inhabited by Eskimos. Yapping, racing, barking dogs were everywhere. Most surprising was the fact that the vast majority were not beautiful, Siberian huskies or Malemute sled dogs but mongrel types. Scuttlebutt had it that these natives regularly ate dog.

Several times I visited an isolated village where conditions seemed more primitive than at other islands. Here our cigarettes might eventually lead to cancer but our candy bars would never cause cavities among the older Eskimo women. Most of them had no teeth.

There was a communal urine tank in which the skins and hides to be used for making clothing received a series of soakings. The women chewed on these skins to soften them and to make them pliable enough for sewing and stitching. We were told by the B.I.A. couple that this method of tanning and preparing hides caused the teeth to eventually wear down and rot off at the gums. I don't know how widespread this method of tanning hides is/was and I wasn't aware of the practice at other Bering Sea islands. Years later, however, I frequently flew into a mainland Eskimo village almost one thousand miles to the far north and I'm certain the skin garments of these natives had also undergone the same tanning treatment. One could tell by the characteristic odor that emanated from wet outer garments whenever an Eskimo came in from outdoors and stood close to a hot stove.

Dining Out

On our second visit to this island two crew members remained in the anchored PBV while five of us inflated the large rubber raft and paddled ashore. We were greeted like old friends and along with the missionary invited into a native hut for lunch. The

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B.I.A. man cautioned us beforehand that we would insult our host if we did not eat his generously offered food. Our small aircrew party crawled through the low entrance passageway and emerged into the large, dimly lit interior of the hut. A large black kettle of fish soup was boiling merrily over a fire in the center of the room. My nostrils twitched from a variety of odors strong enough to knock my socks off.

There were no chairs or table. The Eskimo spoke in his native tongue to the missionary who instructed us to sit cross-legged on some skins. He also told us there was no silverware and that we would eat with our fingers.

I had never considered myself a particularly finicky eater but it would take me forty years to acquire a taste for mere spinach. Here I was, confronted with a totally different outlook about foods, the foods of a different culture. I braced myself for what was coming.

A steaming bowl of the concoction in the kettle was passed around to each person. I have no true idea of what I ate at that meal, or tried to eat without gagging. It was undoubtedly some type of chowder and I'd guess the ingredients were a variety of things such as whale meat, blubber, seal pieces and parts, perhaps a fish head or two, and Lord only knew what else. A very strong fish odor rose from the bowl under my nose. Large fat globules floated on the surface of the brown, liquidy broth.

In imitation of others I sipped some of the broth. It was much too strongly fish flavored for my taste but must have been very nutritious. One item drifting around in the mixture was on the slimy side but turned out to be quite tasty. I was afraid to ask anyone what it might have been. Another little jewel I tangled with started out small but the longer I chewed the larger it became. Soon it filled my mouth and my jaws ached. There was absolutely no way that I could swallow it. Probably fooling no one, I furtively removed it from my mouth and slipped it into one of my flight jacket pockets. Perhaps it was some kind of blubber for it was whitish colored and quite tasteless to me.

A most plausible reason why there were so many non-descript dogs running loose like cattle didn't do anything to increase my appetite. It seemed to grow very warm in the hut but my brow felt more like cold sweat. I decided to get it over with and finished my

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bowl first. When I put it down the Eskimo smiled at me while nodding his head up and down. He said something to the missionary who asked me if I wanted a refill. I told him to thank our host, the soup was delicious but I was full. I patted my stomach to indicate this to our host while I smiled and nodded my head.

The natives, both Aleut and Eskimo, that we visited on those Bering Sea islands were warm and generous people. They always treated us with kindness and respect while showing us the greatest courtesy. These hardy, intelligent people had adapted superbly to their harsh surroundings. Diet and clothing (tanning methods included) being the primary means by which they had managed to survive for thousands of years. Had I been deposited in this environment with my candy bars and honky-tonk ways I would have quickly perished.

I consider myself fortunate to have had the privilege and experience of even a few brief visits to these storied Bering Sea islands. My PBY flights to this intriguing area came to a screeching halt after August 1942 when I was sent west of Dutch Harbor for the remainder of the Aleutian Campaign of WWII.

Several weeks after the Japanese attacks on Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4, 1942, all of the Aleuts on St. Paul and St. George Islands in the Pribilofs were evacuated. Without warning and given less than twenty-four hours to pack belongings the natives boarded the S.S. Delarof which transported them to virtual internment camps in Southeastern Alaska for the duration. Several thousand U.S. Army personnel took over the Pribilof Islands. By the fall of 1942 they had constructed a 2500 foot runway on St. Paul Island.

The native Eskimos were allowed to remain on their Bering Sea islands which were all to the north. They were, however, joined by either U.S. Army personnel or U.S. Navy Seabees. It was reported that wild bidding took place for the available stocks of native handicraft and supplies were quickly depleted. Sky high bidding probably drove trading values to near fair market price.

Little Things Can Be Upsetting

There was one other member of our Dutch Harbor weather office that I failed to mention earlier, Chief Darr's pet

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dog, Rusty. This pampered pooch lived with the stern chief and had the run of the office. For some reason, precious Rusty chose to sleep each night under our weather map desk rather than with Darr. This led to trouble.

To put it mildly, Rusty passed gas in his sleep. This was bad enough but both ends were busy. He also snored and had very bad halitosis. We didn't know what Rusty's diet consisted of but it didn't take a scientist to know that it contained neither Roloids nor Pepto-Bismo. The noise and stench that came rolling and welling upward from under our map desk was overpowering.

John Lynch, who didn't like the dog to start with, could stand it no longer one night. He grabbed the little stink pot and threw him outside into the cold darkness. Rusty, awakened from a sound sleep and pleasant dog dreams, was not used to this rough treatment. Immediately, he began to cry and whine to get back inside. This brought Darr out of his bunk and onto Lynch. Sharp words were exchanged and Darr rescued his pet. The chief told Lynch, in no uncertain terms, that if he didn't like it he could take his weather work outside. That was that!

Ensign Max C. Jack And The Voyage Of The YP-93

To illustrate the odd, varied experiences of navy weathermen in the Aleutians I'll use the case of Max Jack. On May 4, 1942, newly arrived Ensign Jack got the shock of his young life. He was ordered to report for temporary duty to the YP-93. YP's were tiny wooden district patrol vessels known as "Yippy-boats". This order, in itself, was unusual but he was to be the executive officer. The regular executive officer had mumps.

Other than his trip north on the U.S.S. U.S. Grant, Max Jack had never been on a ship. Now, he found himself second in command of a U.S. Navy vessel.

YP-93 left Dutch Harbor on a westward patrol into the Bering Sea the following day. Their orders were: If they sighted enemy ships they were to get off a message in the clear then run like hell. This last was a very tall order because the YP-93 could make all of eight knots, wide open, with a following sea.

Executive Officer, Max Jack was gone twelve days on this patrol. During that time he sat down to exactly four meals, as the seas were not cooperative.

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At one point, the small vessel logged a roll of sixty-eight degrees.

When Jack arrived back at Dutch Harbor on May 16th he apparently had done such a good job on the YP-93 that he was promoted to the Public Works Department. In his absence, the base had received a badly needed shipment of .50 calibre machine guns and some 20mm. light anti-aircraft weapons. Emplacements were needed. Max was put in charge of a detail to dig gun pits. This was a little out of his line, too. "But," Max Jack recalls, "anyone can dig a hole and put a gun in it. This work can be done speedily and efficiently especially if one is expecting, as we were, to be attacked at any moment."

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A Chink In Japan's Armor

Japan's Midway-Aleutian Plan was so vast in scope, forces involved, and timetable to be adhered to that she was forced to disseminate an abnormally large number of top secret operation orders by radio. This intercepted traffic coupled with a mountain of routine dispatches enabled U.S. Naval cryptanalysts at Pearl Harbor to decipher a surprising amount of vital information.

By mid May 1942, it became apparent to U.S. Naval Intelligence at Pearl Harbor that Japanese Forces were planning to occupy Midway Atoll and the Western Aleutians. At his Pearl Harbor Headquarters, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet (CinCPac), concurred with his Intelligence Section's detailed estimate of Japanese plans.

Nimitz relayed the information to the Joint Chiefs of Staff

in Washington, D.C.. This news could not have come at a worse time. Nimitz would have to make do with thin, inadequate forces scattered across the far reaches of the Pacific. After Europe and Africa, U.S. priorities in the Pacific, listed in order were: Hawaii, Panama Canal and a very distant third, Alaska.

Nimitz and his Staff were face-to-face with a desperate situation. Yorktown, badly damaged during the Battle of Coral Sea was still creeping toward Hawaii. At her reduced speed and trailing a ten mile long oil slick she was not expected to reach port until the end of May. Saratoga, was undergoing extensive repairs at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. While patrolling 450 miles southwest of Oahu on January 11, 1942 she had been torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. To oppose the might of the MidwayAleutian Combined Japanese Imperial Fleet of an estimated one hundred-ninety warships including eight carriers and eleven fast, modern battleships, Nimitz had two

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carriers, Enterprise and Hornet, no battleships fast enough to operate with aircraft carriers, thirteen cruisers and thirty destroyers. These forces were inadequate to defend either Midway or the Aleutians let alone both.

Admiral Nimitz chose to concentrate his carrier force near Midway. Even though indications were strong that Midway would receive the main thrust of the Japanese attack, Nimitz's decision involved great risk. If his assessment proved wrong he might well lose Alaska along with the Aleutians.

Having made the correct decision, Nimitz also foresaw that the impending Battle of Midway would be similar to the Battle of Coral Sea in which opposing surface vessels did not come in direct contact and planes from aircraft carriers determined the outcome of battle. Under these expected circumstances Nimitz decided he could spare at least a small token force of cruisers and destroyers for the defense of Alaska and the Aleutians. It was likely that the Western Aleutians would still fall into enemy hands but it would not be by total default.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, after much discussion at an emergency session, had come to a similar conclusion. Some, however, had argued to let the Japanese have the Aleutians. They would have to live there and keep the islands supplied; no mean feat in itself. The final decision to defend the Aleutians with whatever small force that could be spared was based on the fact that a Japanese occupation of the Aleutians would imperil if not sever the vital Lend-Lease supply route of aid to Russia between Alaska and Siberia.

By the time this Joint Chiefs of Staff decision was flashed to Nimitz in Hawaii he had already organized the Northern Pacific Force under the command of crusty Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald, USN. ComNorPacFor Theobald's small force was comprised of heavy cruisers Indianapolis and Louisville, light cruisers Honolulu, St. Louis, and Nashville, and fourteen destroyers.

Theobald's orders, in part, directed him to "oppose the Japanese advance into the Aleutians-Alaska area taking advantage of every favorable opportunity to inflict strong attrition," and "be governed by the principle of calculated risk." Some members of Theobald's Staff interpreted this to mean that they were to sacrifice the North Pacific Force if that

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would stop the enemy.

Theobald, a former Commander of Destroyers Pacific Fleet, ran his flag up on light cruiser Nashville and headed for Kodiak on May 21, 1942. Despite maintaining a speed of twenty-two knots in heavy seas it would take the North Pacific Force five and a half days to reach Kodiak.

Dispatches from Nimitz's headquarters were received by Theobald enroute. These kept him informed of the rapidly developing events. One Naval Intelligence report stated that the Combined Japanese Imperial Fleet would sortie from Japan around May 20; the attack on the Aleutians and Midway could commence at any time after May 24, 1942.

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In Harm's Way
Pawns To Be Sacrificed

Leaders of the four proposed isolated weather units had cut cards at Dutch Harbor to see who went where. Boyd Omang had drawn Attu; Ed Hudson, Kiska; John Lynch, Kanaga; and Charley House, Atka. Hudson and House decided to swap duty stations. Little did either dream how this would change their lives.

Upon their arrival at Dutch Harbor aboard the transport USS U.S. Grant on April 22, 1942, expeditionary weather unit members had been alerted to remain ready to move out at a moment's notice. Three and a half weeks had passed with no hint as to when these moves might take place.

Attu's ten man unit and the six remaining members of the Kiska unit were ordered westward late in the afternoon of May 14th. William Charles House, ("Doc" or "Professor" to his friends because of his rather studious nature), additional radiomen, cooks, and a pharmacist's mate began loading their Kiska supplies aboard the USS Williamson. This work of transferring stacked crates of gear stored in a warehouse, guns and ammunition, personal baggage, and six month's provisions to the ship was not completed until 0300 hours on May 15, 1942. A few hours later the seaplane tender got underway for Kiska.

Aerographer's mates Boyd A. "Bing" Omang, R.E.Vernon, T.O. Hollihand, and the other seven men of this weather unit would be transported to Attu by the U.S.S. Casco. In addition there would be a small Army-Navy-C.A.A. survey party aboard charged with the duty of selecting a suitable airfield site on Attu. Aerological officer, Ensign Max W. Mull, USNR received temporary duty orders for the trip to Attu and back. Martin and Maurer were still the lone

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ship's company aerographer's mates aboard the Casco.

Loading the Attu unit's small mountain of stores continued throughout May 15th. Equipment included a power plant and refrigeration unit. In addition, two prefabricated Quonsets were placed aboard because there were no suitable or available buildings to house the unit at Chichagof, the only native village on Attu.

A report had been received recently from Forrest Medaris that there was a serious personnel problem on Kanaga. Howard Curtis, who was a real operator-agitator, (and always a true civilian at heart), just about had one of the radiomen climbing up the walls of the Kanaga weather shack. This impressionable radioman was very good at his job but it was rumored that he had not been issued a full seabag above the eyes. This made him fair game for Curtis. The young radioman soon began to see Japs everyplace on the island and he was shooting at shadows.

John Lynch, leader of this unit was still at Dutch Harbor. He was ordered to board Casco, take charge of the Kanaga unit and straighten out this trouble.

The Casco left Dutch Harbor on May 16, 1942, the day after the Williamson. She steamed westward to Attu without stopping at Kanaga. Lynch was to be dropped off on the return trip.

Upon her arrival at Attu, Casco was beset by storms that churned up rough seas. During an attempt to lower a boat loaded with building materials high waves smashed the boat against the ship's side. Boat and materials were lost and the Attu weather mission had to be scratched.

Near the same time this mishap occurred, the ship received a coded radio message that the Japanese were about to make a move on the Aleutians. Michael Gorga Hodikoff, Chief of the Aleuts on Attu had visited the ship earlier. He was brought back aboard and told of this latest development. Commander Theta Combs, USN, skipper of the Casco offered to evacuate the natives if they chose to leave. Chief Hodikoff returned to the island to discuss this with the natives.

Mr. Charles Foster Jones and his wife Etta, both employees of the B.I.A. were living at the Chichagof Harbor village. Mrs Jones was the schoolteacher and Mr. Jones took and

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transmitted weather reports. He also manned the radio transmitter in case of enemy sightings.

Chief Hodikoff returned to the ship, thanked Commander Combs for his kind offer but said that all of the natives desired to remain on the island and take their chances rather than be uprooted from their homeland. Foster Jones and his wife chose to remain on Attu with the natives.

This decision having been made, Combs wasted no time weighing anchor and clearing out of Attu, headed east.

Meanwhile, at Kiska one hundred and fifty miles east of Attu, the Williamson had put "Doc" House, AerM1c; Rolland L. Coffield, PHarM1c; Harold E. Echols, RM2c; M.L. Courtenay, RM3c; Seamen First Class, Gilbert Palmer and W.I. Gaffey ashore on May 18th. This group received a joyous welcome from aerographer's mates Turner and Winfrey, radioman Christensen, and McCandless the cook. These four men had been marooned on the island since mid December of 1941.

While these events were taking place far to the west, two distinguished guests arrived at Dutch Harbor. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had sent one of his top aides, Navy Commander Paul Foster to Alaska for a firsthand report of the situation there. At Kodiak, Foster had met with General Simon Bolivar Buckner, head of the Alaska Defense Command. The two decided to fly out to Dutch Harbor and conduct a personal assessment tour of the entire Aleutians.

Adventurous General Buckner was loaded for bear or anything else that he might run into on the trip. He had his sleeping bag and scope mounted hunting rifle. At Dutch Harbor, Lt. Cmdr. James S. "Red" Russell, skipper of VP-42, tried to dissuade General Buckner from going any farther west because of the risks involved. Although Buckner appreciated this concern for his safety he also typically considered such suggestions to be nonsense. Buckner and Foster were going to inspect the entire chain of islands all the way to Attu, period.

Russell selected LT. Samuel E. Coleman, USN, like the skipper, an experienced Aleutian pilot, to accompany him in another PBY in case of emergency or breakdown. As a further safety precaution, Russell chose Ensign Clark Hood to be his navigator for the flight. Hood was considered by his peers to be the

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finest navigator in the squadron. Both of the PBY's were radar equipped.

The two planes, with Buckner and Foster riding in Russell's PBY, headed westward. Attu was the first scheduled stop. A short way past Kiska they ran into the storm that was causing unloading problems at that moment for the Casco at Attu. Unable to get through the weather front, the two PBY's turned around and landed on the choppy waters of Kiska Harbor for fuel and to await more favorable weather. The Williamson was off-loading into her shuttling boats the last of six months' stores and supplies for the Kiska weather group.

Buckner, Foster, Russell, and Coleman went ashore and visited with the ten man Kiska weather unit. The four tramped about the island with aerographer's mate, House. They were looking for a possible airfield site. During the hike Russell advised House to make a few food caches well away from the three frame buildings of the main camp.

Russell was worried about General Buckner, as well he might have been. With the situation becoming more critical by the moment, he did not want to be the agent responsible for delivering the head of the Alaska Defense Command into the hands of the Japanese. Russell finally convinced Buckner that he should get out of Kiska while the getting was good. Buckner grudgingly agreed to return to Kodiak. By the time this decision was made the bay was too rough to permit takeoff.

The situation was discussed with Commander K.N. "Knappy" Kivette, skipper of the Williamson. He agreed that Alaska's top general should not be at Kiska. The Williamson would transport Buckner and Foster back to Kodiak.

Since the Williamson had first anchored in Kiska Harbor on May 18th, Kivette had kept lookouts and signalmen posted ashore at high vantage points. They were instructed to alert the seaplane tender if any Japanese planes or ships appeared. These men had been told that in this event, the ship would immediately get underway for sea in order to have maneuvering room in open water. The lookouts and signalmen would be left behind to take their chances with the men of the weather station.

The storm from the west slashed into Kiska Harbor and raged into Tuesday, May 19th. Late that afternoon the Williamson got underway for Kodiak. A fast moving

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weather front blasted through Kiska that night. By morning, wind and waves had abated enough for Russell and Coleman to get airborne and conduct search patrols. When they returned to Kiska late that afternoon the flight crews went ashore to get some sleep while the weather unit fueled both PBY's by hand pumping aviation gas from 55 gallon drums. A second storm system intensified and came roaring in from the west. Russell and Coleman were weathered in for three days.

At the height of this storm's second day, the Casco came rolling and pitching into Kiska Harbor on her return trip from Attu. Ensign William C. Jones, a radio technician went ashore to help the radiomen set up some of their new gear. Jones had initially installed and fine-tuned the radio equipment of the original four members of the Kiska weather unit some six months earlier. At that time he had presented Turner, Winfrey, Christensen, and McCandless with a mascot pup named "Explosion". Ensign Jones had acquired the pup at Dutch Harbor. He had given it the odd moniker because it had been born the night that a small, dynamite storage shack exploded near the place where a bitch had whelped.

Boyd Omang and John Lynch also went ashore for last goodbyes with the men of the Kiska weather unit. A photograph of the ten man Kiska team was taken at this time. Ensign Max Mull and Patrol Wing Four Chief Photographer's Mate, Lou Yaconelli who appear in the picture were attached to the Casco.

In spite of sloppy takeoff conditions on May 23rd, Russell and Coleman got airborne and headed for Dutch Harbor. After standing by until both PBY's were safely in the air the Casco also departed Kiska.

The fate of the ten man weather unit ashore was sealed. John Lynch could not be dropped off when the ship reached

Kanaga because seas were too rough to launch a boat. The Casco returned to Dutch Harbor to off-load the ten man Attu weather unit and gear, survey party, and John Lynch. She then proceeded east to Cold Bay where Russell had been ordered to set up his squadron headquarters.

Back at Kiska, House and his men started digging a zig-zag trench for protection against bombing/strafing or shelling attack. Several food, rifle and ammunition caches were established at widely separated locations as Russell had suggested. These

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were placed in steep draws and sheltered with camouflaged tents.

House established a routine whereby a combination lookout, radio, and weather watch was maintained from 0600 until midnight. From midnight until 0600 a sentry and radio watch was on duty.

And, they waited.

Patrol Wing Four Headquarters Moves To Kodiak

The disclosure, in mid May 1942, of Japanese designs on the Aleutians jolted Captain Leslie E. Gehres and his Seattle based Patrol Wing Four Staff into action. Almost overnight, Gehres moved his headquarters to Kodiak.

All essential Staff, men, and necessary equipment that could be crammed into the twelve PBY's of Commander Paul V. Foley's VP-41 took off for Kodiak. This first segment to arrive included the Wing's Tactical Air Officer, LtCmdr. R.R. McCracken; Communications Officer, LtCmdr. J.C. Picken; and Staff Gunnery Officer, LT. Ralph Humes. Commander A.R. "Daddy" Nash, Staff Operations Officer, had to remain in Seattle for a short time in order to coordinate the details of moving so many men and so much equipment in such a short space of time outside the continental limits of the U.S..

The Wing's Staff quickly discovered it had flown from a land of plenty into a land of short supply. All that Communications Officer Picken could find in the way of radio gear were the old sets still in use in our weather office at Kodiak's seaplane hangar. These, as I've mentioned, were geared for casual, slow-speed, peacetime use. As of late May 1942 there was still no direct communications link between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor suitable for high-speed wartime military operations.

There was no telling when urgently requested radio equipment might arrive from the states. As one stop-gap measure, Wing Gunnery Officer, LT. Humes was able to persuade four civilians that they would be much happier if they turned their radios over to Commander Picken. In this manner the Wing "acquired" four powerful radios to monitor four different channels.

In spite of supply, moving and organizational difficulties, Patrol Wing Four's Staff settled into its new Kodiak Headquarters, a makeshift frame

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building. Wind whistled through cracks and blew papers off desks but they at least had a roof over their heads and a place for maps, records, and plans for operations.

About two-thirds of Foley's VP-41 PBY's were sent out to Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor to operate with those of Russell's VP-42. Ensign Jack Litsey, VP-41, took over the PBY mail run between Kodiak, Cold Bay, and Dutch Harbor.

Back in Seattle, additional Staff members, officers and enlisted personnel of Wing ground support units, and all remaining gear, supplies, and equipment were loaded on an Alaska Steamship Company vessel, the S.S. Columbia. With her convoy, destroyer U.S.S. Fox, the S.S. Columbia arrived at Kodiak about 1000 hours on May 29, 1942.

Among Columbia's passengers were Lt.Cmdr. John F. Tatom, Staff Aerologist, CAerM Charles C. Herold, AerM3c Donald N. Livingston, and Slc Emmett L. Smith, Elzie B. Carey, and Richard W. Carter.

The Immovable Object Meets The Irresistable Force

We left Rear Admiral Theobald steaming out of Pearl Harbor for Kodiak on May 21, 1942. Four days outbound from Pearl his small task force was still slamming into heavy North Pacific seas but maintaining a speed of 22 knots. Theobald had had an almost impossible task dumped into his lap. How could he defend 34,000 miles of Alaskan coastline with a dozen and a half mostly old ships?

While still a day and a half from Kodiak Theobald received the following coded dispatch:

**25 MAY 1942
FROM: CINCPAC
TO: COMNORPACFOR**

**THE JAPANESE HAVE COMPLETED PLANS FOR AN
AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION
TO SECURE AN ADVANCED BASE IN THE ALEUTIAN
ISLANDS..FOLLOWING
ESTIMATED JAPANESE TASK FORCE HAS LEFT JAPAN WITH
PROBABLE
OBJECTIVE ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND/OR ALASKA 2
AIRCRAFT CARRIERS,
2-3 SEAPLANE TENDERS, 3 HEAVY CRUISERS, 2 LIGHT**

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CRUISERS, 12

DESTROYERS, 8 SUBMARINES, HEAVY BOMBERS, (PROBABLY FLYING BOAT

TYPE) AND TRANSPORTS AND CARGO VESSELS... ON MAY 25 THE ABOVE

FORCES WILL ARRIVE IN NORTHERN JAPAN, FUEL, AND PROCEED TO

THE ALEUTIANS.

The mention of two Japanese aircraft carriers did nothing to improve Theobald's dour outlook. He had no aircraft carriers and he knew that Alaska's land based fighter/bomber strength was woefully weak. Without adequate protective air cover it would be suicide to expose his fleet to enemy carrier aircraft. Theobald decided to keep his small force 400 miles south of Kodiak and await developments. This order was given and he proceeded toward Kodiak in his flagship Nashville. Before he arrived on May 27, 1942, Theobald received a dispatch that U.S. Naval Intelligence believed that Dutch Harbor would be the Japanese target.

At his new headquarters office at Kodiak, Admiral Robert A. Theobald, Commander North Pacific Force, met General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Alaska Defense Command, who had returned from Kiska a few days earlier in the Williamson. The two top commanders in Alaska discussed strategy.

Theobald felt that Nimitz had been fooled by a Japanese ruse and he was not convinced that an attack on Dutch Harbor was the main objective of the enemy. If they bypassed Dutch Harbor and gained a toe-hold on Kodiak Island or Anchorage on the mainland they would be within relatively easy bomber range of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard at Bremerton and the Boeing Aircraft Company plant in Seattle. Theobald considered it his responsibility to see that this calamity did not happen.

Theobald was following war college doctrine which stated: 1. It was wrong to act solely on information provided by intelligence which was often incorrect, incomplete, or worse still, false if planted by the enemy. 2. One had to act rather upon the enemy's capabilities. In this present case, the enemy's capability was similar to, "Where does an 800 pound gorilla sleep?" The answer is, "Anywhere he chooses."

With his small, carrierless task force, Theobald could not directly oppose such a greatly superior

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force with which the Japanese were planning to attack but he did have a plan which he proposed to General Buckner.

Part of the Command that Theobald was given included the Alaska Fleet. This leaky armada consisted of eight WWI four stack, flush-decked destroyers equipped with ancient 3 inch open deck guns and torpedoes. He had also inherited the six old WWI vintage S-boats of Northern Submarine Division under command of Captain Oswald Colclough, USN, and a motley fleet of "Yippy boats" and commandeered wooden fishing vessels which had been placed under the command of Lieutenant Commander Carl E. "Squeaky" Anderson.

Theobald's plan was to have the eight destroyers escort Anderson's "fleet" to Dutch Harbor then anchor in Makushin Bay on the north side of Unalaska Island. Here the destroyers would wait in readiness to oppose any attempt by the Japanese to make an amphibious landing at Dutch Harbor.

Theobald further proposed to set up a north-south picket line west of Dutch Harbor using Squeaky Anderson's fleet, the six submarines, and augmented by intensive search patrols by the PBY's of VP-41 and VP-42. Theobald was confident that the Japanese Fleet would not be able to penetrate this shield without being detected. A vital and immediate part of the plan was to move all available 11th Air Force fighters and bombers from Anchorage, (800 miles from Dutch Harbor), to the secret airstrips at Cold Bay and Umnak.

When contact reports came in, Theobald would order Buckner's bombers to attack. After the Japanese aircraft carriers were sent to the bottom Theobald would engage the enemy cruisers and destroyers in a surface action.

With the exception of moving the U.S. Army 11th Air Force aircraft to Cold Bay and Umnak, outspoken General Buckner was in complete opposition to Theobald's plan. Buckner believed the intelligence estimate that Dutch Harbor would be the focal point of the enemy attack. He proposed that all available forces, including Theobald's task force, be concentrated immediately in this area to await the coming of the Japanese. He was certain that Theobald's picket line would not work. None of the "kidnapped" fishing vessels, Navy YP's, or S-boats had radar. Only a few of Buckner's army bombers were equipped with radar. Many of our PBY's did have radar but the sets were a very unreliable older British type.

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Buckner pointed out to Theobald that the Aleutians are plagued year round by sudden, violent storms. We were also moving into the dense cloud cover, poor ceiling and visibility, and blanketing fogs and drizzles of late spring and summer. Under these conditions, an enemy might pass within a hundred yards of a picket boat and not be seen. Even if a speeding enemy ship was sighted in the mists and reported it would be quite another matter for bombers to sink it. They would first have to locate it after a long, overwater flight.

Strong objection to part of Theobald's plan, the one part that Buckner was in agreement with, came from an unexpected quarter. Brigadier General, William O. Butler, USA, recently appointed Commander of Buckner's Army 11th Air Force, expressed unwillingness to move his fighters and bombers to Cold Bay and Umnak until the new, experimental Marsden steel mat runways were paved with concrete. There was neither the cement on hand nor the time to do this.

Upon assuming command, General Butler had made an inspection tour of the Cold Bay and Umnak airstrips. To his deep concern he learned that fighters bounced high upon landing while heavy bombers pushed a rippling wave of steel mat immediately ahead of their wheels each time they took off or landed. Butler considered the two secret airstrips, rushed to completion by General Buckner, to be dangerous in the extreme, no better than long trampolines, and unfit for combat operations in their present state.

Buckner and Theobald thus reached an impasse. Buckner, brilliant, tough, strict, supremely confident, and Alaska experienced, was adamant. Theobald, equally brilliant, tough, and unyielding sent a message to Admiral Nimitz for a clarification of Command roles.

Nimitz's reply was of no help. It merely stated that the command relationship between Buckner, the Alaska Defense Command, and Theobald, the North Pacific Force Command was to be one of mutual cooperation.

As Commander North Pacific, U.S.Army, U.S.Navy, and Canadian Forces in Alaska had been placed under Theobald's command. Nimitz had declared Alaska to be in a state of fleet opposed invasion. Under this condition, Buckner's U.S.Army 11th Air Force was also turned over to Theobald. If the enemy secured a beachhead on the mainland a state of ground opposed

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invasion would exist and control of the 11th Air Force would then pass back to General Buckner.

Buckner had built his fledgling Air Force from scratch. It must have been particularly upsetting that his few trained pilots, aircrews, and aircraft were taken away from him at this critical moment and turned over to a newcomer--a navy man, to boot. Buckner knew that those not familiar and experienced with the peculiarities and dangers of Alaska/Aleutian weather, terrain, and vastnesses would midjudge resulting in ineffectual deployment of aircraft and imperilment of aircrews.

It is no secret that Buckner and Theobald did not achieve anything remotely resembling the cooperation Admiral Nimitz hoped for. Their rivalry for overall command became such a vital issue that it almost criminally overshadowed the battle between American and Japanese forces in the Aleutians.

This bitter clash between Buckner and Theobald increased the jealousies and mistrusts between services which the war had almost erased. The rift between Army and Navy, at the higher staff echelons, became so wide that inter-service communications in Alaska came to a virtual standstill. In the field, however, particularly between commanders at the forward areas, mutual cooperation was at a good and sometimes excellent level. At the very bottom of the ladder, the rapport was so good between enlisted personnel of both services that we did not even know there was a feud at the top.

Nonetheless, the battle between Theobald and Buckner would cost a great deal of time, effort, and some lives in the months to come.

Theobald exercised his full authority under the state of a fleet opposed invasion. He gave the necessary orders to put his plan in operation. He then went aboard Nashville which rejoined the small task force of cruisers and destroyers 400 miles south of Kodiak. Here they would remain to circle, Cimmerian like, in the fog and storms for weeks, completely out of the action while maintaining strict radio silence. Meanwhile, Generals Buckner and Butler returned to their respective headquarters in Anchorage.

Theobald's plan went into effect just as a series of strong cold fronts with accompanying rain, sleet, snow, fog, poor ceiling and visibility, and winds often near hurricane force approached the Aleutians from the west. These weather systems would continued

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to sweep through the chain of islands for the next two weeks with little letup.

Enemy Scout Plane Reported Over Kiska

On May 26, 1942, a few days after the PBV's of Russell and Coleman, and the Casco left Kiska, a radioman on duty at our Dutch Harbor weather office received a relayed report that House and his men had spotted a Japanese float type reconnaissance plane.

House sent most of the men into the hills while he and Echols, RM2c, coded and enciphered a message of the contact. At first, Dutch Harbor could not be raised because we were only monitoring Kiska every three hours during established weather transmission times.

Echols, the savvy, senior radioman told House that he could turn the transmitter down to the emergency 500 band and could probably raise someone on this frequency. This was done and the naval base at Sitka, in far off southeastern Alaska, picked up the message that would be relayed to Dutch Harbor.

The Dutch Harbor radioman asked House for a confirmation of the report. The report was repeated. The Naval Command Post at Dutch Harbor instructed our radioman to ask House for a precise identification of the plane, its altitude, course, and speed. House reported back that the plane was a type carried by Japanese I-class submarines and designated with the Allied code name: "Glen". All of this radio traffic took time because each message and reply required encoding-enciphering and dechiphering-decoding.

Finally, Dutch Harbor's radioman was ordered to ask House, "Did you really see a plane?" House ignored this and had Echols shut the transmitter down after signing off the air.

Every night at midnight, the men of the Kiska weather unit tuned in to a stateside news broadcast then tuned to radio Tokyo immediately following for the Japanese version of the news. That night, a San Francisco station reported that a Japanese scout plane had been seen reconnoitering the Aleutians and that an enemy attack on these islands or possibly on Alaska itself appeared imminent.

On the same day that the "Glen" scouted Kiska, the Japanese Northern Force, under Vice Admiral Hosagaya, sortied from Ominato in Northern Honshu. This included the Northern Second Mobile Force under

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Vice Admiral Kakuta--the carrier striking force that would attack Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4, 1942.

On May 27th, the Kido Butai under Admiral Nagumo sortied from the Inland Sea of Japan into the North Pacific Ocean by way of the Bungo Suido Strait. This was the main carrier task force that would attack Midway on June 4, 1942.

The Combined Fleet of Admiral Yamamoto sortied from the Inland Sea by similar route on the following day, May 28, 1942.

Vice Admiral Kondo's Midway Invasion Force also sortied on May 28th from staging areas at Guam and Saipan.

Gigantic, fateful, the Japanese Midway-Aleutian Operation was underway.

Tension Mounted With Each Tick Of The Clock

Dutch Harbor had been on the alert for sometime but it doesn't do much good to be prepared to fight if the equipment is inadequate. The majority of emplacements still lacked guns. The navy gunboat USS Charleston came in toward the end of May with about twenty 37mm. and a few 20mm. anti-aircraft guns but most of these were consigned to the Army at Fort Mears. Our shipment of heavier anti-aircraft guns had not arrived.

Chief Darr continued to ride herd on us and as a result he was not well loved by all, especially John Lynch. Because of all the alerts, we had been carrying our weapons with us wherever we went. Lynch was halfway to the messhall when an alarm was sounded and realized that he'd left his trusty .45 in the office.

The loud, piercing siren always frightened Rusty making him quiver and shake. Darr must have been kneeling near the office door comforting his dog when Lynch hit the door, coming on the dead run for his automatic. The door hit Darr in the head, knocking him unconscious. When muster was held in our trench, someone asked where Darr was? Lynch said that the last time he saw him he was lying on the office deck.

I'm afraid that if the word had gone out on some alert to fire at will, "will" might have been our leader.

Red Morrow added to the excitement by wrecking the Crosley, The Commode. Apparently he was running a

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little late that morning and didn't want to take time to lace his hobnailed boots. Instead, he put on a pair of tennis shoes. He was partway through his forecast delivery run when without warning an army deuce and a half ten-wheeled truck stopped in front of him. Red tried to make a panic stop with his tennis shoes but without the traction of his hobnails he failed miserably. With a sickening crunching of metal he slammed into the back of the high bed truck. Although it took a can opener to get Red out of the tangled wreckage he suffered only some minor cuts and bruises but our "Four Wheeled Commode" was totaled.

Squadron Commanders Foley and Russell had been ordered to have their PBY's fly constant search patrols out of Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor. Overnight searches were inaugurated. These PBY's took off toward dusk at around 2130-2200, flew through the four or five hours of darkness and were scheduled to return around noon. Others took off in early morning and returned late that evening. As a result our PBY's were in the air twenty-four hours a day.

Because of limited hangar space, apron, and related facilities the Dutch Harbor seaplane base could handle only four to six planes. Seaplane tender Gillis, a recent arrival at Dutch Harbor, took care of the rest. CAerM Max White and Glenn "Swede" Olson, S1c were the Wing weathermen assigned under temporary duty orders to the Gillis.

During the week preceding the Japanese attacks our PBY's were also operating from dispersal points in the Dutch Harbor area. This reduced the risk of having a large number caught on the water in strafing attacks while at anchor buoys. PBY's were serviced at the seaplane facilities or by the Gillis then either took off on patrol or were sent to isolated bays, inlets, and even a lake. A few PBY's were also operating from the secret Army airstrip on Umnak Island.

The number of PBY's flying in and out of Dutch Harbor changed on a day-to-day basis depending on operation orders. The numbers also fluctuated because a plane from Dutch Harbor would get "weathered out" and be forced to seek shelter at Cold Bay or vice-versa.

This state of affairs caused a few mixups and disruptions in our flying weathermen's routine. Calderon and I were flying from the base seaplane ramp. I returned from a flight and spent the night on

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the Gillis. Calderon spent a night aboard a PBY anchored to a buoy in Beaver Inlet. Situations such as these would soon be the norm for Patrol Wing Four's aerographer's mates.

At Dutch Harbor we were not going to be caught napping on Sunday as Pearl Harbor had been. Starting in the middle of May we went to the trenches before dawn and dusk seven days a week. Wednesday was designated our day off but only between air raid drills.

Dutch Harbor was scouted by a Japanese I-boat's float plane on May 29, 1942. This plane caused one of the many unscheduled alerts. After the war it was learned that this reconnaissance plane crashed while attempting a landing in rough seas near the submarine. The plane sank but the pilot was rescued. Two other I-boats reconnoitered Kodiak and Cold Bay by periscope that same day.

This was also the day that Lt. Cmdr. Tatom and the other Wing weathermen arrived at Kodiak aboard the S.S. Columbia. Elzie Carey and Dick Carter were ashore at Kodiak less than an hour. They had found their assigned barracks and were unpacking when Tatom gave them new orders. Both men went back aboard the S.S. Columbia for transportation to Dutch Harbor. Carey's orders were to Wing Operations at Dutch Harbor. Carter's temporary duty orders sent him to the Gillis.

Two days later, Tatom ordered Chief Herold to the Williamson and Emmett Smith, the "LaVeta Lancer" to Dutch Harbor for temporary duty at the weather office or "for further PatWing Four assignment as is deemed necessary."

After the Williamson had transported General Buckner and Commander Foster from Kiska to Kodiak she had immediately refueled and replenished and headed westward again for Cold Bay to support the Casco. Herold was to join AerM3c Lester Roberts, Jr. on the Williamson. As senior "acting aerological officer" Herold was charged with the duty of preparing the daily flight forecasts for planes operating from the Casco and the Williamson, so long as both tenders remained at Cold Bay. Although Roberts and Martin had been doing a good job for quite some time this would relieve them both of a great responsibility even if it were only for a short time.

Don Livingston, AerM3c received orders to the USS Hulbert. This AVD had recently been added to the Wing's small,

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seaplane tender fleet. A carbon copy of the Williamson and Gillis, she was expected to arrive at Kodiak on June 5, 1942. For the time being, Tatom would remain at Kodiak with Wing Commander Gehres and his Staff.

On June 1, 1942, Herold and Smith caught a ride with Ensign Jack Litsey and his VP-41 PBY mail plane. Herold was dropped off at Cold Bay while Smith continued on with Litsey to Dutch Harbor. I flew a daylight search patrol on June 1st. and was delighted to see Emmett Smith at Dutch Harbor upon my return late that evening.

A Japanese submarine made a periscope reconnaissance of Dutch Harbor on June 2, 1942. The boat's skipper sent a radio signal to Admiral Kakuta that instead of the full army division that Japanese Intelligence estimated, there appeared to be only about 5000 men at Dutch Harbor and most of these were service and support personnel.

Kakuta flashed a radio signal to Yamamoto asking for permission to capture Dutch Harbor. Yamamoto knew that Dutch Harbor could be taken but it was too far from Japan to be kept supplied and held for any length of time. He vetoed Kakuta's request.

While this decision on the fate of Dutch Harbor was being weighed, Kakuta's undetected Northern Carrier Force, now less than five hundred miles away, was racing toward us at 22 knots.

The outcome of the war in the Pacific would be determined during the next forty-eight hours at the Battle of Midway. Victory or defeat would hang by a very slim thread.

At Dutch Harbor we were about to pay the price of years of peacetime public apathy that left Alaska practically defenseless.

One of the series of strong cold fronts ripping into the Aleutians from the west was providing excellent concealment for Kakuta's carrier task force. He was keeping his ships just inside the leading edge of the fast moving front where heavy clouds, fog, sleet, and rain obscured everything from view beyond a few hundred yards.

These current, closely bunched cold fronts were not as disastrously violent as one that had smashed its way through Dutch Harbor a month previously. Howling winds and shrieking Williwaws that accompanied that monster had plucked 2 x 4's from a lumber pile and driven some, like arrows, into a barracks wall.

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With an awesome display of power and fury these same winds had also flipped a lashed down PBY over onto its back before they subsequently blew it off the cement apron and into the bay where it promptly sank.

In spite of very poor flying conditions, including winds gusting over fifty knots, (57.5 mph), our PBY's took off on search missions the morning of June 2, 1942. The attendant low ceiling, visibility, and weather associated with the fronts prevented effective search patrols. Calderon flew out of Dutch Harbor on this day.

Early that afternoon the chilling sound of the alarm sent men racing for the trenches. An unidentified ship had emerged from the murk and was entering the harbor. An army gun battery fired a warning shot across her bows before the ship belatedly identified herself. She was the USS President Filmore, an army transport arriving with troops and supplies including some of the desperately needed heavy anti-aircraft guns and ammunition we'd been waiting so long for. Unfortunately, the guns and ammunition were buried deep in her holds and would therefore be among the last of the cargo unloaded.

Dutch Harbor's shortage of weapons of all types was so great that CAerM Edward S. "Duck" Hudson had turned over to the base Commandant, Commander William E. Updegraff, USN, all of the small arms and ammunition from the remaining aerological unit stocks still stored in a warehouse. These weapons, including the sporting .22's and shotguns, were issued to weaponless navy base personnel. The supply was meager and quickly ran out.

Shotguns and .22's are not adequate firepower with which to beat off attacking Japanese carrier planes or to oppose an amphibious landing. At best, they may have boosted the morale of the men receiving them. The several thousand civilian workers on the base and at Fort Mears were unarmed.

Dutch Harbor's weather deteriorated still further the evening of June 2, 1942 but Ensign Marshall C. Freerks of VP-42, somehow, bounced his radar equipped PBY off the churned up waters of the bay to conduct an all night search. In equally poor weather conditions one hundred-eighty miles east at Cold Bay, LT. Jack Bingham, VP-41, took off in a similarly equipped PBY. These were the only two PBY's to get airborne for night searches. Calderon had returned safely to Dutch Harbor late that afternoon but he was on the Gillis,

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at least for the night.

Meanwhile, at Kodiak, where the weather was much better that evening, one of the few U.S. Army 11th Air Force four-engined bombers was preparing to take off on an overnight search. Tatom sent Don Livingston in this LB-30 to "fly the weather." This early version B-24 Liberator took off at 2000 hours June 2, 1942, flew southward approximately 600 miles into the Gulf of Alaska to latitude 48 degrees north then turned for home. Livingston's LB-30 landed at 0600 hours on June 3, 1942

Late spring and summer nights in the northern latitudes of the Aleutians are short. The darkest hours, depending on the weather's whim, are from about 2230 until 0230. At midnight on June 2, Kakuta's task force was rapidly approaching the position selected to launch his attack against Dutch Harbor. We knew the Japanese were coming but we did not know exactly when or where they would strike.

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The Japanese Attacks On Dutch Harbor

Attack of June 3, 1942

Shortly before midnight on June 2nd, Kakuta had increased speed to twenty-five knots to get clear of the leading edge of the weather front he had been using for cover. At 0200 hours on June 3, 1942, the weather surrounding his speeding carrier force was still so poor that first light was delayed. Kakuta would have to wait for sufficient light and an improvement in weather conditions before he could safely launch aircraft. He had already passed the scheduled time and launch position.

At Dutch Harbor at 0200 hours word was received in the weather shack to sound the air raid alarm for the predawn alert. In wet, windy darkness we manned our dug-in positions. Soggy dawn broke and with it, no attack. We were secured about 0330. Men who did not have a duty watch, myself included, went back to barracks or huts and hit the sack.

Around 0230, Admiral Kakuta, in his flagship Ryujo became increasingly anxious over the delay and conferred with his Senior Air Officer, Lieutenant Commander Masatake Okumiya. Kakuta was understandably worried about the poor weather conditions and had some misgivings about whether his pilots would be able to locate Dutch Harbor or their own carriers after the attack.

Japanese Intelligence had provided little information about the American base about to be attacked. Pilots were supplied with copies of a thirty year old map that outlined only the shores of Unalaska and Umnak Islands. Interior portions were blank and indicated as the, "Unknown areas."

Okumiya, a highly regarded pilot who had led the attack on the U.S. Gunboat Panay and three Standard

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Oil Company tankers on the Yangtze River in China in 1937, assured Admiral Kakuta that all would go well. Kakuta's pilots were highly trained, skilled, and combat proven. Left unspoken was the fact that none had ever flown in the Aleutians. They were about to be launched into this frightening experience.

At 0243 hours the visibility improved to 1000 yards and ceiling to 400 feet. Ryujo, in the lead, could visually see carrier Junyo and signals could be exchanged without breaking radio silence. Although visibility and ceiling were both below minimums for conducting Japanese carrier air operations, Kakuta gave the order to launch planes. He was already three-quarters of an hour behind the split second timing of his Midway/Aleutians operations orders and could delay no longer.

One of the "Kate" bombers that roared down the deck of Ryujo experienced engine trouble immediately after takeoff and crashed into the heaving, icy sea. Its three-man crew was rescued by a destroyer. The remaining nineteen planes of Ryujo's attack group and the twenty-six from Junyo were launched without mishap.

Because of the low ceiling and poor visibility these forty-five planes could not fly in formation. Therefore, orders had been given for each plane to proceed independently to an area outside Dutch Harbor where they would form attack groups before hitting targets.

The following is a detailed composition of Japanese aircraft launched, and targets assigned for the first attack on Dutch Harbor. This information is contained in a letter dated March 5, 1969 written to Admiral James S. Russell, USN, at his request, by Rear Admiral Hiroichi Samajima, IJN, Chief of Staff, Japanese Military Self Defense Force. During the time of the Dutch Harbor attacks, RADM Samajima was a flight leader of horizontal bombers operating from carrier Ryujo.

* Kate- Allied code name for the Nakajima B5N2, a three place, high level or torpedo bomber. Single winged, single engined, this plane had a top speed of 235 mph, service ceiling of 27,000 feet, and a range of 1237 miles. It was equipped with two 7.7 mm. synchronized machine guns and two free 7.7 mm's. Forces that participated:

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Group Name of Carrier Formation Leader Number of Aircraft

| | | | | |
|------------|---|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| horizontal | A | <u>Ryujo</u> | LT. H. Samajima | Seven(7) |
| | | | bombers | |
| horizontal | B | <u>Ryujo</u> | LT. M. Yamagami | Seven(7) |
| | | | bombers | |
| | C | <u>Ryujo</u> | | Six(6) Fighters |
| Fighters | D | <u>Junyo</u> | LT. Y. Shiga | Thirteen(13) |
| Dive | E | <u>Junyo</u> | LT. Zenje Abe | Thirteen(13) |
| | | | bombers | |

Targets:

Group A. Three horizontal bombers led by Samajima-: Radio

Station. Four horizontal bombers-: warehouses and barracks.

Group B. Warehouses, oil tank installations and anti-aircraft batteries.

Group C. Flying boats, hangars, oil tanks, and any other worth-while targets.

Group D. Military installations.

Group E. Ships and harbor installations.

Ryujo's pilots were able to find Dutch Harbor, rendezvous, and form attack groups. Twenty-four of the twenty-six planes launched by Junyo became lost temporarily in the Aleutian mists, failed to find Dutch Harbor, and after much difficulty straggled back individually or in small groups to Junyo. All published accounts of the Battle of Dutch Harbor state that only aircraft of carrier Ryujo attacked on June 3, 1942. While this has long been accepted as a fact of history it is perhaps just as well that it was never etched in stone. Admiral Samajima indicates in his letter to Admiral Russell that two of Junyo's Zero fighters joined Ryujo's planes and attacked Dutch Harbor.

The banshee wail of the air raid siren awoke me from a sound sleep about 0400 hours on June 3, 1942. In our hovel next door to the radio shack, tired weathermen and radiomen grumbled, searched for

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gear--, hurriedly put on boots--, thrust arms into foul weather jackets--, crammed steel helmets on heads--, and grabbed rifles and ammunition belts.

Our hut door flew open and a radioman, in hasty search of his rifle and helmet, burst into our midst.

"What's up?" someone asked.

"This is it," he replied. "Seventeen unidentified planes off Eider Point."

This terse radio message, in the clear, is believed to have been transmitted by Ensign Jim Hildebrand of VP-41. Hildebrand's PBY was airborne having just taken off from a dispersal inlet.

Red Morrow, AerM3c, has the dubious distinction of being the first U.S. casualty of the Japanese raids on Dutch Harbor. Six foot three, the lanky, long-legged red head beat us all to the trench. Morrow, with the rest of us hot on his heels, and his rifle held crossways high over his head, took a flying leap down the wooden steps of the bunker's narrow entrance. Red's legs flew through the entrance but before his feet reached the ground his athwartship rifle jammed in the opening. With both arms almost torn from their sockets, Red was flipped on his back. The stampeding herd behind had no time to stop as it hurtled down on top and over him, trampling him into the mud. Fortunately, his injuries were not serious and in a few weeks he was spry and chipper as usual.

The Japanese planes had arrived just as a storm front passed through. A break in the lower cloud cover appeared behind the front and in this relatively clear hole lay Dutch Harbor spread out below the enemy pilots.

I first became aware of anti-aircraft guns firing at a "V" formation of three high-flying specks approaching from the north, the entrance to the bay. Slowly, it seemed, the specks became black crosses against a background of grey sky. Scattered puffs of black flak from a few 3 inch guns appeared to be bursting far short and well below the enemy bombers. These guns, the heaviest anti-aircraft weapons at Dutch Harbor, were being fired from the Gillis, army transport President Filmore, and USS Charleston. A fourth ship, desperately attempting to get clear of the harbor, is believed to have been the unarmed SS Columbia.

37mm. guns from Fort Mears and the few from the

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navy base began to fire busily but ineffectually. Tracer shells from widely scattered 20mm. gun positions began lacing curved arcs across the sky in the general direction of the oncoming bombers which were still several miles away, and at an estimated altitude of 8,000 feet, far out of range of these small calibre guns.

The high flying "Kates", locked into their bombing runs, unswervingly kept coming, unhurried, somehow quietly detached from the noise around us, strangely remote, inevitable.

With my neck cranned way back, mouth open and my eyes riveted on the bombers, the unseen Zeros appeared as if by magic. They had come flashing in low and were snarling and swarming among us.

With the exception of Marshall Freerks's PBY, in which he had recently returned from an overnight patrol, the only other Catalina present was that of Ensign Jack Litsey. Litsey had the mail run between Dutch Harbor and Kodiak. He had his PBY warmed up and ready for takeoff when the attack began.

Litsey was carrying two passengers, just as a few days earlier he had transported Herold and Smith to Cold Bay and Dutch Harbor respectively. As Litsey gunned his engines for takeoff he instructed his radioman to get off a message in the clear that Dutch Harbor was under attack.

Two Zeros spotted Litsey's PBY attempting to takeoff and they made a strafing attack. Litsey's radioman bent over his key as he tapped out the message. A chief petty officer of Litsey's crew, intent on seeing that this message got out, had placed his hand on the radioman's shoulder. A machine gun slug from a strafing Zero passed through the chief's hand and into the back of Martin Zeller, AVRM2c, killing him instantly. Bullets ripping into the PBY killed Rolland Geuder, AVRM3c, one of the passengers. Other slugs struck the other passenger, Bert Brown, AVRM3c. The attack had also set Litsey's plane afire. The Zeros made sharp, banking turns and returned to finish the job. Badly wounded, Brown dove out an opened blister hatch and drowned. Litsey brought the burning plane to a skidding crash stop on the spit where he and the remaining crew members escaped just before the PBY blew up.

A Zero strafed the hangar and another came directly toward our trench on a strafing run at the radio shack. Other Zeros strafed the docks,

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warehouses, and barracks then attacked Fort Mears.

Distracted by all this, I'd forgotten about the bombers. I thought the world had come to an end when the first heavy bombs exploded in the dock, warehouse, barracks area. Another string of bombs shook the earth as they struck halfway up our hillside. Amidst this chaos, L.R. Upton and Rebel Hollihand, out of breath, came tumbling pell-mell into our trench.

Bombs and explosions rocked the base and Fort Mears for what seemed like forever. Small flights of enemy bombers came in from different directions, at different high altitudes. One large bomb landed near our trench and close to a gun emplacement which was just across the dirt road from the dug in Command Post.

Zeros kept coming back, zipping and diving all over the sky as they made streakingly fast strafing runs. Although the high priority radio shack was the target of many of these attacks the sandbags of our weathermen's fighting trench also absorbed a beating. The bombers were out of range of our rifles but we repeatedly fired at the incredibly swift Zeros with no apparent effect. They attacked at will.

Dutch Harbor seemed a shambles. Heavy black smoke poured from the old SS Northwestern which had taken a direct bomb hit. Two large fuel storage tanks were burning fiercely. A warehouse and a barracks were in flames. Behind us at Fort Mears there were many buildings afire. Black smoke rolled over the whole area.

Our tormentors finally left but only when the bombers were out of high explosive bombs and clusters of incendiaries and the Zeros had nearly exhausted their supply of 20mm. cannon shells and machine gun ammunition. Japanese records indicate that on the morning of June 3, 1942, their attack planes were over Dutch Harbor for thirty-five minutes. This is an abnormally long time for a tiny area to be subjected to bombing and strafing.

The aerographers remained alert in their zig-zag trench, rifles still clutched or resting on sandbags, not knowing whether this was just a temporary lull before the enemy resumed his attack. The--All Clear--had not sounded. Someone had wondered aloud why no dive bombers had taken part. Perhaps they were on their way in to finish the job.

"Anybody hurt?" someone hollered from down the trench. "No"

"No"

"Not here," came the replies.

A hush settled over us. In the relative quiet that had descended I became conscious of my thumping heart. It sounded so loud that I wondered if the men on either side of me could also hear it? My lips were dry and I licked them but my tongue was equally parched. I tried to swallow but couldn't. Someone handed me a canteen. I'd forgotten mine.

Apprehension and brains numbed temporarily by shock kept us quiet for a time but this did not last long. Some men may have sensed that the attack was over and reactions set in in the form of chatter.

"Sweet Jesus, I hope it's over," someone muttered. "How about those friggin' Zeros? Balls they're fast." "What the hell size were those bombs?" "I dunno, probably 500 or 1000 pounders." "Hell, I'll bet they weighed a ton."

Then a pissed-off voice demanded to know, "Where the hell were the goddamned Army P-40's?"

This was a very good question which nobody could answer at the time.

A navy radioman at Dutch Harbor had transmitted in the clear, "ABOUT TO BE BOMBED". This message was received all down the line to the east as far as Kodiak. P-40's took off within minutes from the secret airstrip at Cold Bay and headed for Dutch Harbor. Some accounts say that these P-40's arrived only ten minutes after the attacking Japanese planes had departed to the south. We weathermen, from our high vantage point, did not see any P-40's over or around Dutch Harbor and the Japanese planes headed west on the north side of Unalaska Island. It is our considered opinion that the Cold Bay P-40's were not able to get through the intense cold front which at that time was sweeping eastward between Dutch Harbor and Cold Bay.

At the other secret army fighter strip on the eastern tip of Umnak Island, only forty miles to the west of Dutch Harbor, word that we were under attack was not received at all.

The Army communications link between Dutch Harbor and Umnak, the only one that existed at the time, was a Rube Goldberg lashup that failed to function at the critical moment. A portable field type voice transmitter, operated by batteries, relayed

information to another weak output battery set located on top of Mt. Ballyhoo. Army radiomen at that point relayed the message to Umnak where it was received on an ancient radio set that had been commandeered from a fishing boat. The signals sent all along the line were so weak that the system only worked under ideal conditions.

As the enemy attack planes left Dutch Harbor to return to their carriers, the weather, never good, began to deteriorate with the approach of another strong front. Through a break in heavy clouds, one of these planes passing near the entrance to Makushin Bay caught a glimpse of five American destroyers at anchor. This information was radioed to Admiral Kakuta.

Kakuta's second air strike on June 3, 1942 was ordered against the five destroyers that had been discovered purely by accident. In Rear Admiral Samajima's letter to Admiral Russell, dated 3/5/69, he lists these attack groups as follows:

Seventeen (17) horizontal bombers from Ryujo.

Fifteen (15) dive bombers from Junyo.

Fifteen (15) fighters total, launched from both carriers. In addition, Kakuta ordered cruisers Takao and Maya to each

launch two catapult float planes to assist as scouts and spotters.

Samajima's disclosure, almost twenty-seven years after the fact, that planes from Ryujo were also sent against the five U.S. destroyers in Makushin Bay will come as a surprise to U.S. historians of the Battle of Dutch Harbor. U.S. histories of the battle state that only aircraft from Junyo plus the four cruiser float planes were launched for this attack.

Kakuta's carrier force had proceeded to within one hundred miles of Dutch Harbor at this point and was about sixty miles southwest of Umnak Pass at the western end of Unalaska Island. Fighters, bombers, and scout planes were launched. The weather and fog became so thick that the planes of this second strike passed the returning planes of the Dutch Harbor raid without any of the Japanese aircraft making visual contact.

While the enemy planes sped to attack our old destroyers waiting patiently in Makushin Bay for further orders from Theobald, the Dutch Harbor attack aircraft were recovered. Pilots made their reports at a debriefing while strike photographs were developed.

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Kakuta's pilots reported that their attack was not a surprise such as at Pearl Harbor. The Americans seemed to have been alerted and were waiting for them. Very heavy damage was inflicted on shore installations. There were many permanent type, large buildings and warehouses. Everything was connected by a complete network of roads. They had encountered no American fighter opposition. Japanese Intelligence apparently had been correct in their assessment that the nearest U.S. fighters were far away in Anchorage, with a few possibly based at Kodiak. The base complex was greater in extent than they had imagined.

Kakuta wanted to know where the American flying boats were based? There was a seaplane hangar, cement apron and ramp at Dutch Harbor, the pilots reported but they had only seen two patrol planes. One they had shot at outside the harbor had made its escape up a draw and into thick cloud cover, (Ensign Jim Hildebrand, VP-41); the other had been destroyed on the water while it was attempting to takeoff, (Ensign Jack Litsey, VP-41).

Strike photographs corroborated the pilots' reports. The Japanese now had pictures of the base fuel tanks, Standard Oil Co. fuel tank farm and dock, radio station on the hill, seaplane hangar, barracks, warehouses, SS Northwestern, Fort Mears, and the village of Unalaska. They had gone into Dutch Harbor not knowing exactly what was there or the location of vital targets. In case a second attack was necessary, Kakuta could assign more specific targets.

Kakuta waited for word from his second attack groups. Soon, instead of the report of a successful attack on the American destroyers, his carrier planes were asking for direction bearings in order to find their way home. They had become lost and had not been able to find Unalaska Island let alone Makushin Bay.

Pilots of the four float planes from Takao and Maya had not been so lucky. They too, had become disoriented in the murk but had stayed together. They had found a stretch of coastal land which they hoped was near the eastern end of Umnak Island. The four planes were circling in a tight group, just offshore, in and out of heavy clouds.

Unfortunately, for them, they happened to be almost over Fort Glenn, the secret fighter airstrip near Otter Point, Umnak. The enemy pilots did not catch sight of the airstrip but their milling float planes were seen from the ground and identified as

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Japanese aircraft. P-40's scrambled to intercept. In the ensuing dogfights one of the Japanese "Petes"* was shot down, one severely damaged and two shot full of holes. The three damaged "Petes" escaped into cloud cover, established their bearings, and headed for home. The badly damaged one made it back to its cruiser but crashed on landing. Pilot and gunner were rescued shortly after this plane sank.

The sudden appearance of American fighters this far out in the Aleutians was a startling development to the Japanese. Kakuta ordered a 180 degree turn by his task group which sped away to the southwest. Kakuta met with his Staff to try to determine where the P-40's could have come from and to decide on the next plan of action.

At Dutch Harbor we stayed at battle stations most of the day because of continuing air raid alerts all of which proved to be false alarms. Most of these alerts were caused by PBY's either

* "Pete"-Allied code name for the Mitsubishi model F1M2, Navy

Type 97, two place catapult scout plane powered by a Mitsubishi NKK2 Zusei 13 engine of 875 horsepower. Top speed was 230 mph, service ceiling 30,970 feet and range about 500 miles. Two 7.7mm. fixed machine guns fired forward, one 7.7mm. was flexible and bomb load was 246 pounds. leaving or entering the air corridors around Dutch Harbor.

The SS Filmore had cast off her lines quickly and gotten underway during the early morning attack. She was escorted beyond the harbor entrance by the Gillis which remained with her throughout the day. The Gillis and Filmore made a good pair; the Filmore had U.S. Navy gun crews aboard to man her light anti-aircraft weapons. Together, the two ships had thrown a lot of lead at the attacking Japanese planes.

After the attack, the Gillis repeatedly shepherded the Filmore back toward the dock so that the supply ship could unload her gun cargo. Each time they approached, the siren had wailed another warning and the two ships were forced to do an about face and head for sea again.

Raging fires on the naval base and Fort Mears were brought under control and we started to total the damage. A bomb had completely destroyed a Fort Mears barracks. In the blast, twenty-five U.S. Army personnel were killed and about the same number

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wounded. These fifty men accounted for most of Dutch Harbor's casualties that first day. Considering the prolonged length of the attack, the casualties and damage were surprisingly light.

The S.S. Northwestern had taken a bomb hit which caused fires to erupt. A Navy Chief Petty Officers barracks sustained heavy bomb damage but the building had been empty. Several fuel storage tanks had burned with the roar of an inferno. A hastily abandoned ten-wheeled truck had taken a direct bomb hit and was turned into a burned, twisted wreck. Incendiaries had caused fires at Fort Mears and burned a Siems-Drake warehouse at the naval base. The nimble "Zekes" had thoroughly strafed the naval base and army fort.

The tragedy of fifty casualties from a single bomb hit on a Fort Mears's barracks caused the navy to close down its barracks and messhall for several days. Men who had been bunking in these main barracks buildings had to scrounge a place to sleep and we were fed from portable army field kitchens.

With the approach of darkness, the first day's Battle of Dutch Harbor came to an end. VP-42's Ensign Marshall Freerks, whose PBY had been in the hangar being serviced and escaped damage, took off on another night patrol in an attempt to locate the Japanese carrier fleet.

Ensign Jim Hildebrand, VP-41, who had narrowly avoided being shot down by Zeros that morning, also took off for an overnight search. Hildebrand and his crew never returned--disappeared without a trace.

The Williamson, with aerographer's mates Herold and Roberts, left Cold Bay on June 3, 1942 under orders to proceed to the Dutch Harbor area to help the Gillis service dispersed PBY's.

"Zeke"--Allied code name for the Mitsubishi A6M2 Reisen Navy Type O, carrier model Zero fighter. Specifications: 950 hp Nakajima engine, maximum speed 332 mph, cruising speed 207, range 1930 miles, time to 19,685 ft. (6,000m.) 7 minutes 27 seconds, service ceiling 32,810 ft., two 20mm. type 99 cannon in wings, two 7.7mm. machine guns in upper fuselage.

Just as the location of our secret army fighter strip on Umnak Island was a mystery to the Japanese, the whereabouts of the Japanese carrier task force remained a mystery to us. As far as we knew, neither Russell's nor Foley's PBY's nor the two LB-30 Liberators and several early model B-17's of Colonel

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William O. Eareckson's 36th Bombardment Squadron had been able to discover the elusive enemy ships.

Two PBY's, one piloted by LT(jg) Jean Cusick, VP-41, the other by LT(jg) Lucious D. Campbell, VP-42, had taken off on June 3, 1942 to search to the southwestward. By nightfall both "Cats" had failed to return and were listed as overdue. Both had found the Japanese carrier fleet.

Three days would elapse before we learned the fate of Campbell and his crew. It would take thirty-nine months for the story of Cusick and his men to come to light.

Cusick took off at 0300 June 3, 1942 from the secret fighter strip on Umnak. On the return leg of his sector patrol at 1000 hours, 200 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor he was jumped by Zeros of Junyo's air cover. It happened so quickly there was not time for Cusick's radioman to transmit a contact report.

In the slashing attack Cusick was severely wounded in the shoulder by a tracer bullet. The starboard engine was knocked out, the wing set on fire, and the radio destroyed. Cusick and his co-pilot brought the burning plane down to a safe landing on the open sea. Engulfed in flames and sinking rapidly, the PBY was quickly abandoned. Three men inflated the large rubber raft and jumped in. The raft had been pierced by many bullets and it sank sucking the three men down with it. Cusick, his navigator LT(jg) Wylie M. Hunt, and two enlisted men crowded into the two man raft. There was no room for a fifth man who, immersed in the icy water, clung to a line which ran through loops around the outside of the raft. He endured it for almost half an hour before he died of exposure and slipped below the wave tops. Cusick died of his wounds shortly afterward. Without hope, Hunt and the other two survivors on the wildy pitching raft waited their turn to die.

The Japanese heavy cruiser Takao happened upon the bobbing raft about noon. The three men, near death from exposure, had to be helped aboard. They were wrapped in blankets and fed soup and hot tea. Later, the men were separated, Hunt by himself, and the two enlisted men together in another compartment. They were interrogated. The Japanese especially wanted to know where the American fighters were based. The men pleaded ignorance, even though they had taken off from the Umnak strip, and gave only their names, rank/rate, and serial numbers.

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Lucius Campbell took off from Dutch Harbor the afternoon of June 3, 1942 with orders to search the sector of the unreported Cusick. Campbell reached the outer limits of his sector search without finding signs of Cusick's PBY or the enemy. He was on the return leg when he found the Japanese carrier task force.

Unlike Cusick, Campbell had just enough time to get off a complete contact report as to position, course, speed, composition, and deployment of the enemy ships. Campbell had no way of knowing that atmospheric garbled his message so totally that Dutch Harbor's radioman could not even tell which PBY had transmitted it.

Immediately after transmitting, Campbell nosed over into a dive from 5,000 feet in an attempt to gain cloud cover but it was too late. Zeros flying Combat Air Patrol (CAP) pounced before the lumbering Yoke boat could safely hide. Machine gun, and 20mm. explosive cannon fire quickly reduced the PBY into a flying wreck. Bullets cut the rudder control cables, wounded one of Campbell's waist gunners, AMM3c B.T. Gillis, in the thigh, stitched holes in the starboard gas tanks, started a fire in the tunnel compartment, and a 20mm. cannon shell carried away the forward, starboard wing strut. Zeros made a total of five passes at Campbell's crippled "Cat" before he could escape into dense cloud cover.

Nobody had told Campbell that a PBY could not be flown without a rudder. The aeronautical engineers who had designed the plane considered this impossible. Campbell, nonetheless, manhandled the unwieldy beast by means of the ailerons and elevators and set a course for Umnak, the nearest base.

Fuel was pouring out of the seived starboard gas tank. When the plane captain flight engineer told Campbell that they only had a half hour's fuel left, Campbell climbed back to 5,000 feet. He had already set the carburetors on their leanest mixtures to conserve fuel but he knew that they weren't going to reach land. The extra altitude would afford a longer glide path when the engines quit. Forty miles from Umnak the fuel starved engines died.

At 5,000 feet the "Cat" started down into the solid overcast, dead stick, on instruments. With no rudder, Campbell fought the PBY down through the soup. They broke out of the cloud base a scant 300 feet above the cold grey seas. Campbell, somehow, managed

to set his crippled crate down safely.

Water began pouring into the hull through the many bullet holes. Crewmen stuffed rags into these holes to keep the PBY from sinking. The first aid kit was opened and the wound in Gillis's thigh was tended to. For the next forty-five minutes the crew fought the stubborn fire in the tunnel compartment, plugged holes, and bailed. The radioman worked to repair his equipment which had been damaged by gunfire.

The fire in the tunnel was finally extinguished but the combined efforts of the crew could not plug all the leaks. Despite bailing, the plane was slowly sinking. The radioman effected repairs to the radio at which time the auxillary "putt-putt" generator motor was started and an SOS was transmitted. At this time, the enemy contact report was repeated.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Nemaha, patrolling nearby as part of Admiral Theobald's early warning line, picked up Campbell's SOS/contact report and headed in the direction of the signal. The drifting, slowly sinking PBY was quickly located and Campbell and his crew rescued. Doomed, the PBY was set afire and sunk by gunfire from Nemaha.

The Nemaha, under orders, continued to patrol for the next forty-eight hours maintaining strict radio silence. Her skipper, a Warrant Boatswain, and Campbell both assumed that Campbell's enemy contact reports had been received back at Dutch Harbor and Cold Bay.

Three days later, the Nemaha put in at Sand Point in the Shumagin Islands and Campbell learned that his two contact reports had been garbled by atmospherics. It was at this time also that Lt. Cmdr. Russell found out, with great relief, that one of his flight crews was safe and not dead as presumed.

Campbell was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and every member of his crew received the Air Medal.

Upon recovering planes after the aborted attack of June 3, 1942, on the American destroyers in Makushin Bay, and the shooting down of both Cusick and Campbell, Kakuta's carrier striking force had reversed course and retired to the southwest. Dawn of June 4th found Kakuta's ships over four hundred miles from Dutch Harbor.

The Japanese High Command's Midway-Aleutian battle plan called for the occupation of Adak, Kiska,

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and Attu. Japanese Intelligence believed there was a U.S. Naval installation at Adak. Consequently, Kakuta ordered an attack on Adak. This would destroy any installations that might hinder the amphibious landings scheduled for later. To facilitate this attack, Kakuta ordered a 90 degree change in course to the northwest which would head his ships directly at Adak and bring the island within easy range of his aircraft.

Kakuta's ships encountered worsening weather, including dense fog, the closer they approached Adak. His staff meteorologist predicted that Adak and any of its targets would be completely obscured by fog. He suggested that weather conditions to the eastward in the vicinity of Unalaska Island would be much better.

Kakuta abandoned his plan to attack Adak, (there were no structures on the island except a few deserted fur trapper's cabins), and ordered preparations for a second attack on Dutch Harbor.

To his chagrin, Kakuta realized he was beyond the range of his planes for another strike at Dutch Harbor. Accordingly, he ordered another drastic, unplanned 90 degree change in course which pointed his force once again in the direction of Dutch Harbor. Aleutian weather was still calling the shots.

Attack of June 4, 1942

In order to close the distance to Dutch Harbor Kakuta increased speed and abandoned his tactic of keeping his force hidden in weather fronts. By mid morning his ships were less than 300 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor.

At 0900 hours Marshall Freerk's radioman reported blips on his radar screen. Freerks dove his PBY through a small break in the clouds to investigate and found Kakuta's Second Mobile Force. Freerks and his crew had been searching since late the previous evening. They were on the return leg of their patrol with gas reserves running low. Freerks, thanks to atrocious Aleutian weather, was lucky. For the past few hours Kakuta's ships had been ploughing through closely bunched black squalls, gusty high winds, patches of dense fog, and rough seas which prevented him from launching fighter air cover. Freerks was able to maintain contact long enough to transmit a detailed report before a dwindling fuel reserve forced him to head for home.

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The position of the Japanese striking force was flashed to all bases. Army 11th Air Force bombers took off from Cold Bay and Umnak to attack. The few B-17's carried bombs but the B-26 Marauders were each equipped with a torpedo slung from the plane's belly. Navy Field Torpedo Unit (FTU) crews had rigged the army planes to carry this weapon.

At Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor, and Umnak several of our PBY's were armed with a combination of aerial torpedo attached under the wing on one side and a partially counter-balancing weight of two five-hundred pound bombs.

Lieutenant Charles E. "Cy" Perkins, USN. Executive Officer of VP-42, took off from Dutch Harbor with his PBY decked out in this armament to take over the shadowing of the Japanese force. With the aid of radar, Perkins found the enemy ships and reported their latest position, course, and speed. He maintained contact and awaited the arrival of the 11th Air Force bombers.

Lacking radar, the U.S. Army B-26's were not able to locate the Japanese task force. Perkins, never known for his patience, became exasperated and radioed a message that he was going to attack. He selected Junyo as his target, nosed the PBY over into a wind-shrieking power dive, leveled off just above the heaving sea, and started his deck level torpedo run. Seven Japanese men-of-war threw a concentrated wall of shells at the approaching PBY. One shell literally blew the starboard engine out of Perkin's plane and the explosion almost pitched the PBY into the sea. Perkins had to jettison his torpedo and bombs and seek the safety of a squall. He dumped half his fuel to lighten the load and struggled home with one engine and a thoroughly shot up "Cat". Perkins was awarded the Navy Cross for his effort.

Lt(jg) Eugene W. Stockstill, VP-42, in his radar equipped PBY went out to relieve Perkins and maintain contact with the enemy fleet. In the meantime, however, Ryujo had launched Zeros for a combat air patrol (CAP). When Stockstill arrived on the scene he was immediately shot down in flames by the Zeros. There were no survivors. Killed with Stockstill were co-pilot, Merlyn B. Dawson, AP1c, USN; Navigator, Henry M. Mitchell, AP1c, USN; Plane Captain, Cyril A. Day, AMM1c, USN; First Radioman, Oscar J. Alford, AVR3c, USN; and blister gunners, David D. Secord, S1c, USN, and Frank E. Birks, S1c, USN.

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When the six B-26's from Umnak led by Army Captain Robert Meals failed to locate the enemy fleet, Colonel Eareckson at Cold Bay took off leading another flight of six torpedo equipped B-26 Marauders. Upon reaching the vicinity of the enemy fleet's position, Eareckson's flight ran into a wall of dense fog and was forced to climb above it. One of the pilots, Captain George W. "Wayne" Thornbrough, Operations Officer of the 73rd Bombardment Squadron, became separated from the others and continued his search alone. Thornbrough found the enemy ships. He attempted two, standard low level torpedo attacks at the Japanese carriers but each time the screening vessels prevented him from

*AP-Naval enlisted pilot. getting a clear shot. He climbed high and out of the murderous flak. Thornbrough had been told that the torpedo's water impeller would arm the torpedo in the air if sufficient speed could be reached. The torpedo could then be used as a bomb. Thornbrough put the B-26 over into a screaming dive, leveled off and streaked through heavy anti-aircraft fire and aimed straight at Ryujo's flight deck. Just as he released his torpedo, Ryujo plunged into a deep trough. Missing the canted carrier deck by mere feet, the torpedo splashed harmlessly into the sea beyond.

Thornbrough had miraculously survived the concentrated fire of seven enemy warships. He threw his B-26 into zig-zag evasive maneuvers to escape the last of this flak, high-tailed into heavy cloud, climbed back on top, and set course for Cold Bay. He was disgusted with himself for his failure to damage or sink an enemy ship.

Upon landing at Cold Bay, Thornbrough gave orders to the ground crew to patch his plane, fuel it, and load it with bombs instead of a torpedo. While this work was being done, Thornbrough went to VP-42 headquarter's tent and gave Russell a detailed, current report of the Japanese fleet's position, disposition, course and speed. Refueled and rearmed Captain Thornbrough took off again in another attempt to inflict damage on Kakuta's ships.

He did not find the enemy fleet a second time. Upon returning to Cold Bay about midnight, he radioed that he was on top of a solid overcast at 10,000 feet and trying to find a hole to let down through. A telephone line had been completed that day which ran

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from Russell's tent out to the anchored Casco. Russell used this line to tell Commander Combs, skipper of Casco, about Captain Thornbrough's plight. He suggested that by using Casco's direction finder on Thornbrough's radio signal, Combs might be able to coach Thornbrough down to a safe landing. There was no other choice because Thornbrough was desperately low on fuel.

Thornbrough was not heard from again. Several weeks later, one of Russell's patrolling PBY's detected some aircraft wreckage on the beach twenty miles west of Port Moller on the northern side of the Alaska Peninsula. An engine and part of a wing were identified as being from Captain Thornbrough's Marauder.

After Thornbrough's near miss with his torpedo the next attack on the Japanese force was carried out by two B-17's. These planes, both equipped with radar, were piloted by Captain Jack L. Marks and Lieutenant Thomas F. Mansfield.

Captain Marks made a low level attack through clouds and fog patches but his bombs all missed. Marks pulled up and out of heavy flak and LT. Mansfield went in on his run at an altitude of less than nine hundred feet. Mansfield was boring in on the Japanese heavy cruiser Takao when his B-17 was hit by flak and blown up in a violent explosion.

Moments before Captain Marks and LT. Mansfield located the Japanese ships by radar the afternoon of June 4, 1942, Lt(jg) Wylie M. Hunt was being threatened with a plank walk off Takao. Hunt and two enlisted aircrewmembers survivors from Lt(jg) Jean Cusick's PBY had been plucked from their bobbing raft by Takao around noon the previous day. This is the final chilling twist concerning Cusick's missing PBY that took thirty-nine months to finally be told.

The three Americans had been treated with some kindness by their captors until a Japanese pilot from heavy cruiser Maya came over to Takao by small boat late on the afternoon of June 3rd. This pilot had flown one of the four catapulted "Petes" that had been jumped so unexpectedly and shot up by P-40's from Umnak. Still shaken from this experience, and infuriated by Hunt's refusal to talk, this enemy pilot stormed into Hunt's compartment and proceeded to try to beat the truth out of him. This didn't work and the pilot returned to the Maya. A short time later Hunt was grilled again as to the location of the secret

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American fighter airstrip. Hunt and the two enlisted men still feigned complete ignorance.

The following day, June 4th, the Japanese were about to launch their second attack on Dutch Harbor still not knowing where the P-40's were based. They were determined to make Hunt talk or else. He was bound hand and foot and set down roughly in a chair. A Japanese sailor held the point of a bayonet at Hunt's throat while the officer/interpreter thrust a piece of paper in front of him. Hunt was ordered to answer the three questions written upon it:

1. Where is the American fighter airstrip?
2. How many fighters are there?
3. Where are the remaining American flying boats based?

Even though he had taken off from the Umnak strip Hunt said that he didn't know the answers. The Japanese officer became furious and ordered Hunt's legs untied. Hunt was marched topside at bayonet point to a platform that protruded over the ship's side. A large weight was fastened around his waist and with the bayonet's pricking him in the back, he was asked the three questions again. Again, Hunt told his captors he did not know the answers. He was then blindfolded and forced forward near the edge of the platform. The interpreter told Hunt that he would have one last chance to save his life by answering the questions

truthfully. Hunt insisted he could not tell them something he did not know; that he had only recently arrived in the Aleutians and knew little or nothing about navy units and nothing whatsoever about U.S. Army groups or activities. Then, in one last desperate attempt to delay his fate, Hunt asked if there were a chaplain aboard, might he be permitted to make his Peace with God before he died?

The interpreter left but returned a few moments later and removed Hunt's blindfold. He told Hunt that they were convinced he was telling the truth. As Hunt was being led away General Quarters sounded on Takao and the ship went to battle stations to fend off the attacks of Captain Mark's and LT. Mansfield's B-17's.

After three weeks, Hunt and the two enlisted men were transferred from Takao to another ship which transported them to a POW camp in Japan where they remained until the war's end.

The final attack on the Japanese Second Mobile Force was carried out by B-26 Marauders. Upon

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receiving the enemy's latest position report from Captain Marks, Captain Meals, who had led an earlier flight of B-26's from Umnak in a vain attempt to find the Japanese ships, once again led a flight of six B-26's.

This time Meals and his two wingmen found the enemy fleet. Two planes attacked Junyo and one went after Ryujo. All torpedoes missed.

It was frustrating. After finally locating the Japanese fleet, fouled up communications, uncoordinated attacks by single and small groups of planes, lack of all planes being equipped with radar, and bad weather had let the enemy escape unscathed.

Kakuta, now well within range of Dutch Harbor, launched his second attack. To complete the destruction of Dutch Harbor Kakuta selected only his best pilots. Aleutian weather was proving a formidable enemy to the Japanese as well and Kakuta was determined that all of his attacking planes reach the target this time. The strike was launched shortly before 1500 hours.

Admiral Samajima's letter to Admiral Russell lists these

specially selected forces as follows:

From Ryujo: Nine (9) horizontal bombers. From Junyo: Eleven (11) dive bombers.

From both carriers: A total of eleven (11) fighters. Targets were the communication station, ships, hangars, oil

tank installations, and other military installations. Japanese pilots headed for Dutch Harbor this time knowing the exact location of their targets. For this attack even each of the eleven Zeros was equipped with a 250 pound bomb.

Dutch Harbor's personnel had been on alert since before dawn and dug in defensive positions manned throughout the day. We had left our trench only to make chow call or to relieve the weather office watch.

The initial enemy contact report received from Marshall Freerk's followed by those from Perkins, Thornbrough, Marks, and Meals, all of which gave the enemy fleet's latest position, course and speed, enabled us to track Kakuta's force. The projection clearly indicated that the Japanese carriers were on their way back to Dutch Harbor. When will the attackers arrive? This had been the unanswered question all day.

Alternate Red alerts followed by all clears

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sounded during the morning and early afternoon of June 4, 1942. As on the previous day, most of the alerts were caused by PBY's. This confusion could not be avoided. A speck above the horizon can quickly mushroom into a snarling, real life, death dealing monster if it happens to be an enemy aircraft approaching at hundreds of miles per hour.

Japanese aircraft were also flying about in the Dutch Harbor area prior to the attack of June 4th. Admiral Samajima provides details of this enemy air activity as follows:

(1) Weather observation units:

No. 1 unit consisting of two(2) horizontal bombers left carrier Ryujo at 0650 and returned at 0950.

No. 2 unit consisting of two(2) horizontal bombers which was led by LT. H. Samajima left carrier Ryujo at 0944 and returned at 1305, June 4, 1942 after observing the weather conditions over Dutch Harbor and Unalaska Island.

Like strings on a harp our nerves had been stretched taut. Each time the siren wailed anew it added one note to the ascending scale of tension because we believed the real attack was about to begin. When the Japanese planes finally came storming back in, it was almost a relief.

The second attack began as the first one had with the sleek, grey-green Zeros leading the way. Red "meatball" insignia of the rising sun on wing and fuselage, they came snarling in, guns spitting. As before, our defenses were pitifully light.

One Zero dove and planted its bomb almost dead center in the roof of our seaplane hangar. The explosion destroyed a PBY parked inside and caused considerable structural damage to the large building. Another Zero made a shallow dive and released its bomb at the radio shack scoring another near miss on this as well as our weathermen's trench. Other Zeros bombed the base and dock areas to our right. After their bombs had been dropped Zeros pressed home strafing attacks on likely looking targets.

Bombs from high level "Kates" scored two direct hits on the old Northwestern, setting her afire again. Thick black smoke erupted and spread throughout the

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area. A pattern of bombs landed harmlessly in the bay near the spit but others scored hits on a warehouse on the base and on several barracks at Fort Mears. Sticks of incendiary bombs started many fires.

Dive bombers peeled off into relatively shallow dives and attacked. Bombs from these planes scored direct hits on the fuel storage tanks which blew up with a tremendous explosion as 750,000 gallons of fuel was ignited. Four bombs bracketed the radio shack. A bomb released by a "Val"* hit and badly damaged the B.I.A. hospital in Unalaska but all patients had been evacuated.

An officer and three men of a navy 20mm.gun crew were killed instantly when a bomb made a direct hit on their emplacement. This gun pit was a short distance from our trench.

Zeros, coming in from different directions, made many strafing attacks. The radio shack was a prime target as it had been on June 3rd. Japanese planes attacked Dutch Harbor for fifty-five minutes on June 4, 1942. No one to this day has explained why P-40's from nearby Umnak did not arrive to oppose this lengthy attack. Even if all communications had failed again, it seemed to us, in our hidey-holes, that the explosion of the Standard Oil fuel tanks was loud enough to have alerted the fighter squadron at Umnak? With the Umnak strip only fifteen minutes flying time to the west it is even more perplexing that P-40's were not flying constant air cover over Dutch Harbor throughout the day. From the moment of Marshall Freerk's contact report around 0900 hours everyone including the messcooks knew the Japanese were coming back.

*"Val"-Allied code name for the Aichi model D3AI Navy Type 99 carrier dive bomber. Specifications: 1080 hp Mitsubishi engine, maximum speed 240 mph, service ceiling 30,050 ft., range 915 miles, bomb load 813 lbs., three 7.7mm. machine guns-two synchronized, one free.

Greater damage was suffered on this second attack because the Japanese knew the layout of the base, and the dive bombers participated. Our casualties, however, were slightly less with a total of eighteen killed and twenty-five wounded.

Raging fires and clouds of thick black smoke rolling over the whole of Dutch Harbor, Fort Mears, and Unalaska village caused it to appear that our

installations had been thoroughly destroyed. With their blood red markings, the attacking planes being low on fuel and ammunition and out of bombs finally flew away to return to their carriers.

Still unaware that the secret army airstrip was located on the eastern tip of Umnak Island, Senior Air Officer Okumiya had selected Ship Rock in the center of Umnak Pass as the rendezvous for his returning planes. Ship Rock was only about three miles from the P-40 fighter field.

Eight Japanese aircraft gathered over Ship Rock in plain view of the airstrip. Eight P-40's took off to intercept and in the ensuing dogfights four "Vals" were shot down, three damaged and one Zero damaged. The cost to us was one pilot and two P-40's. Lieutenant John J. Cape was shot down in flames but Lieutenant Winfield E. McIntyre crash-landed his shot up, on fire P-40 on a strip of beach and walked away from it.

The Williamson happened to be south of Umnak Pass at the time, having been dispatched earlier to search for a PBY reported to be down and adrift. The Williamson searched through fog and squalls in vain and then received a radio signal that the report had been a false alarm. The ship also received the latest position report of the Japanese task force at this time. Commander K.N. Kivette checked his chart and found that his seaplane tender was within eight miles of Kakuta's ships. He reversed course and rapidly headed back for Umnak Pass. This placed his ship directly in the path of the returning Japanese planes.

The Williamson went to General Quarters when a large bomber was reported on the horizon in the direction of Umnak. This turned out to be a B-17 which was suddenly attacked by several Zeros each of which made one pass before they banked in the direction of the Williamson.

Unbelievably, a submarine popped to the surface between the Williamson and the approaching Zeros. This submarine was quickly identified as "friendly", (One of Admiral Theobald's six old S-boats on picket line duty). A Zero dove at the submarine and made a strafing attack. The enemy fighter also dropped what looked like a bomb which hit and bounced off the conning tower. This missile did not explode and was later believed to have been an empty auxiliary belly gas tank. It must have been jettisoned in the hope that it might cause a fire when it hit. This was

clearly no place for an S-boat to surface and its skipper quickly pulled the plug in a crash-dive.

Aerographer's mates, Herold and Roberts, were outside the weather office watching this action as the Zeros came slashing in at the Williamson. Roberts, rooted with fascination, was sitting on the flag bag and shielding his eyes from a few feeble rays of sun when the lead Zero made its first strafing pass. A machine gun bullet flicked Robert's flat-combed, straight brown hair missing his skull by a quarter of an inch. Herold bellowed orders to take cover and the two dove into the weather shack.

The two Zeros banked sharply and came back for another strafing attack as the ship's four .50 calibre machine guns attempted to blast them out of the sky. During the second strafing run machine gun bullets stitched a diagonal row of holes through the thin steel bulkhead just above the heads of Herold and Roberts. Had Herold been standing in the position of the shorter Roberts, he would have been hit in the head or neck.

The Williamson suffered eleven casualties in the strafing attacks including one man who lost an eye and another whose leg was broken. After the attack, Captain Kivette found three armor piercing slugs lodged in the fleece lining of his greatcoat.

The Japanese recorded this incident as an attack by two fighters on a small destroyer south of Umnak Pass on the afternoon of June 4, 1942.

Late in the evening of June 4th the Dutch Harbor weather office watch learned that Ensign Albert E. Mitchell's PBY had been shot down in flames outside the entrance to Beaver Inlet. This had happened a few moments before the enemy attacked the base at 1740 hours that afternoon.

An army gun crew atop a hill at Fisherman's Point on English Bay had watched helplessly while a few miles away three Zeros attacked Mitchell's PBY. The gun crew including their sergeant had been at Dutch Harbor only a few days having arrived with Carter and Carey aboard the S.S. Columbia. The soldiers were serving as lookouts at their isolated post until their heavy gun was unloaded. They had spent the past two days laying miles of telephone line over the rough ground from an army command post in the hills above the village of Unalaska to Fisherman's Point. At 1743 hours the sergeant sent a report over this line that he and

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his men had witnessed a tragedy. Mitchell had crash-landed his on fire PBY on the water. Most of the crew had survived and they climbed into a rubber raft as the plane began to sink. They began paddling toward the nearest shore. Not content with shooting down the PBY, the Zero pilots strafed the men in the raft until all were killed.

The following is an excerpt from the War Diary of the USS Gillis detailing one of her many activities on June 4, 1942:

"11. At 1948 received a despatch from Dutch Harbor that a PBY had been shot down off Beaver Inlet near Egg Island and that survivors were afloat in a life raft. Proceeded there at eighteen knots and just east of Unalga Island, between that island and Egg Island, a wing tip float with approximately eight feet of wing attached was found. Further searching revealed a life raft unfolded and uninflated with several bullet holes through it, minor debris including a parachute bag and a mattress and a body that later was identified as W.H. Rawls, Aviation Machinist Mate First Class, U.S. Navy. On the body was found the daily flight inspection form showing the airplane to be 42-P-4 and the senior pilot Ensign Mitchell, the same airplane and crew that just a few days before we had rescued off Deer Island. Just prior to dark gave up search for more evidence, and returned to Dutch Harbor."

Several days earlier Mitchell's PBY had received some contaminated gas from the Gillis which caused engine trouble, forcing Mitchell down at sea. Gillis had found the drifting PBY and the starboard wing tank had been drained and cleaned. The port wing tanks of our PBY's, however, were rubber lined, self sealing ones and could not be thoroughly cleaned except back at Kodiak. Lt.Cmdr. Russell sent Mitchell to Kodiak the morning of June 4th to have this work done.

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Immediately upon Mitchell's arrival, Wing Commander Gehres gave him three packets of top priority operations orders to be delivered to his forward area commanders at Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor, and Umnak.

Mitchell took off from Kodiak, flying on just the fuel in his cleaned starboard wing tank. When he delivered Russell's packet at Cold Bay, Russell cautioned Mitchell to request radio clearance before entering Dutch Harbor because another Japanese attack was imminent.

When Mitchell arrived outside Dutch Harbor and requested clearance to enter and land he was told to stay clear of the area because we were about to be attacked again. It is believed that Mitchell chose to land in sheltered Beaver Inlet. It was while heading for this dispersal location that Mitchell's PBV was jumped by three Zeros that had rounded the northeastern tip of Sedanka Island on their way in to attack Dutch Harbor.

Short as the fight was, one of Mitchell's blister gunners, quite possibly Wheeler H. Rawls, AMM1c, USN, inflicted slight damage to the Zero of Flight Petty Officer, Tadayoshi Koga.

One .50 calibre slug severed the return line leading to Koga's oil pressure gauge. When Koga observed his oil pressure drop to zero he headed directly for the nearby island of Akutan which had been chosen by the Japanese for just such an emergency. A Japanese submarine was standing by to rescue any attack pilot forced to crash-land on Akutan. Koga radioed the submarine of his plight and selected a flat looking area on which to set his Zero down. He made the mistake of lowering his wheels. They caught in the mushy tundra, flipped the Zero onto its back, and Koga's neck was broken.

The Japanese submarine searched along the shoreline by periscope but could find no trace of Koga or his plane. The prize, the first intact Mitsubishi Zero to fall into our hands, would remain upside down and unnoticed for two weeks before it was accidentally discovered by Lt(jg) William Theis and his co-pilot, Ensign Robert R. Larson of VP-41.

Theis landed offshore, anchored, and with crew members went ashore in a rubber raft to get a closer look at their find. A team of U.S. Navy salvage experts was sent to inspect the plane and determine the best way to recover it. A second salvage team

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loaded the Zero onto a barge and brought it to Dutch Harbor.

The first Zero salvage party report reads in part: "Bullet holes entered the plane from both upper and lower sides, no holes could be found larger than .50 calibre. The oil return line had been cut by a bullet. The plywood belly tank has a bullet hole from below. There were no bullet wounds apparent on the pilot. His head had been struck a hard blow however. It was most certainly a dead stick landing. The landing gear snapped off as the plane touched earth. The plane went on a few yards, then flipped over on its back in the swamp. Very little damage to plane in crackup. The navy mechanics say it can be repaired."

Koga's Zero was carefully dismantled, crated, and loaded aboard the USS Charleston for shipment to the states. There it was reassembled, repaired and studied. At San Diego, a navy chief AP test pilot flew the Zero, "ringing it out" to determine its capabilities and characteristics. It was discovered that the Zero could turn extremely fast in one direction but considerably slower in the opposite direction. This bit of vital information alone was worth its weight in gold to U.S. fighter pilots.

In June of 1942, Grumman Aircraft Corporation had already designed a new navy fighter to replace the F4F Wildcat. An experimental prototype XF6F-1 was being built. With modifications this plane became the U.S. Navy's famed F6F Hellcat. The Hellcat did not see its first action until early October 1943. From then on, Navy and Marine fighter pilots using this plane and ChanceVought's new F4U "Corsair", coupled with secrets gleaned from testing Koga's Akutan "Zeke", began to dominate the Zero in aerial combat establishing a ten to one kill ratio.

Abandoning a crash landed Zero on Akutan seemed an insignificant incident to the Japanese at the time but it played an important role in their losing air supremacy which in turn would lead to their ultimate defeat.

There is grim satisfaction in the knowledge that FPO Koga paid for his acts quickly but it is even more rewarding to savor the thought that the machine gunning deaths of Mitchell and his crew were repaid by the Japanese one hundred fold over the next few years thanks in part to Koga's Zero.

Killed in action with Ensign Mitchell were:

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Ensign Joseph M. Tuttle, USNR; Wheeler H. Rawls, AMM1c, USN; Frank G. Schadt, AMM3c, USN; Burton J. Strom, ARM3c, USN; Neal R. Sparks, ARM3c, USN; and James D. Pollitt, S2c, USN.

The deaths of Mitchell and his crew brought the two day total of men killed in Aleutian action to seventy-eight. At Dutch Harbor and Fort Mears, the focal point of both day's attacks, the total killed was forty-three, miraculously few, of about five thousand Army, Navy, and civilian personnel. Twenty-five of the forty-three victims were claimed by one single bomb. The other thirty-five men killed in action,--almost half--, were flight crews of U.S. Navy and U.S. Army aircraft.

That evening of June 4, 1942, we learned that VP-41's Ensign Hildebrand and his crew had failed to return and were listed as missing. No trace of them or their PBY was ever found. Japanese records do not indicate that they were shot down by enemy ships or aircraft. It therefore has to be assumed the blame rests with Aleutian weather or mechanical trouble. The deaths of Ensign Hildebrand and his crew were listed as operational and are not included in the total of men killed during the Dutch Harbor attacks.

Regardless of how the deaths were officially listed, the casualty rate of flight personnel and aircraft was alarmingly high for the two squadrons of our Patrol Wing. At that point, Cusick, Campbell, Stockstill, Mitchell, and Hildebrand had all taken off and failed to return. In addition to these five crews and PBY's, three men aboard Ensign Litsey's strafed and destroyed plane had been killed; "Cy" Perkins' PBY was badly damaged and we had lost another PBY in our bombed hangar. Adding the PBY and four men killed in Ensign Andy Smith's takeoff crash on April 23, 1942, and the PBY and eight man crew of Ensign Edwin Winter, missing on patrol south of Dutch Harbor since May 9th, our total losses were nine PBY's destroyed, one damaged out of an original twenty-four. As of the night of June 4th our personnel losses stood at seven complete crews, for two days would pass before we learned of the Nemaha's rescue of Campbell and his crew. These PBY losses, amounting to 41.6% of our aircraft, occurred from April 23rd to June 4, 1942, a period of only forty-three days, with all but two occurring during a thirty-six hour period on June 3 and June 4.

Historians may classify the Japanese attacks on

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Dutch Harbor as minor skirmishes in an insignificant theatre of war, resulting in little damage and few casualties but it was a major disaster for our small Patrol Wing. The future looked none too bright for those who flew in PBY's.

The low casualty figure at Dutch Harbor can be attributed to the fact we were alerted and dug in in widely scattered, well protected defensive positions. That the targets were military installations and the Japanese bombs, for the most part, especially on the raid of June 4th, were well aimed were other contributing factors. Enemy pilots scored direct hits on their primary targets including fuel tanks, hangar, warehouses, barracks, and the Northwestern on both days. Why and how the old vessel could remain afloat must have been a mystery to the Japanese. If they had returned a third time, I'm certain the Northwestern again would have been a prime target.

The enemy failed to score a direct bomb hit on the radio shack. This major target was repeatedly attacked by bombers and fighters on both days but remained in operation. These persistent attacks on the radio shack, notwithstanding, none of the U.S. Navy weathermen was injured. Bombs exploding on our trench side and classified as near misses on the radio shack were closer to being direct hits on our position. Jarring concussions from these bombs left our ears ringing and we were showered with dirt and small rock.

The Zeros became very personal enemies of the aerographers. To attack the radio station they had to strafe directly through our position, either coming or going. It was still too close for comfort when a Zero attacked from either side because machine gun and 20mm. cannon fire sprayed about as the pilot fish-tailed to properly align his guns at the radio shack. Whenever a Zero came directly toward us, we hunkered down deeply in our trench and the machine gun slugs zipped overhead or plopped harmlessly into the sandbags.

The 20mm. cannon shells were a different story altogether. They exploded upon contact, hurling hot pieces of jagged metal in all directions. Our sandbags absorbed most of the shrapnel from these shells and we were relatively safe as long as we stayed well down during a direct attack. After two days of strafing and bombing, our sandbags, so neatly stacked initially, were dislodged, ripped and tattered. It was not difficult to find souvenir lead.

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There was ample opportunity to fire our rifles at the swooping Zeros. Many men got off a shot or two even when the fighters were coming directly toward them, (The Zero's propellor hub centered in the radial engine cowling made an inviting bull's-eye). With two thousand or more men shooting thousands of rounds of small arms at the Zeros during the two days, it is astounding to me that we were not able to shoot down even one plane. Certainly some must have been hit but none was damaged enough to prevent them from returning to their carriers. We must have been poor shots and the Japanese pilots extraordinarily lucky.

They were also cocky for they figuratively thumbed their noses at us with exhibitions of daring and skillful aerobatics. Although I'm not a pilot, I can understand what prompted some of these unnecessary antics. The Zero pilots were young yet experienced; heady with success and it was honorable to die for their emperor but most of all they were at the responsive controls of the fastest, most maneuverable, deadliest fighter plane in the world at that time. They were over an American base, there was no fighter opposition, and they were having a field day. The temptation was too great. They could not resist showing off.

A good example of this is the Zero pilot who dropped the bomb in the middle of our seaplane hangar. When he yanked his joy stick back to pull out of his shallow dive, the Zero shot back up into the sky like a bullet. One could almost feel the enemy pilot's exuberance and elation being transmitted from his brain through his limbs and into the "Zeke's" controls for he then threw the plane into a lightning quick but beautifully executed Immelmann turn followed by a wing over bank which brought him screaming down for a strafing attack on the radio shack.

This is one of many vividly recalled incidents that happened during those two days of enemy air attacks. Ensign Litsey's PBY being strafed on the water was a terrible sight to witness in complete helplessness. The old Northwestern hit and burning on both days was another lasting impression as were the exploding Standard Oil Co. fuel tanks, the fires and burning buildings, and the chokingly thick clouds of black smoke engulfing the base.

In the midst of this chaos, who knows for certain the precise order in which events happened? Afterward, we navy weathermen discussed the raids at length among

ourselves. Our versions differed slightly even though we had all viewed the action from the highest vantage point on the base. These variations must have been the result of the manner in which Dutch Harbor was attacked. Most air attacks against shore installations are quickly carried out, hit-and-run affairs. This was not so at Dutch Harbor. The Japanese raids were unique in several ways: 1. We were at a small, isolated, island base. 2. Our heavy anti-aircraft weapons had not arrived in time. 3. We were woefully short of lighter anti-aircraft weapons as well, (.50 calibre machine guns, 20mm. and 37mm. cannon). 4. Our expected interceptor fighters did not arrive at the scene on either day.

The combination of these elements allowed the Japanese to carry out prolonged attacks in which various flights of bombers made several runs at different altitudes from different directions, some dropping bombs on each run while others criss-crossed over the base and dropped bombs on their second runs. In addition, although the number of Zeros attacking on both days, (eight and eleven respectively), was relatively few, they were over the target area so long and made such a large number of strafing runs that it appeared to Dutch Harbor's defenders that there were dozens of Zeros taking part. That each Zero swooped down and also dropped a 250 pound bomb of its own on the day of the second attacks added to the confusion of trying to determine later which plane dropped which bomb, when, and where.

Even though official U.S. Government press releases concerning the enemy attacks on Dutch Harbor were highly propagandized they became part of published history. These accounts falsely stated and stressed the fact that Dutch Harbor was heavily defended and that we threw up a furiously intense curtain of heavy anti-aircraft fire that blackened the sky. This "story" was intended to boost morale and calm the jittery nerves of the American public, thereby avoiding possible panic, especially on the west coast. Official U.S. Navy photographs taken during the attacks clearly show Japanese aircraft against a background of leaden grey skies but there are few puffs of black anti-aircraft fire visible.

Afterward, it was quite natural for the aerographers to also recall and recount several incidents that took place among our small group during the period of the attacks. Considering the deadly

serious nature of conditions around us, it is incongruous that some of the incidents had a humorous aspect. This incongruity of an odd kind of humor in such situations seems a mechanism for the release of ongoing tensions that could otherwise become intolerable. Such tension releases can also explode as rage. We experienced both kinds.

The Reason Was Not An Excuse

The rest of us had been curious as to why Hollihand and Upton were so late arriving at the trench the morning of June 3rd. The two had had the 1600-midnight duty in the weather shack and had hit the sack about 0030. An hour and a half later the dawn alert had sounded. They were supposed to go to the trench but there had been so many alerts for so long they chose to ignore this one and catch a few more winks. Neither one claimed to have heard the all clear sound at 0330. The second alarm around 0400 had only stirred Upton's subconscious enough to become part of a dream. He did not awaken until exploding 20mm. cannon shells from a strafing Zero ripped into the barracks.

Upton was up, dressed, and headed for the door within seconds. He turned to check on Hollihand. Instead of being in feverish activity, Hollihand was sitting on the edge of his bunk, in his skivvies, and with a pair of dungarees clutched in one hand.

"What the hell are you waiting for?" asked an incredulous Upton. "Hurry up. Get your clothes on. The Japs are here."

"Ah'm tryin'", Rebel Hollihand replied, "but ah cain't stop mah knees fom shakin'."

They had sprinted from the barracks to near the base of our hill. Here they had taken temporary refuge from a string of exploding bombs by crouching alongside a cylindrical, cement sentry tower. From here they had run up the hill as a string of bombs, dropped by LT. Samajima's "Kates" and meant for the radio shack, hit halfway up the hill. These bombs missed Hollihand and Upton by mere seconds. After hearing their story we could understand why they were both gasping for breath when they dove into the trench.

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Chief Darr Was Upset

While the other weathermen calmed down after the attacks, Chief Darr remained agitated and incensed in the extreme. Just prior to the attack on the morning of June 3, 1942, Darr had received word by phone from the Command Post to sound the alarm because the Japanese planes were on their way in. John Lynch was sitting on the boardwalk railing while completing a weather observation when Darr came charging out of the office. In his haste to reach the alarm button, Darr slipped, landing on his butt in the mud. Someone saw the soiled seat of the chief's trousers and spread the tale that Darr had crapped his pants. We suspected that Lynch started this rumor even though he claimed innocence. His, "It was probably somebody hurrying by," lacked the ring of truth.

Bill Stewart's Case Of Bubonic Plague

Several hundred sailors became displaced persons for several days when the navy shut down its barracks on June 3, 1942. Bill Stewart, along with other weather guessors who had been bunking in one of the main barracks, decided that if they could not sleep in the barracks they would sleep under it. On the evening of June 3rd these men gathered up their bedding and selected a place under the barracks that had about four feet of crawl space. The past twenty-four hours had been trying ones and the exhausted weathermen quickly settled down and dropped off to sleep.

About midnight a large rat bit Stewart on the ear. Stew screamed in terror and pain as he took a frantic swipe at the filthy creature. His loud cry and commotion, in the inky blackness, startled the other men into wide-eyed wakefulness.

"What is it?" an alarmed voice asked.

Before this question could be answered another screaming "AAAHHRAAGH!" pierced the night. Someone, momentarily forgetting where he was, had grabbed his rifle and tried to stand up. In the process he had crunched his head into a floor joist.

"Sonuvabitch, what the hell's happening?" someone demanded. "I can't find my f-----g shoes," exclaimed another.

Pandemonium took over when Stew told the men he'd been bitten on the ear by a rat. The other scream from a different man, additional cursing and commotion in

the dark caused it to be chillingly imagined that a whole pack of slimy, beady-eyed, sharp fanged, wharf rats was attacking. Additional heads met assorted floor joists as men hurriedly attempted to collect their belongings and beat a hasty retreat from under the building. This ended that sleeping arrangement.

Stewart reported to sick bay for treatment of the puncture wounds. Navy doctors and hospital corpsmen were busy tending men wounded during the Japanese air attack and gave him the brush off. He hung around until a corpsman found the time to at least dab some Tincture of Merthiolate on the rat bite and supply Stew with a couple of Band-Aids.

Stewart, understandably concerned about the possibility of infection or disease from the bite, borrowed a medical book from the pharmacist's mate and started studying the day-to-day symptoms of bubonic plague.

Bill Stewart enjoyed practical jokes and was adept at them. He softened us up for this con job by solemnly reading a brief history of the dreaded disease, the rapidity with which death arrives, and the extremely high mortality rate. He would each day read aloud the new day's symptoms and in all seriousness announce that he felt exactly that way. The power of suggestion worked so well that some others believed they were suffering from similar symptoms.

After two days of this farce a gullible one asked Stew, "What happens tomorrow?"

This was the straight man and the line Stew had been patiently waiting for.

"Tommorrow," (dramatic pause) "I die..heh..heh..heh." We had no tomatoes so someone threw a boot at the actor.

Upton and The Sunshine Recorder

The sunshine recorder was an instrument with a clock mechanism that drove a small cylindrical metal drum to which a chart was attached. A large magnifying glass mounted on the top of the case was supposed to catch the sun's rays and burn a pin-point trace on the slowly revolving chart. No one could recall ever having seen a sunshine mark on any of the charts. The sunshine recorder sat expectantly on a post outside the weather office.

In addition to his regular duties, the task of changing sunshine recorder charts had been assigned to L.R. Upton upon his arrival at Dutch Harbor. Chief Darr held him responsible to see that this duty was performed without fail. Upton took quite a ribbing about all this and soon developed a hatred for the sunshine recorder.

During the height of the second day's attack, with bombs exploding, Zeros strafing, and a great amount of firing taking place, Upton momentarily ran out of Zeros to shoot at. He searched for a target and spied an enemy, the sunshine recorder below and several hundred yards away. He got off two shots and missed before a Zero came in on another strafing run at the radio shack. During the remainder of the raid Upton did not get a chance to take aim again at his secondary target. When the firing ceased it was too late. Upton had missed his golden opportunity. As a result he had to continue changing unmarked sunshine charts until he was transferred to Nikolski on Umnak Island about the middle of June 1942.

The Smitty's Jug and "Preacher" Vernon Incident

This was not the least bit funny at the time and involved all of the weathermen in the trench. We planned to have a short celebration if we survived the Japanese attacks. Emmett Smith, fresh from the states, still had a precious pint of good sippin' whiskey. He had carefully hidden this between some sandbags. Seconds before the attack of June 4th began, Smitty announced that when it was over he would pass his jug around.

Emmett's trench mate was R.E. "Preacher" Vernon a devout Mormon. Slender of build, Vernon had sparse, light brown hair combed straight back. His brown eyes were close set, his nose and chin sharp and separated by thin lips all of which gave his features a narrow, slightly pinched look. He was neat in appearance and habits, bouncily energetic, inquisitive, and he expressed his sense of humor with an odd, snuffling nasal laugh. A good watch-stander and bright, Vernon was well liked by his shipmates except when he got off on his zealous, missionary tangents. He was unswervingly strict and dedicated in his church beliefs. Vernon would not tolerate the consumption of alcoholic beverages and he was valiantly fighting a losing battle in his attempts to stamp out cussing

among us.

Vernon and Smith, antipodean in beliefs and appearance, found themselves side-by-side in a fighting trench.

Bulky from top to bottom, heavy jowled Emmett Smith from LaVeta, Colorado, was a happy-go-lucky, fun-loving extrovert. Possessed of a fine sense of humor he had a quick wit and a wryly sarcastic often sacrilegious tongue.

While the all clear was sounding after the Japanese attack, Vernon discovered the hiding place of Smitty's whiskey bottle. Before Emmett, or anyone else, could stop him, the "Preacher" poured the bourbon out into the mud of the trench proclaiming as he did so, "This is the devil's brew!"

The bystanders were momentarily stunned into immobility by Vernon's act. Then they exploded with cursing rage and a bit of shoving. The "Preacher", stunned in turn by the venom and hatred suddenly directed against him, must have feared for his life at that moment. He didn't even attempt to scold anyone for swearing and the words heaped upon him were the foulest that a furious group of sailors could conjure. Luckily for Vernon the more violent members of our band in the narrow, zig-zag trench were not close to him at this instant.

What harm would have come from our each taking a slug from the jug? The bond among a small group of navy weathermen who, together, had endured and survived two days of prolonged enemy air attacks was not to be celebrated as planned; a blood brother symbolism that instead of the prick that draws blood, brought the flow of whiskey--and ill temper.

The Prototype Navy Chow-Hound

The civilian messhalls, unlike the U.S. Navy's, remained open during the Japanese raids. After sampling the food at our assigned temporary army field kitchen on the evening of June 3, 1942, some of us wind-guessors, (along with a number of other enterprising navy personnel), fell in line for breakfast with the civilian workers on the morning of June 4, 1942. Because of the mixed bag of clothing worn it was impossible to distinguish sailor from civilian and we trooped in undetected and sat down to the best meal we'd had in months.

Unfortunately for him, Walter Babic did not learn

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of our sly chow maneuver until late that evening. Babic, a massive young man from Montesano, Washington, possessed a huge, passionate appetite for food which had earned him the nickname, Sea Pig. As our undisputed knife and fork champion he was incensed that we had not cut him in on our good chow deal sooner.

After he spent a restless night of mouth watering anticipation, Babic joined us for breakfast on the morning of June 5th. We fell in at the end of a long line that wound around several corners and which eventually led to the main entrance of a civilian messhall.

After numerous slow shuffling steps, we worked our way around the final corner only to discover that all navy personnel were being turned away at the door. The construction company had issued special chow passes to their workers, thereby effectively putting a stop to the navy free-loaders. The Sea Pig could have cried.

Because of the time wasted in the civilian chow line we had to run for the army field kitchen before it shut down. We barely made it. Instead of the well prepared sumptuous meal we'd eagerly looked forward to, cool, rubbery, scrambled, powdered eggs were slapped down into our proffered mess kits and at the end of the line stood a bin of cold, curled up toast.

Babic's face clearly showed deep disappointment and frustration as he stared at the unappetizing glob in his mess kit. The episode, capped by Babic's expression, struck the rest of us as being so comical that we started to laugh. At first, Babic became angry and began cussing and blaming us for most of his troubles which only made it seem funnier. Then as we broke up in contagious laughter he saw the humor of it all and joined in. Our rollicking hilarity reached an almost hysterical pitch as two days of pent up tensions were released like waters from a bursting dam. Laughter would subside with convulsive sobs only to erupt again when Babic pointed at his food with disbelief saying, "God! Just look at this stuff!" and again when someone gasped, "Are...you...going...back...for...seconds"?

Our sideaches finally subsided and the tears stopped flowing as we regained control of our emotions. It had been a good tonic and we felt better for it.

After eating instead of dining, we headed for

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roll call at the weather shack. Babic was still bemoaning the way he'd been shafted by the fickle finger of fate. In happy spirits we reported to John Lynch, the senior petty officer of the watch that morning. After two straight days of Zeros in our midst, Lynch, always the realist, greeted us with, "Okay you clowns, fall in outside and line up for strafing attack." This sobering thought brought us back to a world we had momentarily forgotten.

A third Japanese attack which we had expected might occur at dawn on June 5, 1942 did not take place. We did not know it but the Battle of Dutch Harbor was over. An air of tension remained, however, for we had failed to damage either of the Japanese carriers when presented with the opportunity and had lost contact with them since the previous afternoon. The enemy raiders were still on the loose somewhere in the mists and there was no reason to expect they would not return.

We prepared for another attack and the Japanese surely would have hit us again had not the Battle of Midway intervened and developed as it did.