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

VOLUME II

FOREWORD

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

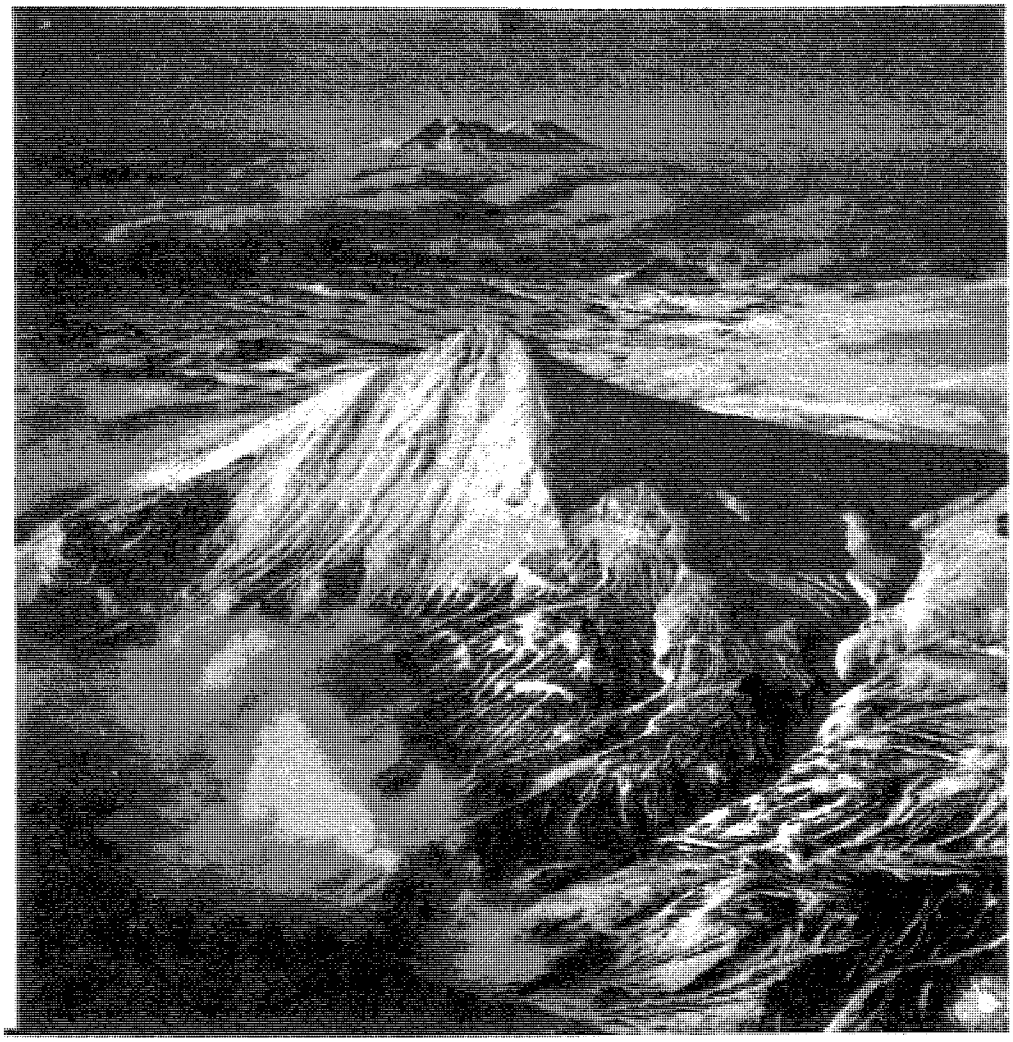
The time frame starts before the attack on Dutch Harbor and ends after the last Japanese solider is removed from The United States on the island of Attu.

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.



On a good day you could see forever. View looking southwest from Umnak Island. Islands of Four Mountains in the distance. (About 100 miles from foreground)

Airstrip at Fort Glen--Umnak

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The Midway/Aleutian Connection

The brilliantly conceived Japanese Operations Plan inexorably linked Midway to the Aleutians by a tenuous cord 2000 miles in length.

Because of its great magnitude and complexity the seemingly foolproof plan would invitably have hidden flaws. These flaws had nothing to do with the fact we had broken a top secret Japanese code. Far more subtle, they were like fragile threads which fate gleefully and diabolically selected to weave into the delicate fabric and unravel in unpredictable fashion at the worst possible moments.

On May 26, 1942, Japanese submarine I-121, the first of six I-boats each carrying 10,000 gallons of aviation fuel, arrived off French Frigate Shoal. This isolated pin-point on the map 550 miles northwest of Pearl Harbor was to be used as a refueling station for a squadron of long range, four-engined, "Emily" [1] seaplane patrol bombers. These flying boats were to thoroughly scout Pearl Harbor and the surrounding waters of the Hawaiian Islands and to locate and maintain surveillance on any heavy U.S. fleet units they might discover. The Japanese had used French Frigate Shoal as a refueling stop for two "Emilies" which carried out the little known second attack on Pearl Harbor on March 4,
1942.

When I-121's skipper took a periscope look, he was surprised to find an American seaplane tender, anchored in the French Frigate Shoal lagoon, servicing a squadron of PBY's. The first flaw in its planning had been found and as a result, the Japanese High Command was forced to cancel this vital phase of its air search reconnaissance.

On that same day a scout plane from another I-boat, 2000 miles away, flew over Kiska and this fact

was duly reported by Charles House, AerM1c.

This was also the day that Vice Admiral Hosagaya's Northern Force sortied from Ominato and headed for the Aleutians.

More importantly, it was the day that Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey's Enterprise/Hornet carrier force quietly slipped into Pearl Harbor. Upon receiving an urgent signal from Admiral Nimitz at Pearl Harbor, Halsey had raced from the Solomons area undetected by the Japanese.3 This we shall designate flaw number two.

Upon his arrival at Pearl Harbor, Admiral Halsey, suffering from a severe case of shingles, was admitted to the base hospital and Rear Admiral Raymond A. Spruance assumed command of the Enterprise/Hornet task force.

The following day, May 27, 1942, Admiral Nagumo's main carrier task force sortied from Japan's Inland Sea into the Pacific bound for its Midway attack launch position some 250 miles northwest of that island.

Several important events took place on May 28, 1942. Admiral Yamamoto's Combined Main Fleet followed Nagumo through the Bungo Suido to take up a support position 300 miles to the rear of Nagumo's carrier force.

Admiral Kondo's Midway Invasion Fleet sortied from its anchorages at Saipan and Guam.

The Enterprise/Hornet task force sortied from Pearl Harbor to take a patrolling-intercept position some 250 miles northeast of Midway, and, the crippled U.S. aircraft carrier Yorktown, escorted by cruisers and destroyers, arrived at Pearl Harbor. Since being badly damaged at the Battle of Coral Sea on May 8, 1942, Yorktown had been struggling toward Pearl Harbor. This would be a brief stop on her long journey to a west coast shipyard where her repairs were expected to take at least three months.

Admiral Nimitz desperately needed her now,--three or four months might be too late--. He ordered Yorktown into dry dock at Pearl Harbor. Within forty-eight hours, navy yard workmen made enough temporary repairs to enable Yorktown to take part in the upcoming battle. Under the command of Rear Admiral Frank J. "Black Jack" Fletcher, Yorktown sortied from Pearl Harbor with her small task force of cruisers and

destroyers to join Enterprise and Hornet.

All of this U.S. aircraft carrier activity at Pearl Harbor and the subsequent sortie of these units went undetected by the Japanese primarily because they had not been able to conduct their planned, extensive seaplane search patrols out of French Frigate Shoal.

The Japanese would soon have a ghost on their hands for they believed that they had sunk Yorktown, along with the Lexington, at the Battle of Coral Sea.4 There were now three U.S. carriers steaming toward Midway while the latest Japanese intelligence indicated that the Enterprise and Hornet were still in the Solomons area of the South Pacific. Nimitz had ordered a U.S. cruiser in the Solomons to transmit bogus signals on a radio frequency normally used by carriers.

On June 2, 1942, Japanese radio intelligence informed the High Command in Tokyo that radio intercepts now indicated that a U.S. carrier task force was operating in the Midway area. Imperial General Headquarters at Tokyo flashed this vital information in a coded message addressed to both Admiral Yamamoto and Admiral Nagumo. Yamamoto received it and saw no reason to break radio silence to ascertain if Nagumo, slicing toward Midway three hundred miles in advance of him, had also copied the message. Nagumo had not. Fate the weaver, peering down from high above, must have been well pleased.

The first attack phase of the Japanese Midway/Aleutian battle
plan had gone well with Kakuta's successful early morning attack against Dutch Harbor on June 3, 1942.

Now, twenty-four hours later, on schedule, Admiral Nagumo arrived at the Midway attack aircraft launch position, undetected but still unaware there were U.S. carriers in the vicinity.

Weather had again played a major role. Nagumo's carrier force and Yamamoto's Combined Main Fleet had been concealed in fog and heavy clouds during the last four days of their Midway approach.

Around 0430 hours on June 4, 1942, Nagumo turned his four carriers into the wind and launched 108 aircraft for the massive attack against Midway. Search planes were also sent aloft to fan out and scout ahead of his fleet.

The mysterious hand of destiny intervened again. The scout plane assigned to search the sector northeast of Midway, where the U.S. carriers were, had

engine trouble and its launch was delayed for a half hour. After launching aircraft the Japanese carrier force resumed its base course for Midway to shorten the distance. Nagumo knew that some of his attacking planes would be damaged while others would be low on fuel upon their return.

The stage was set for the greatest carrier-air battle in history.

At the Battle of Midway, that which at first appeared to be another resounding victory for the Japanese, quickly mounted into a disaster of such proportions that it turned the tide of battle in the Pacific and ultimately led to Japan's defeat.

Volumes have been written and are still being written which chronicle in detail the multitudinous actions of the Battle of Midway. For our purposes a summary will suffice.

A PBY patrolling a northwestern sector search out of Midway sighted the large formations of Japanese bombers and fighters heading for Midway and radioed the alarm. The PBY continued in the direction from which the enemy aircraft had come and shortly discovered Nagumo's fleet through a break in the cloud cover. This contact report gave the enemy carrier fleet's position, disposition, course, and speed.

Midway launched an attack against Nagumo's carriers by her available assortment of 16 obsolete Vindicator dive bombers, 18 Dauntless dive bombers, 7 TBF torpedo bombers, all piloted by U.S. Marines, and 4 U.S. Army B-26's and 15 B-17's. At the same time Midway's 21 outnumbered, outdated, marine piloted, Brewster "Buffalo" fighers and 7 F4F "Wildcats" took off to intercept the incoming Japanese attackers.

Enterprise, Hornet, and Yorktown had received the PBY enemy contact report but could not launch an attack because the Japanese fleet was beyond range. The U.S. carriers changed course and increased speed to bring Nagumo's carriers within striking distance.

The Japanese Midway strike planes slammed through the intercepting marine fighters, shooting most of them down in the process, and attacked Midway at 0635 hours on June 4, 1942. After the attack, Japanese strike leader, Lieutenant Tomonaga, radioed a report to Nagumo that although great damage had been done, a second strike would be necessary to complete the destruction of Midway's installations.

Although this had been foreseen as a possibility, Nagumo's staff had not expected a second attack would be required and Nagumo's reserve bombers had been armed with torpedoes and armor piercing bombs for use against ships. A second strike against Midway would require re-arming these planes with high explosive and incendiary bombs.

Around 0700, Enterprise and Hornet came within extreme range of Nagumo and both launched squadrons of dive and torpedo bombers for a strike at the enemy carriers. These planes were vectored to an estimated intersect position based on the Japanese course and speed reported by the lone PBY an hour and a half earlier.

The Yorktown, separated from Hornet and Enterprise, launched
a similar torpedo and dive bombing attack around 0730.

At 0705, ten torpedo planes from Midway attacked the Japanese carriers. Seven were shot down by Zero fighter cover and the few torpedoes released were evaded.

Nagumo, not having received the up-dated Japanese radio intelligence report, was still unaware of the near presence of a U.S. carrier task force. Since his scout planes had not broken radio silence, he felt secure that there were no enemy ships to contend with at present. Accordingly, and since he was at that moment under attack by land based torpedo planes, he gave the logical order to commence rearming his remaining bombers for the second strike against Midway.

This order was being carried out when one of Nagumo's scout planes broke radio silence to report that U.S. cruisers and destroyers had been sighted about two hundred miles to the northeast of Nagumo's position. There was no mention of an aircraft carrier; so the rearming for Midway continued.

This process, however, was slowed and disrupted during the next hour as the other flights of Midway launched bombers arrived on the scene and attacked in succession. Many of these bombers were shot down and no torpedoes or bombs hit their targets. The last attack was carried out my Midway torpedo planes at 0820.

At 0825, Nagumo received a corrected report from his scout plane to the northeast, that one of the American ships sighted was an aircraft carrier that looked exactly like the sunken Yorktown. Nagumo gave

the order to stop rearming for Midway and rearm with torpedoes and armor piercing bombs.

Adding to this already hectic, confused state of affairs, Nagumo's Midway strike planes began arriving in search of their carriers these having been scattered by the various flights of attacking U.S. bombers from Midway.

Around 0900, with his Midway strike planes recovered, Nagumo ordered his widely scattered force to turn northward in order to gain time to straighten out the mess on his carrier decks, finish rearming, regroup his ships, and prepare for the attacks against the U.S. carrier reported to his northeast.

This radical change of base course by the Japanese was unplanned and had been dictated by circumstances. Hornet's dive bombers, escorted by fighters, were first to arrive at the predicted intercept position and found no enemy ships. The flight leader surmised they had arrived too late and the Japanese fleet had already passed. He turned southward to search and flew directly away from Nagumo.

Dive bombers from Enterprise, led by Lieutenant Commander Wade McCluskey, and without fighter escort from which they'd become separated enroute, were next to arrive at the predicted position. There was no enemy fleet below. McCluskey decided that the enemy ships had been delayed so he led his dive bombers northward.

At 0928, Hornet's famed Torpedo Squadron 8 located the Japanese carriers. In its search, it too had become separated from its fighter escort. The fifteen Hornet torpedo planes pressed home a determined attack. All fifteen were shot down by Zeros or anti-aircraft fire. Fourteen torpedo bombers of Enterprise, also unescorted, were next to attack. Ten of these planes were shot down. Twelve of Yorktown's torpedo planes attacked at 1016 and ten were shot down. Not a single torpedo launched during these three attacks found its mark.

Another great Japanese victory seemed assured. Nagumo's task force had beaten off the concentrated attacks of both U.S. land based and carrier bombers without receiving a hit. Now it was his turn and Nagumo ordered the attack on the U.S. carrier.

At that instant, from two directions, Yorktown's dive bombers and those of Enterprise, led by McCluskey, arrived high above the Japanese carriers

and came plummeting down in almost vertical dive bombing attacks. The slow, unescorted U.S. torpedo planes had brought the Zero fighter cover right down to the water to complete the slaughter thus leaving the skies above Nagumo's carriers unprotected.

In a few minutes time, Akagi, Kaga, and Soryu were hit. Explosions ripped through them and fires raged out of control. All three first line Japanese carriers were doomed although they did not sink immediately. Nagumo transferred his flag from Akagi to a cruiser.

Nagumo's fourth carrier, Hiryu, had become separated from the other three prior to the dive bombing attack and was not seen by U.S. planes.

From the number of planes that attacked Akagi, Kaga, and Soryu, it was apparent to the Japanese that more than one U.S. carrier was involved. Rear Admiral Tamon Yamaguchi, Commander of Carrier Division Two aboard Hiryu, ordered an attack against the only one that had been located, the Yorktown.

Yamaguchi's planes found Yorktown at 1220. Two bomb hits stopped her dead in the water and left her engulfed in black smoke. In this attack Hiryu lost thirteen of her eighteen attacking dive bombers and three out of six Zeros.

Hiryu launched ten torpedo bombers and six Zeros to locate
and attack any remaining U.S. carriers.

Meanwhile, the fires on Yorktown had been extinguished, power was restored, and she got underway again at 1340, while maintaining a speed of thirteen knots.

At 1442, Hiryu's ten searching torpedo planes and six Zeros located what they believed to be an undamaged U.S. carrier that also looked exactly like Yorktown. It was, of course, the Yorktown, surrounded by a protecting screen of cruisers and destroyers. The Japanese planes attacked through intense anti-aircraft fire and half of the attacking planes were shot down. Four torpedoes were launched, two of which scored hits which stopped Yorktown dead in the water again. All power was lost and she developed a twenty-seven degree list. Orders were given to abandon ship at 1500 hours.

A scout plane from Yorktown found Hiryu at 1445.

Enterprise launched twenty-four dive bombers at 1530 to
attack Hiryu.

It is understandable why the trip-hammer

catastrophe which had befallen Nagumo caused him to send some confusing and conflicting reports to Admiral Yamamoto. These notwithstanding, it was obvious to Yamamoto that the situation at Midway was going badly. Yamamoto sent an urgent radio signal to Admiral Hosagaya in the Aleutians ordering him to cancel all plans for the occupation of Adak, Kiska, and Attu and withdraw with his Northern Invasion-Occupation Force. The orders further directed Kakuta to speed toward Midway with his carrier force of Ryujo and Junyo in support of Nagumo or to cover a retreat, if one were necessary.

Kakuta received these orders an hour after he had launched his second attack against Dutch Harbor. He could not comply until he had recovered his aircraft.

Meanwhile, at Midway, the twenty-four dive bombers from Enterprise located and attacked Hiryu at 1704. Four direct hits turned her into a flaming, sinking wreck. Admiral Yamaguchi chose to go down with his ship.

At 1755 when Hiryu was lost, the plan to concentrate the four remaining Japanese carriers, (one each from Yamamoto's Main Fleet and Kondo's Midway Invasion Fleet, plus Ryujo and Junyo), was abandoned. Yamamoto issued orders cancelling the occupation of Midway. The Japanese Combined Fleets had little choice and withdrew toward Japan in humiliating defeat.

Admiral Hosagaya, in command of the Aleutian Operations Northern Force proprosed to Yamamoto that he be allowed to proceed with his occupation of the western Aleutians. This move would save face and also provide the needed northern defense for protection against American bombing of Japan's home islands, a factor that still existed and had to be dealt with. Yamamoto agreed to Hosagaya's proposal with one change: The canecellation of the Adak occupation. The Kiska and Attu invasion plans would stand.

After recovering planes from the second attack on Dutch Harbor, Kakuta's carrier force sped toward Midway for about an hour at which time he received new orders that directed him to change course and proceed westward to support Hosagaya's occupation of Kiska and Attu.

The Japanese High Command, its combined Midway battle forces in full retreat, became worried about Ryujo and Junyo being jumped by our remaining carriers. To beef up the Northern Force, Yamamoto ordered carrier Zuiho, which was attached to his

Combined Fleet Force and therefore the closest, to speed to the Aleutians in support of Ryujo and Junyo and rendezvous with them four hundred miles south of Kiska.

When the smoke from the Battle of Midway cleared we had lost the Yorktown, destroyer Hammann, and 147 land or carrier based aircraft. Japan's losses were 3500 men killed, four first line carriers sunk, several other ships sunk or damaged, and 332 aircraft. Japan was on the defensive for the remainder of WWII.

Contributing factors that turned the tide against Japan and
caused her defeat at Midway were:

1. The presence of a U.S. seaplane tender at French Frigate Shoal.
2. The intelligence report that Nagumo did not receive.
3. The unknown presence of three instead of two U.S. carriers in the Midway area.
4. The failure of one Japanese scout plane to be launched on schedule.
5. The need for a second strike at Midway.

Allied naval historians imply that the Japanese Aleutian Operation was an insignificant and unnecessary apendage tacked on to the Midway Operation. This is completely false thinking from the standpoint of the Japanese. From the beginning, and especially from the moment of Lt.Col. Doolittle's raid on Tokyo, the Japanese placed equal or even greater importance on the role of their Aleutian Operation.

It is a sad commentary on Alaska's lack of preparedness that the Japanese reasoned correctly that Midway (two atolls totalling about two square miles) would be harder to capture than the western Aleutians. It was for this reason, not because of relative importance, that Yamamoto concentrated his major forces at Midway.

Although the mother died suddenly and unexpectedly at Midway her spawn born in the Aleutians would cling tenaciously to life for fourteen months.

By June of 1942 we had been fighting the Japanese for seven months. We were painfully aware much of their equipment was superior to ours and not just cheap copies of western technology as first supposed.

There is a lesson in this that one must remember

about Japan. Through the centuries, designs that might have been initiated elsewhere, were always, when used by Japan, converted and changed to suit Japan's needs and therefore became peculiarly Japanese not foreign. Japanese cameras, for example, are not German--,not the German Leica, long since outdistanced by the Japanese--. Japanese automobiles is another example that readily comes to mind. Serious work of the Japanese is always Japanese. We have not understood this.

After seven months of war the Japanese, in turn, realized that the U.S. soldier, sailor, and marine also possessed toughness, courage, and a willingness to die. Each adversary had gained new respect for the other. Each knew it would be a long difficult war.

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Aftermath of the Japanese Attacks on Dutch Harbor

LOST IN THE FOG: One enemy carrier task force. If found please notify.....

My boss, Lt.Cmdr. John F. Tatom, whom I had not seen since leaving Seattle in February, flew into Dutch Harbor from Wing headquarters at Kodiak late in the afternoon of June 5, 1942.

Tatom was upset. He wanted to know why the patrol flight weather reports taken by his aerographer's mates seemed to cease at the most critical moment when they were so vital to the preparation of accurate forecasts for PBY pilots seeking the enemy carrier fleet.

Tatom wanted to know the reason, for instance, why I wasn't
out on patrol at that moment, or Smith, or Carey, or any one of the dozen other aerographer's mates at Dutch Harbor.

I attempted to explain that we'd been busy at Dutch Harbor. Most of our PBY's had either been shot down, shot up, were missing, or had been dispersed.

Tatom wasn't interested in excuses and had even less
tolerance for impertinence.

"Do I have to fly the weather myself? What the hell do you think I sent you out here for in the first place? You've got a plane now,--the one I came in. Get your toilet kit, extra clothes, and a sleeping bag and get down to that PBY right now. It is being refueled and will fly out to either the Gillis or Williamson for the night."

"Max White, Calderon, and Olsen are already on the Gillis and Carter has orders to her," I ventured, "and Herold and Roberts are on the Williamson."

"Goddamnit, Carrigan," Tatom exploded, "I'm not sending you to a tender for duty, I'm sending you to fly the weather until I tell you to stop. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Tell White and Herold that I want them to send at least one of their aerographers daily into the sectors where they expect the worst weather. They are not to hesitate to each send two men out in different sectors if the situation warrants. There is no other way to pinpoint these storm systems and fast moving fronts. The only damn accurate weather reports to the west will be the ones taken by us. Now get going before you miss your plane."

These were the first of a long series of Tatom's verbal orders that more or less orphaned me and sent me off on a two year Aleutian odyssey. In all that time I was to receive only a few sets of written naval orders. As a result, my records, including pay and health records, seldom if ever caught up with me. At one point, the United States Navy lost such complete track of me that it assumed I was missing in action.

I reported as ordered to the PPC of the PBY at the seaplane ramp. The VP-41 crew having been sent out as a replacement unit were new to me and the Aleutians. The senior pilot told me to throw my gear aboard and climb in. Refueling was almost completed and as soon as he'd made a last minute check with the duty operations officer we'd get airborne.

Twenty minutes after takeoff we landed in Trident Bay, Akutan Island. Mooring gear was broken out as the pilot taxied to a buoy and our PBY was quickly secured for the night. A crash boat came alongside to take us to the anchored Gillis.

When I walked into the tender's weather shack, Chief Max White thought I was returning from a long sector patrol. When I told him I'd just come from Dutch Harbor he couldn't understand why I'd been sent to the Gillis when she already had about thirty percent of the Wing's aerographer's mates. With typical patience the seldom ruffled Max White received Tatom's verbal orders that passed on in partial explanation of my presence. With a wry smile he wondered aloud if Tatom knew there was a war going on around Dutch Harbor. Max knew the value of accurate in-flight weather reports as well as anyone and he'd been sending us out on sector patrols at every opportunity. White surmised that if Tatom had not

received all of the reports at Kodiak it was probably because of overloaded, fouled up communications.

Gillis was dreadfully overcrowded and that night I spread my sleeping bag in a corner of the tiny weather shack. Plane crew members, including some of the pilots, had to sleep on the steel deck in any space they could find. Many crew members chose to sleep in the planes.

Max sent me on a flight into the Bering Sea early the following morning. All PBY's operating from the Gillis were sent on Bering Sea patrols that day, a Japanese task force having been reported in that area.

Our flight lasted almost twelve hours, all of it in solid soup under a thick overcast. Most of the patrol was at an altitude of 50 feet to maintain visual contact with the wave tops.

Ceiling and visibility were near zero-zero at Akutan and Dutch Harbor upon our return. Our pilot was advised to try for Chernofski Bay. We flew southwestward along the northern shore of Unalaska only to find conditions there equally poor. After a rather rough but safe landing outside the entrance to Chernofski we taxied in and up to the stern of the anchored Williamson.

Chief Aerographer's Mate, Chuck Herold, received my verbal report from Tatom with mounting fury. The Williamson had been in the area less than sixty hours. She had spent almost the entire time underway in searching for reported down PBY's. Zeros had strafed the ship south of Umnak Pass on June 4th. Later that day and the following day the Williamson had rescued two PBY's and crews found forced down at sea.

One plane had searched for the Japanese fleet beyond a safe fuel margin and upon its return had used up its reserves while groping in the fog for its base. The Williamson found this plane and refueled it at sea.

LT(jg) Jep C. Johnson's PBY had been forced down at sea by mechanical trouble and this plane had been located and towed into Chernofski.

Search patrols from the ship had only commenced that morning and Roberts had been sent out to fly the weather. Herold felt that Tatom should be well aware of the Williamson situation.

"Christ, C.C.," I said after he'd vented his wrath, "don't take it out on me. I'm only passing on The Word. I've got troubles of my own. Tatom ordered me to fly every damn day from wherever the hell I end

up until he tells me to stop."

The following day, June 7, Herold sent Roberts on a search patrol southwest of the Aleutians. He sent me on another patrol into the Bering Sea. This time it was on a western sector just to the north of the Aleutians. Again, the weather was stinking with a solid, low overcast of stratus, dense fog patches, and intermittant drizzle. Upon our return we taxied into Chernofski Bay to discover the Gillis anchored there.

The Williamson had gone to Dutch Harbor to top off fuel tanks and take on stores. She had been pressed into service as a hearse/hospital ship for victims of the Japanese attacks. With sixteen dead and fifty wounded, Williamson was on a high-speed run to Kodiak. Near Cold Bay she would pass the Hulbert which had been ordered to the Dutch Harbor area.

Upon taxiing into Chernofski there were no planes being serviced by the Gillis so we manuevered up to her stern for refueling. When this operation was completed we were fended off and taxied to a mooring buoy. A crash boat collected us and took us to the ship.

Radio silence was not broken to transmit hourly weather reports during a patrol. There was still considerable work to be done and I went straight to the weather office. The first step in this follow-up work entailed briefing the watch forecaster on any pertinent weather phenomena encountered. Next, the Aircraft Meteorological Code (AirMetCo) hourly reports were enciphered for radio transmission and dissemination. Lastly, the hourly reports were entered on the appropriate synoptic charts. Most flights were from twelve to fifteen hours' duration so this spanned two synoptic charts.

Swede Olson was helping me with this entering work when he told me that Robert's PBY might be in trouble. Neither the ship nor Dutch Harbor had been able to raise the plane by radio during the past hour. The pilot last reported he was going to try to make it back to Chernofski through a socked in Umnak Pass. Another hour of anxiety passed before Robert's PBY was reported safely down at Dutch Harbor.

Max White sent me on a sector patrol southwest of the Aleutians on June 8 that turned out to be almost a duplication of Robert's flight the previous day. For endless hours our PBY droned along under a solid overcast, in and out of fog patches and drizzle, with conditions zero-zero on numerous occasions. The

ceiling was seldom over 200 feet and the visibility fluctuated between zero and a mile at most.

When we came within range of the Aleutians, our radar set which had been acting up all day became even more erratic. All attempts to adjust or tune out false echoes failed and the readings could not be trusted. With the fang of Ship Rock waiting within, our pilot was not about to go charging blindly into the narrow jaws of Umnak Pass. He turned eastward and began the nerve-wracking job of skirting the jagged southern shore of Unalaska Island. An hour and a half later, after some trying moments flying through dense fog patches, we landed at Dutch Harbor.

During my three days' absence the weather office had been moved from the shack on the boardwalk to the building on the hill that had been the communications station during the Japanese attacks. Communications had moved into a new reinforced concrete structure near the docks. Radio towers had been erected in the hills on the south side of the bay. One transmitter and receiver had been left in the old radio shack and there were still radiomen on duty there to copy and transmit our weather
schedules. The bat cave hut next door still housed these radiomen and eight aerographer's mates.

In addition to the old radio towers which were left standing, the civilian workmen had erected a dummy tower next to the building that was our new weather shack. This was done to fool the Japanese into attacking the old communications station again, if and when they returned. The aerographers were unhappy about this navy brass brainstorm to use the new weather office as bomb bait.

There was great uneasiness at this time because the hard-hitting Japanese carrier force was still on the loose somewhere out in the Aleutian summer fogs and drizzle and the most dangerous enemy is the one that is unlocated.

There was deep concern among the aerographers for our weather/radio teams on Kiska and Kanaga. Boyd Omang told me that Medaris and Curtis were still transmitting three-hourly weather reports from Kanaga but contact with House and his Kiska outfit had ceased after the midnight report on June 6, 1942. Mr. Foster Jones's radio on Attu had gone silent about the same time. Clouds, fog, and drizzle had prevented any of our search planes from getting a good look at either Kiska or Attu.

Rumors abounded. Scuttlebutt had it that a great carrier air battle had taken place near Midway Island but nobody seemed to know who won. We heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked again and some even insisted that San Francisco had been bombed. One local area rumor had Kodiak bombed; another that several enemy submarines had been sighted, attacked, and sunk in waters near Dutch Harbor. Japanese fleet units were reported in both the Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea. It was impossible to sort out the truth.

Enlisted men and even junior officers were not privy to that
which was actually taking place even in our own immediate area. We learned the truth days, weeks, months, and sometimes years later. One high command policy of all military establishments is to divulge little or no information to the enlisted personnel. It is only considered necessary that these men obey orders without question and do their duty.

The Rat Islands Acquire a New Batch of Rodents

During the past week our four seaplane tenders had been hopping around like Mexican jumping beans in their attempt to stay one step ahead of operations and the rapidly flucuating situation. This game of musical chairs was played to a fast tempo and would continue until August 30, 1942.

By June 10, the Gillis which had been in and out of Dutch Harbor, Beaver Inlet, Akutan, Chernofski, and Cold Bay, all within a week, had moved 350 miles west to Nazan Bay on the eastern end of Atka.

Atka is the largest island in the Andreanof group which includes, from east to west, the major islands of Amlia, Atka, Great Sitkin, Umak, Little Tanaga, Kagalaska, Adak, Kanaga, and Tanaga.

Atka had the only native settlement west of the Fox Islands with the exception of Attu. The village was located at the head of sheltered Nazan Bay which fronts on the Bering Sea. The southeast arm of the Bay forms the western shore of short, narrow, Amlia Pass which leads into the Pacific.

About eighty Aleuts lived at Nazan Bay along with three Caucasian employees of the B.I.A. : Mrs. Ethel Oliver the school teacher, and Mr. and Mrs. Sam McGee who ran the store. Sam also took weather reports and operated Nazan Bay's radio. He was one of the men whom Wild Bill Lindeman and Squeaky Anderson had recruited

for their "Fish Net" radio circuit at the outset of WWII.

When the Gillis moved west, the Casco was ordered from Cold Bay to join the Hulbert at Chernofski. Casco's place at Cold Bay would be filled temporarily by the Williamson.

Extensive operations quickly depleted the aviation gas, bombs, depth charges, and various stores of the AVD tenders, Gillis, Williamson, and Hulbert, necessitating frequent speed runs to Dutch Harbor to refuel and replenish. Whenever a tender had to leave her flock for these purposes, another tender took her place to service returning PBY's.

If this tender juggling could not be accomplished on time, the returning planes either landed on the untended bay, anchored to buoys and waited, or if the delay would be too great, the returning planes were ordered to bases such as Dutch Harbor or the airfield on Umnak Island, or to a bay where a tender was operating. Occasionally, a plane was sent to Cold Bay.

When one adds this situation to the almost daily occurrence of various PBY's being "weathered out" and seeking shelter anywhere they could it is no wonder that plane crews, including aerographer's mates, led gypsy lives. This total lack of assurance that we would return to the same takeoff location heightened the aura of impermanence.

It was around June 9th that a few PBY's of our newest squadron, VP-43, began arriving in the Dutch Harbor area. These first elements were under command of VP-43's Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Herman L. Ray. The majority of the squadron under its skipper, Lieutenant Commander Carroll B."Doc"Jones, left San Diego for the Aleutians about the same time and arrived in small groups a day or two later. In addition, part of VP-51, under command of Lieutenant Commander D.T. Day, was diverted to the Aleutians from Alameda, California.

These squadrons had almost no time for preparation. They were quickly ordered to the Aleutians when Dutch Harbor was bombed. Unlike the pilots of VP-41 and VP-42, the new pilots, almost without exception, had no experience flying in Alaska.

They did have a plus or two in their favor. VP-43's aircraft were new PBY-5A's and most were equipped with the latest ASV search radar, a vast improvement over the early AS radar units.

The U.S. Navy and 11th USAAF both claim the honor

of first discovering the Japanese invasion and occupation of Kiska in the Rat Islands and of Attu in the Near Islands on June 10, 1942. Whether it was VP-43's Lt(jg) Milton C. Dahl, Captain Robert E. Speer, of the 36th Bombardment Squadron, or Lt(jg) William J. Bowers of VP-41, they all observed Japanese ships and activity in Kiska Harbor on that date. In addition, Lt(jg) Roy Green of VP-43, dropped bombs aimed at enemy ships in Kiska Harbor late in the afternoon of June 10th.

Dense fog had allowed the Japanese the more than ample time
of four days in which to dig in.

On June 10, Lt(jg) Dahl got a good look at Kiska Harbor through a break in the fog and cloud cover, the first such observation achieved in over a week because of the weather. He found Japanese, not the elusive carrier force, but elements of Admiral Hosagaya's invasion force. Dahl reported a heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, a destroyer, and several transports with many landing barges and small boats plying the waters between ships and shore.

Dahl continued his patrol 195 miles westward to Attu and reported the Japanese had also landed there. He reported many landing barges on the beach at Massacre Bay, numerous tents, and a Nakajima Type 97 "Pete" anchored offshore.

When Captain Speer dove his LB-30 Liberator down through a hole in clouds over Kiska Harbor to check some unidentified ships he was fired on by a cruiser. Speer, highly upset, believed he had been mistakenly fired at by one of the cruisers of Admiral Theobald's phantom, radio silent task force. When he landed at Umnak Speer described the cruiser to a navy lieutenant who identified it as a Japanese Natori-class cruiser. Proper enemy ship and plane recognition still had a long way to go at that stage of the war.

On June 11, 1942, we received orders from Wing Commander Leslie E. Gehres to bomb the Japs off Kiska and keep at it around the clock until we accomplised it or ran out of bombs and PBY's in the attempt. Attacks were to be carried out regardless of weather conditions.

Our ambitious leader had risked the wrath of Admiral Theobald, who was still maintaining radio silence and steaming around in the soup 400 miles south of Kodiak, by going over Theobald's head and directly informing CinCPac of the Japanese invasion of

Kiska and Attu. Gehres also volunteered our PBY's and crews for the job, pointing out to Admiral Nimitz that at that moment he had a seaplane tender operating 300 miles closer to the Japanese on Kiska than the nearest U.S.A.A.F. base. Nimitz gave Gehres the green light.

U.S. military and civilian leaders in the states concurred with this decision. There had hardly been time to savor the great victory at Midway when news of the Japanese occupation of the western Aleutians leaked out. This invasion of American home soil, the first time since the year 1812, and the only time this was accomplished by any enemy during WWII, could not be tolerated. Overnight, Kiska became an island far too close to the U.S. mainland. The enemy must be ejected at all costs.

President Roosevelt ordered the Japanese blasted back into the sea. Some Army Air Force generals wanted to use high altitude strategic bombing to prove the merits of this method of attack. General Buckner wanted to storm Kiska's beaches and drive the enemy off. Some admirals proposed a blockade to starve the Japanese on Kiska and Attu into submission.

While this rhetoric was going on we had already received our orders from Commodore Gehres. With lumbering PBY's, a dozen or so army heavy bombers, army and navy flight crews set about to carry out their impossible orders.

Japan's invasion of Kiska and Attu was taken especially hard by aerographer's mates. It had to be assumed that House, Winfrey, Turner, and the other seven men of the Kiska unit were dead. Japanese troops would certainly have stormed the beach with guns blazing at the cluster of three small wooden shacks that housed our weather/radio team. There was little solace in hoping that the men had had time to escape and melt into the fog shrouded hills. In that event, the enemy soldiers would undoubtedly hunt them down like animals and shoot them.

The fate of Mr. and Mrs Foster Jones and the Aleuts on Attu
could only be guessed at.

We had been hoping against hope that the past three days' silence from Attu and Kiska was caused by radio transmitter trouble. Now we knew differently and the matter was seldom discussed.

This latest news that so quickly followed the Dutch Harbor attacks brought the war down to a cruel personal level for navy weathermen. A real hatred for

the Japanese was evident. Revenge would be sweet, indeed. I still remember that I felt no fear, only a wild, almost uncontrollable rage and the urge to fight back and kill the enemy.

We Fly Over Kiska and Into the Meat-Grinder

Intense, round-the-clock bombing of Kiska began on the morning of June 11, 1942. These attacks were carried out by our PBY's, several B-17's and some newly arrived B-24's.

U.S.A.A.F attacks were limited by the small number of planes available and by the fact the aircraft were land based and had to operate from Cold Bay and Umnak. Even Umnak was at the extreme full bomb load range of the army planes.

By contrast, the navy PBY's far outnumbered the army planes, they were based much closer at Nazan Bay, and they had far greater range. Consequently, our PBY's were over Kiska and Attu more frequently.

Our elphantine patrol planes conducted the Kiska attacks from Nazan Bay, Dutch Harbor, and Chernofski. These bombing and strafing missions involved most all of our available "Cats" but the brunt of the exceedingly dangerous work fell on the shoulders of newly arrived VP-43. For three days the activity centered around the Gillis anchored in Nazan Bay. That which followed turned into a nightmare in all respects for, unlike pachyderms, our PBY's had exceedingly thin skins.

Initially, both the army and navy bombed from high altitudes. For B-17's and B-24's this meant from 12,000 to 30,000 feet and for PBY's from 5,000 to 15,000 feet.

This method proved ineffective because of weather. Bombs were released through heavy cloud cover or small breaks and specific targets were seldom seen. Moveover, the results could not be observed.

Next, bomb runs at 4,000 to 5,000 feet were carried out by various PBY's using Kiska volcano as a navigating point. We would come in from the northside, fly over the volcano, set a course and speed, and by stop watch drop the bomb load when calculations indicated we should be over the harbor shipping. This method of attack was developed by Lt(jg) William N. Theis, of VP-41.

Theis's technique enabled us to navigate to a bomb release point directly over the cloud covered

unseen harbor but the harbor was large and unless there were breaks in the clouds, targets still could not be located. In addition, the top of Kiska's volcano was often obscured by clouds so Theis's approach could not be used.

Regardless of conditions, the bomb load was released more often than not on a hit or miss basis. Exploding bombs had a nuisance value if nothing else and would tire the enemy by keeping him at almost constant battle stations, slowing and disrupting his activities. Too, we might get lucky and accidently drop a bomb on something of value.

VP-43's skipper, Lt.Cmdr. Jones invented and instigated a third method of bombing Kiska that was adopted and used for a short time. His undreamt of approach to the problem was to employ the PBY as a dive bomber!

First, a likely hole in the cloud cover over the target area was selected. The top of the lower cloud deck was usually between 3,500 and 5,500 feet. Underneath, the base varied from zero to 1,500 feet. Once the suitable hole was chosen, the pilot pushed the nose of the PBY over into a steep dive. Fourteen feet wide and 104 feet long, the parasol wing that had a surface area of 1400 sq.ft., approximately the same as a floor 30 feet by 47 feet, would commence vibrating violently enough to be felt throughout the plane. As speed increased, the considerable wing sections outboard of the struts and engine on each side began a flexing undulation so fascinating that it almost had a hypnotic effect. A moaning sound of wind whistling past the open gun blisters changed to a peculiarly mournful howl as the airspeed indicator approached 250 mph.

Hurtling downward was the easy part. Our pilots experienced the first of many alarming perils of dive bombing with a PBY when they tried to pull out of the dive: They discovered that the ailerons and elevator controls would not budge. To get the nose up, both pilots were forced to lay back into a virtual standing position while pulling back on the dual "Yoke" with their combined strength. This was the maneuver that took such a frantic, superhuman effort that muscle cords in their necks bulged and knuckles turned white. The G-forces of this structural frame twisting, rivet popping method of attack stressed both pilots and plane, threatening to rip off PBY wings, wings designed for sedate patrol work.

Chapter XVII

I have never bailed out of a plane, started down the icy shoot of a ski jump, or dove off a lofty cliff into water far below but the sensation must be akin to riding in a PBY that pushes over into a dive bombing attack. There is that gut wrenching moment of truth. Once you jump, push off, or let go, it is too damned late. There is no turning back. There is an utter finality about it.

When the death plunge had been arrested, often frighteningly close above the water, a target had to be selected, a course change made, and a climb begun to gain altitude to avoid being caught in our own bomb blasts. If possible, targets were strafed as we roared back up into the relative safety of the cloud base with hails of anti-aircraft fire streaking in our direction.

Although this method of attack was more effective, the resulting damage could not often be observed or accurately assessed.

It was a preposterous idea approaching suicide to use the PBY's against the heavily concentrated fire of Kiska's guns and those of Japanese warships in the harbor for these additional reasons: 1. A PBY presented a huge target and was so dreadfully slow for this type of work it must have appeared almost stationary to enemy gunners. 2. PBY's carried light armament for their size and little armor plate protection for the crews. 3. The huge wing contained upward of 1500 gallons of highly flamable aviation gas, only half of which was in self-sealing tanks on the port side. Outside of a barrage balloon or blimp, a PBY would have to be considered the most luscious target ever sent aloft.

Each day, anti-aircraft fire intensified as more guns were off-loaded from ships and barged ashore to be set up in strategically located emplacements. Soon, the harbor was ringed with guns and others were placed high up on Kiska's ridges and the slopes of the volcano.

Three navy men were killed within a space of minutes on the first attack on Kiska the morning of June 11, 1942. First to die over Kiska was Lieutenant Clark Alexander Hood, USN, of VP-42. Lt. Hood, you will recall, was the excellent navigator Commander Russell had selected to accompany him and Lt. Samuel Coleman when they flew General Buckner and President Roosevelt's aid, Commander Paul Foster out to Kiska and back in mid May.

Hood was on loan to the army as navigator to lead a flight of five newly arrived B-24's over Kiska and back.

These B-24's were attached to the 21st Bombardment Squadron and had arrived at Cold Bay on the evening of June 10. Colonel Eareckson had ordered them to proceed to Umnak, unload equipment, refuel, take on a full bomb load and attack Kiska early on the morning of June 11. Lt. Hood was at Cold Bay and he volunteered to lead the green army pilots to Kiska.

The five B-24's took off from Umnak on June 11th and headed for Kiska 650 miles to the westward. Hood was navigating in the lead plane flown by the newly appointed skipper of the veteran 36th Bombardment Squadron, Captain Jack Todd.

A weather front had moved past Kiska during the night resulting in broken clouds as the flight approached the target. The B-24's went in flying level formation at 12,000 feet. Japanese gunners cut loose and Captain Todd's B-24 took a direct hit in the opened bomb bay. The midair explosion severely damaged the two planes flying immediately on either side of Todd. These two B-24's pulled out of the attack as their pilots fought for control. Two remaining B-24's dropped their bomb loads but scored no hits.

What was left of Todd's B-24 plunged to earth, crashed onto the slopes of Kiska's volcano and burned.

Ensign James C. Clark of VP-43 arrived over Kiska at that moment and dropped his bombs. His PBY was caught in the same accurate anti-aircraft fire. Flak killed two crewmen , wounded a third, shot out the port engine, damaged the port aileron, and started a small smoldering fire.

Clark wrestled the crippled, one engined "Yoke-boat" all the way back to Nazan Bay and landed safely. Clark's plane had received so much damage that it was beached and after all usable gear was salvaged, the PBY was burned.

Warrant Officer, NAP Leland L. Davis, VP-43, who had attacked a Japanese submarine south of Tanaga on June 10th, had a crewman killed over Kiska on June 11th. His PBY was so badly shot up that when he landed his plane sank beneath the waters of Nazan Bay.

PBY's came back from Kiska missions with numerous bullet holes and flak damage. Lt.Comdr. Herman Ray's PBY took a direct hit from a three inch shell but it

was a dud. On June 11th, PBY's attacked Kiska nine times. Attacks numbered about the same on the 12th and 13th. Several pilots bombed Kiska twice in twenty-four hours.

On June 12, LT.(jg) Arthur Jacobson, USN, of VP-43 was

* Blister gunner/second radioman, Ellis J. Keith, S2c, and Plane Captain, W.H. Lansing, AMM1c were killed at their stations. First Radioman, Chief M.R. Mortenson was seriously wounded. The U.S. Navy named a destroyer in honor of Seaman Keith. directed to attack four, four-engined "Mavis"* flying boats at anchor along the shoreline of Kiska Harbor. Jacobson was an experienced PBY pilot who had fought the Japanese in the Philippines at the outbreak of the war. On this mission, another PPC, Ensign Carl H. "Bon" Amme, USN was Jacobson's copilot. They located the flying boats and attacked, scoring near misses with the four bombs and possibly damaging two or three of the planes. The four enemy planes were thoroughly raked with machine gun fire. Before they pulled back up into the clouds and out of intense anti-aircraft fire, NAP Buergey, the bow gunner, silenced an anti-aircraft gun that was firing at them from a Japanese cruiser. Jacobson's PBY returned well sieved with over one hundred holes in it but no crew member was hit.

Daily search patrols were conducted in addition to bombing runs on Kiska. A few PBY's were also sent out to Attu to drop bombs on the Jap tent city taking shape at Massacre Bay or to attack any enemy shipping found in the area.

These missions were being carried out by pilots and crews who had reached exhaustion. This not only was true of the veteran crews of VP-41 and VP-42 but of newly arrived VP-43 aircrews because of the manner in which they went to war. VP-43 had departed San Diego on June 8, arrived at Tongue Point the same day to refuel and catch a few hours sleep before taking off for Kodiak. They departed Kodiak on June 10 for Cold Bay, Dutch

* Allied code name for the Kawanishi H6K4 four-engined flying
boat bomber; a predecessor of the "Emily". Harbor or Nazan Bay. Most of VP-43's PBY's bombed Kiska on the

second day after leaving San Diego. By June 14th many of them had bombed Kiska two or more times and some of the PBY's had racked up ninety flying hours in the six days since departing San Diego. These flights were all twelve to fifteen hours long, flying in strange country, and mostly in poor weather.

LT(jg) E.B. Hanson, USNR, arrived at Nazan Bay with a section of four PBY's led by Commander Jones. They had carried bombs all the way from San Diego. Although pilots and crews were fatigued the first thing Jones asked was, "Can I reach Kiska from here?"

The flight refueled and without sleep took off on a bombing mission. Their plan was to make the bombing run from an altitude of 15,000 feet. Hanson went over the bombing procedure he would follow with his copilot, Ensign R.F. Calrow. Hanson would pull the toggle and drop a bomb from his side, then Calrow would drop a bomb. In this way they would alternate until the four bombs had been released. Unfortunately, at a little over 500 feet per minute, it took so long to climb to fifteen thousand feet in a PBY-5A that the already exhausted Calrow fell sound asleep. Hanson had to shake him awake for the bomb drop.

Japanese ships continued to arrive at Kiska under the cover of fog and low clouds. Unloaded supplies from these ships were beginning to stack up on the beach and were providing a sizeable target. Wooden frame buildings of various sizes sprang up overnight. There was a daily increase in fire directed at us from new gun positions.

The cloud cover over Kiska was both a blessing and a curse and determined to some extent what type of bomb run was made. If the clouds were dense we could not see targets but the Japanese gunners also could not see us.

At first, the Japanese threw up a furious anti-aircraft barrage over the entire harbor area from ship and shore. Later, when we started to dive bomb through holes in the cloud cover they shifted their tactics to filling just the holes with ack-ack. We could not continue down through this hail of death. Accordingly, we changed our tactics somewhat by diving through the solid cloud deck and avoiding the breaks. This was scary instrument flying. We never knew what lay underneath or how low the ceiling might be.

Just as some pilots are better flyers than others, some are more reckless so attack methods varied. If the planes went over in a group they

followed instructions and orders of the flight leader, like it or not. Single plane attacks had greater freedom to choose the method of bomb release.

All of this activity was on a shuttle basis using Nazan Bay, Atka as the midpoint. The usual routine included takeoff from Dutch Harbor or Chernofski Bay, make a bomb run over Kiska and return to Nazan. The plane would be refueled, rearmed, bullet holes patched, the crew fed and after a few hours' sleep takeoff either on another bombing run or a search patrol then land back at Dutch Harbor or Chernofski.

It was difficult to repair damaged PBY's on the water so they often had to be flown to Dutch Harbor. After repairs were made and the plane refueled and rearmed it was flown to Nazan or Chernofski in order to keep the cement apron and facilities at Dutch from becoming too congested.

Our Patsu personnel at land bases and on our seaplane tenders did a marvelous job of keeping our planes in the air throughout the Aleutian Campaign of WWII. These ground support men worked round the clock under the most adverse conditions to perform repair miracles for which they received little or no recognition.

After a search patrol out of Dutch Harbor on June 11, a few hours sleep aboard the PBY that evening at Nazan Bay, a midnight takeoff, and a bombing mission over Kiska, I returned to Chernofski on June 12th to find the Casco and Hulbert anchored there. Our PBY was refueled and rearmed by Casco and our plane crew taken aboard.

When I entered the ship's weather shack I was greeted by Aerological Officer Ensign Max Jack. Emmett Smith was also temporarily assigned to the ship. On the morning of June 2, Jack had received orders at Dutch Harbor to proceed, "Without delay", to the USS Casco Bay, AVP-12, at Cold Bay for temporary duty as Senior Aerological Officer. It took Max Jack five days to get to Cold Bay, a distance of one hundred-eighty miles. He had left about 0800 hours on a PBY to Umnak to catch the army mail plane to Cold Bay. This mail plane was damaged on landing the previous evening and the repair crew had to wait a week for spare parts. Jack had hitched a ride on a heavy bomber and reported aboard Casco on June 7, 1942.

Jack took a long look at my red eyes and haggard appearance. He suggested I take a hot shower, make chow, and get some sleep. I died, went to heaven, and

did not stir until twelve hours later on the morning of June 13th. Jack had sent Emmett Smith over Kiska. Hulbert and Don Livingston had departed to assist the Gillis at the madhouse in Nazan Bay.

A Temporary Retreat from Nazan Bay

This first burst of activity over Kiska lasted until the evening of June 13, 1942, when Gillis ran completely out of bombs, aviation gasoline, and stores. Hulbert had arrived on the scene at 2000 hours but at the same time U.S.Naval Radio Intelligence deduced from Japanese transmission intercepts that the enemy was about to launch a heavy bombing attack on the seaplane tender at Nazan Bay. As expected, a Japanese scout plane had discovered our advanced operating base. The attack was to be carried out by a squadron of long range, Kawanishi "Mavis" flying boats that had been flown into Kiska on June 8, 1942.

Nimitz sent orders to Gehres to pull Gillis out of Nazan Bay immediately and fall back to the Dutch Harbor area. Captain Norman Garton of the Gillis was also ordered to evacuate the residents of Nazan Bay. Without warning, given little time to pack and allowed to take only their barest essentials these people were boated out to the two seaplane tenders. Two families whose husbands were sustenance fishing at a camp some distance from the village refused to go. Garton promised to send a PBY the following day for these remaining natives.

Prior to leaving Nazan Bay that night, the larger buildings in the village were burned to prevent their use by the Japanese. These structures were the church, school, store, and a large warehouse. The native houses were not put to the torch as seems to be the popular belief.

All ship's personnel, pilots, and plane crews were more than happy to leave Nazan Bay for everyone was as exhausted as the Gillis's stores.

So many planes had been coming and going on shuttle runs to Kiska during the past seventy-two hours that there simply was not room enough in the Gillis to feed or accomodate more than a small fraction of the men involved. Cooks, for example, had prepared meals continuously for three days. Many of the flight crews remained aboard their PBY's to try to catch a few hours' sleep before taking off on patrol or to bomb Kiska again. Others were boated ashore to

sleep in the church and school house. Mrs Oliver set up a kitchen in the school and cooked for these plane crews.

Native men and young boys helped to refuel and rearm our PBY's. They came out in small boats from which they hand-pumped aviation gas from 55 gallon floating drums into the wing tanks of moored planes. Others, standing in boats, assisted ordnance men in raising bombs up into the wing racks. Several of the native kids who helped our PBY crew in this work the evening of June 11 could not have been more than twelve years of age. It was truly a cooperative effort by the Nazan Bay Aleuts and the U.S. Navy personnel, working desperately together in common cause.

Gillis and Hulbert pulled out of Nazan Bay around 0200 hours on June 14 and none too soon. Three "Mavis" flying boats arrived later that day to attack the seaplane tender reported to be in the bay. When no U.S. ship could be found the enemy pilots selected the village as a target and sent their bomb loads whistling down through a broken cloud deck.

Gillis returned to Dutch Harbor to refuel/replenish and unload her group of thirty Nazan Bay natives. Hulbert stopped briefly at the village of Nikolski on Umnak Island to drop off her fifty natives where they would await further transportation to Dutch Harbor. All of Nazan Bay's Aleuts were later taken to an internment camp at Killisnoo in southeast Alaska. After departing Nikolski, Hulbert continued on to Trident Bay at Akutan where she topped off her fuel tanks. The following day she was ordered to Chernofski to help the Williamson tend PBY's. Casco, meanwhile, had been pulled back to Dutch Harbor.

The Bombing of Kiska Continued

While a furious phase of bombing Kiska with PBY's ended on the night of June 13 the bombing continued. Conversely, our casualties in personnel and PBY's increased after June 13. Most likely this was the result of a combination of steadily increasing accuracy by Japanese gunners, additional guns installed, exhaustion on the part of PBY crews, and wear and tear on our planes. The task of trying to bomb the Japanese off Kiska would become increasingly difficult as fighter opposition developed.

Seaplane carrier Kimikawa Maru slipped into Kiska Harbor on June 14, 1942. Her twenty-four planes

included fourteen single float, two seat, spotting biplanes, Type Zero; four single float, two seat, reconnaissance biplanes, Type 95; and six twin float, three seat, reconnaissance monoplanes, Type Zero. The fast, single seat, single float fighter Type Zero's would not arrive until mid-July.

Two thirds of these planes were unloaded for operations out of Kiska while the remainder were kept aboard for operations conducted at sea from the ship.

Warrant Machinist NAP Leland Davis and his VP-43 crew were shot down over Kiska on June 14. During their few days of war they had arrived in the theatre, attacked a Japanese submarine, bombed Kiska several times, had one shotup plane sink from under them, and then had made their final run over Kiska after taking off from Chernofski Bay.

It is known that Davis released his bomb load and had departed the immediate area of Kiska Harbor. He reported that his plane had been heavily damaged by flak. After this radio transmission there was only silence and no trace was ever found. Killed with Davis were acting co-pilot, Ensign Keller; Navigator, NAP A.L. Gyorfi; Plane Captain, AVMM2c J.C. Hathaway; First Radioman, AVRM2c R.A. Smith; and AVRM3c E. Alford. There were only six men aboard Davis's PBY because his regular co-pilot did not get the word in time and as he was being sent out in a boat to catch the plane, Davis took off on his last flight.

Late in the evening of June 14, Lt(jg) William Theis and his co-pilot, Ensign Robert R. Larson of VP-41 neared Kanaga after a Kiska bombing mission. Theis had been ordered to evacuate the five man navy weather/radio unit on Kanaga and the two remaining Aleut families from Nazan Bay.

It did not appear that these orders could be carried out. Generator problems had developed on the way to Kiska and the trouble had grown progressively worse. There was a good chance that if Theis set his PBY down to rescue the navy weathermen he might not be able to takeoff again. Theis decided to make the attempt.

He had one of his crew shoot off a flare as the signal for the men ashore to evacuate immediately. Aerographer's mates Forrest Medaris and Howard Curtis, and the other three men of the isolated outpost were overjoyed to see a PBY land in their bay. They had

spent an anxious last ten days and had begun to wonder if they'd been abandoned.

After destroying all weather and radio gear the five happy men, traveling light, rowed out to the waiting, bobbing PBY. The generator trouble was located and temporary repairs made.

Theis took off and continued east to Nazan Bay where he
evacuated the two Aleut families as Captain Garton had promised.

The Gospel of Chief Herold

After another run over Kiska I returned to Chernofski and went aboard the Williamson on June 14th. On her return from Kodiak the ship had stopped briefly at Dutch Harbor. This enabled Lester Roberts to rejoin Chief Herold and the ship and Elzie Carey to be added to her weatherman complement.

Youngsters who served apprenticeships under Chiefs Bliss and
Darr did not appreciate their good fortune until years later. Those who came under the tutelage of Chief Herold could not help being aware of immediate benefits in spite of the fact that he, too, did not expect to win any popularity contest.

First, Herold cared a great deal about our daily welfare and never hesitated to go to bat for his men. Secondly, he was an excellent teacher with a knack for explaining things in terms simple enough for us to grasp. Because of the Wing's shortage in qualified forecasters and far-flung operations we would all, sooner or later, be called upon to put out forecasts. This awesome responsibility had already been thrust upon Roberts and Livingston. Herold had the patience and determination to explain to us many of the basic intricacies of North Pacific weather analysis, often when we were so tired we could barely keep our eyes open. Ours was a continuing learning process administered by a dedicated weatherman.

Young aerographer's mates were not the only ones who benefitted from Herold's knowledge. Our pilots and navigators were exposed to his gospel at one time or another.

Herold took charge with self assurance and conviction at weather briefings. He continually stressed to the pilots and navigators that his only job was to try to keep them alive so that they could

continue to fly. Dead pilots and crews and lost PBY's were of no value to anyone.

If they had not already learned the lesson they would quickly realize that their major enemy in the Aleutians was not the Jap but the weather. They were flying in the worst weather in the world and this extremely dangerous foe would be encountered daily. In contrast,they might put in a whole tour without ever coming into contact with the Japanese. Therefore, it was no contest as to which would prove to be the main maimer and killer. If they were to survive daily search patrols they had better develop into competent weathermen and in one helluva hurry.

Herold told them that his forecasts were only as good as the weather information they brought back to him. He stressed the need for accuracy in these reports. Weather, he would say, was no longer just something they had been required to study briefly in order to earn their wings. It was also no longer the inconvenient stop at the weather desk in the states to obtain clearance for a sunny hop of a few hours' duration. "Now," he intoned, "it is a daily matter of life or death."

At one briefing, Herold told a newly arrived group of flyers, "Do not hesitate to ask questions about anything that you do not understand about weather. There is no law that says you can't drop in to the weather shack any time day or night to check on our current weather situation. You don't have to wait until the briefing just before takeoff. We have text books of all types which you may borrow. You can brush up on pictures and diagrams of clouds, cloud shields, and frontal systems if nothing else. There is someone on watch twenty-four hours a day and these qualified people will be more than willing to answer any questions you might have. We fly with you daily so we have a personal stake in this business too."

Herold concluded, "We aerographers cannot fly with each of
you everyday in every sector but this does not relieve you of the responsibility of accurately reporting any significant weather changes that you encounter."

One flight usually served to impress the new pilots with the importance of his words. In fact, by the time they had flown down the chain from Kodiak to the combat zone they were eager to learn all they could about Aleutian weather. As a result, our PPC's, co-pilots, and navigators became knowledgeable

weathermen. This in turn improved the accuracy of our forecasts. Confidence bred confidence which increased our chances for survival.

Four of Herold's early converts were Lt(jg) Arthur Jacobson, and Ensigns Carl H."Bon" Amme, Richard G. Johnston, and Herbert George. Originally, it had been a two section, eight plane flight from Kodiak to Dutch Harbor led by VP-43's skipper Doc Jones. Jacobson was PPC of one PBY with Amme his co-pilot and Johnston first pilot and George co-pilot of another plane. The eight PBY's arrived at Dutch Harbor only to have Ensign Stan Raithel's plane strike a submerged reef which ripped the bottom out. Raithel remained at Dutch Harbor to await a replacement aircraft. With a four plane section, Jones flew on to Nazan Bay. Jacobson, Johnston, and Ensign Carl Bagge, in a third plane, were ordered back to Cold Bay. After landing they barely had time to eat when orders were received to immediately join VP-43's Executive Officer, Lt.Comdr. Herman L. Ray at Nazan Bay. Bagge's PBY had
mechanical trouble and he remained at Cold Bay until the following day.

Jacobson/Amme and Johnston/George made an instrument/radar
takeoff at midnight on June 10 after having only nine hours sleep since leaving San Diego on the 8th. A few hours later Jacobson and Johnston were forced to go "on top" after shaving a number of volcanic peaks and running into dense fog. While going up through heavy clouds, both planes ran into moderate icing conditions but stayed together in the darkness. A decision was made to turn southward away from the unfamiliar, frightening peaks and rugged terrain to wait out the darkness before continuing westward. They returned at daybreak, found a hole to let down through, got their bearings and were shocked to discover they were only 100 miles from their takeoff point. Unseen, fierce winds aloft had blown them far off course during the few hours of darkness.

These men were among those who hung on Chief Herold's every word. With dramatic quickness they realized they were no longer in VFR (Visual Flight Rules) kindergarten. The Aleutians were IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) territory and this was advanced class. If one failed to pass this weather test he flunked out of life itself.

A Mercy Mission Ends In Tragedy

On June 15, 1942, VP-41's Lt(jg) Jep C. Johnson was returning to Dutch Harbor after dropping his load of bombs on Kiska. With Johnson were co-pilot Ensign A.D. Peterson; Navigator Ensign James K. Morrill; Plane Captain Samuel Olsen, AVMM2c; First Radioman T.H. Scroggins, AVRM2c; D.F. Pribble, AVMM3c; R.L.V. Nielsen, AVRM3c; and Richard C. Hazard,AVMM3c.

They were slightly over halfway home from their early morning mission and nearing Seguam Island when radioman Scroggins picked up an emergency message. A destroyer patrolling a short distance to the southwest of Johnson's position had a seaman with acute appendicitis. The ship requested that the nearest PBY fly the stricken man to the hospital at Dutch Harbor.

Johnson responded and after some difficulty locating the destroyer in the thick fog and low clouds he landed nearby. A ship's boat transferred the sick man to the PBY where he was made as comfortable as possible in one of the plane's fold down canvas bunks.

Fog closed in and conditions were zero-zero when Johnson turned his PBY into the wind and took off on instruments. A short while later he realized he was lost after narrowly escaping flying headlong into several unfamiliar projections of rocky land. Every course change during the next half hour produced the same danger.

Unknowingly, they had become trapped inside a small area ringed by Chuginadak, Kagamil, Herbert, and Carlisle: the Islands of Four Mountains whose peaks range in height from Kagamil's 2,930 feet to Chuginadak's 5,675 foot Mt. Cleveland.

Johnson chose the last resort of Aleutian pilots when he decided to go on top even though the summer fog is often over a mile thick, the case on this June day. He was still climbing at 4,900 feet when black rocks came rushing at him from the mists. Knowing he didn't have time to turn, Johnson horsed back on the yoke in an attempt to get the nose up and stall the PBY to ease the impact of the coming crash. A second later the PBY slammed pancake fashion into the fifty-degree slope of the mountainside.

Navigator, Morrill, lay stunned. His legs were jammed down between the jagged, twisted metal of what had been the keel and catwalk. He turned to look across the compartment at radioman Scroggins and saw that he was dead in his seat. Morrill extricated

himself and crawled forward where he found Johnson dead, his side of the cockpit impaled by a large boulder. Co-pilot, Peterson, was alive but seriously injured. His face was covered with blood from a head wound that had all but scalped him. Morrill helped Peterson who was dazedly trying to free his legs from the tangled wreckage of the cockpit. With flames licking around both engines, they crawled out of the plane through a large hole in the navigation-radio compartment. Other crew members were already outside the plane. One, AVMM2c Samuel Olsen, the plane captain was lying still. He had been thrown violently forward in the crash and sustained an obviously broken leg but it was feared that his back was also broken.

The appendicitis victim was dazed but on his feet and apparently not seriously injured. Pribble and Nielsen were badly bruised and had several gashes but were able to move about. AVMM3c Hazard was miraculously unhurt.

Morrill became conscious of great pain in his legs. He lifted his trouser legs, took a look and didn't try to use his legs again. After that he sat down and pushed or pulled himself along with his hands and arms.

Hazard repeatedly crawled into the burning wreckage until he
had brought out two rubber boats, stores of emergency rations, water canteens, flashlights, a length of line, sleeping bags, smoke flares, and the Very signal pistol. Shortly after Hazard emerged from a trip the remaining fuel blew up. The plane continued to burn and for an hour the seven surviors crouched behind rocks as exploding machine gun ammunition went off and ricocheted around them.

Although the men did not know it, they had crashed just below the volcanic peak of extremely rugged Mt. Carlisle. They knew, however, that their only chance for survival and possible rescue was to get down off the mountain to the shoreline. They also knew that they could not pack the partially paralyzed Olsen down whatever steep mountain they were on. Olsen was placed in a sleeping bag so that he would not freeze to death and one of the rubber boats was spread over him to keep him dry. Food and water were left within Olsen's reach and at 1600 hours the other six began their descent.

In the dense fog they could see only a few feet in any direction on the dangerously steep peak. The

four who could walk had their hands full packing the rubber raft, sleeping bags, rations, and other gear. Morrill and Peterson could not be helped as they slowly and painfully scrunched along on their bottoms while dragging their useless legs. The descent was especially fearful in the fog because the party could not see what lay ahead. They crossed snowfields, sheer cliffs stopped them, steep shale slides they could not negotiate forced detours or required the men to climb upward again.

Darkness caught the party halfway down the peak. After eating sparingly from their emergency rations, five men crawled hurt and exhausted into their sleeping bags. The sixth man, AVMM3c Richard Hazard climbed back up to Olsen. He found Olsen still alive and spent the night with him at the crash site. At first light, Hazard returned to the group halfway down the mountain.

The six made it to the beach that afternoon after a torturous time inching along cliffs before they found a shale slide they could descend. A driftwood fire was started and the men crowded around it for warmth. The yellow rubber life raft was inflated and placed on edge against the black cliff as a signal.

Late that afternoon the fog lifted and the survivors were elated to see a destroyer offshore. The Very pistol was fired and the destroyer responded. A boat was lowered but because of heavy surf the rescuers could not approach closer than one hundred yards.

The destroyer's Executive Officer, Lieutenant Edward E. Michel was in charge of the rescue boat. He stripped off his heavy outer clothing, re-donned his life jacket and with a long, light line secured around his waist, leaped into the icy waters in an attempt to swim ashore through the fury of the surf. Although it was only 100 yards, Michel struggled for twenty minutes. Crashing waves pounded him into rocks as he neared the beach. Hazard and Pribble rescued him when he reached shallower water. Banged up, completely exhausted, half frozen and almost drowned, courageous Lt. Michel was placed in a sleeping bag near the fire.

A member of the boat's crew riding the crests beyond the breakers fastened a heavier line to the one Michel had brought ashore. This line was tied around co-pilot Peterson, the most seriously injured man and he was pulled bodily out through the surf to the boat.

Navigator Morrill was next. The line was secured

under his armpits and he was carried out into the frigid waters to be reeled like a large fish out to the boat. In getting Morrill out of the water and into the ship's boat, the lifeline was lost overboard. Those on the beach, all of whom could walk, were directed to make their way around to the lee side of the island to be rescued.

When the ship's boat reached the destroyer's side the seas had become too rough to transfer Morrill and Peterson. Again, by means of a line around the chest, each was lowered in turn into the near freezing water and pulled to the side of the heaving, plunging ship. Waves slammed them against the destroyer as crewmen yarded them aboard. By this time, Morrill and Peterson, more dead than alive, just didn't give a damn. They only wanted the nightmare to end one way or another.

Ironically, this was the appendicitis victim's destroyer which now had her executive officer stuck on the island. This ship sped to Dutch Harbor with Morrill and Peterson. A second destroyer was directed to the lee side of Carlisle where boat crews rescued the remaining men. During this operation the indefatigable Richard Hazard, AVMM3c guided a stretcher party to the crash site and helped carry the badly injured plane captain, Samuel Olsen, down from the peak.

What of the man who triggered these events? Apparently, the emotional stress associated with a plane crash frightened the emergency out of his appendix, at least temporarily. It was not until mid-August that a second attack occurred and a successful surgery done in the naval hospital at Kodiak.

A Dispatch From Commodor Gehres

From June 16 through June 19 the weather became so thick that flight operations were curtailed although some sector patrols were flown and several PBY's found Kiska and dropped bombs.

During this lull our seaplane tenders and forward area commanders received the following dispatch from Commodore Leslie E. Gehres, ComPatWing Four:

"MY WINGS UNBELIEVABLE GOOD FORTUNE TO DATE IN SUCH SMALL
PERSONNEL CASUALTIES CANNOT LAST FOREVER NOW THAT

THE JAP
IS ESTABLISHED X SQUADRONS AND UNITS ALL WIDELY SCATTERED
AND OPERATE SINGLY X REPORTS ARE DAYS LATE SOME NEVER COME
X TO PROVIDE FOR EVENTUALITIES LOSS OF RECORDS ETC COMMANDER
PATROL WING FOUR RECOMMENDS NOW THAT ALL SQUADRON AND TENDER
COMMANDERS AND EVERY PATROL PLANE COMMANDER COMBAT FLYING IN
THIS CAMPAIGN BE AWARDED AT LEAST THE NAVY CROSS FOR EXTRA-
ORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT IN LINE OF PROFESSION HEROISM IN FACE OF
ENEMY UTTER SELFLESSNESS IN SUPPORT OF THE MISSION X EVERY
SECOND PILOT NAVIGATOR PLANE CAPTAIN RADIOMAN BOMBER AND
GUNNER AT LEAST THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS WITH SOME CITATION...." (and so on enumerating members of his staff) ....."IF EVENTS PERMIT X FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE
SUBMITTED BUT IT WILL NEVER BE POSSIBLE TO DO JUSTICE TO ALL
X WHAT WAS EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT LAST WEEK IS TAKEN IN
STRIDE TONIGHT X NO AWARDS WHICH MAY BE MADE WILL BE TOO
GREAT RECOGNITION FOR WHAT THESE OFFICERS AND MEN HAVE DONE
AND I DESIRE TO PLACE THIS IN THE RECORD BEFORE ANY MORE GO
FURTHER WEST THAN KISKA X " Unquote.

The consensus was, "This is the last we will hear of that,"
and this was true.

On June 20th the Casco and Hulbert were at Chernofski, the Williamson at Dutch Harbor and the Gillis was at Cold Bay. Although the weather was still poor full scale search and bombing missions were ordered that day.

A two section flight of seven VP-43 PBY's took off from Chernofski to make a high altitude bombing run on Kiska. Lt.Comdr. Herman Ray led the first section of four planes while Ensign "Bon" Amme led the other group. After takeoff neither section caught

sight of the other during the mission. Midway to the target the planes flew through a cold front then climbed on top of a cloud deck at 3,500 feet. Kiska's now familiar 4,004 foot peak could be seen protruding through the clouds in the distance. Amme's planes climbed to 15,000 feet, the crews donned oxygen masks, and settled into a bombing run. Approaching closer to Kiska they found the target area hidden under a solid overcast. Amme took his section down to 4,000 feet and flew around to draw anti-aircraft fire as a target locator, then dropped bomb loads accordingly.

There was often tense drama connected with routine search patrols because everyone got lost at one time or another. When this occurred after a bombing mission it made for a trying day. This happened to Ensign Emil B. Hanson.

After dropping his bombs, Hanson was returning with Amme's section flying in formation. Enroute, he became separated from the flight and flying a compass course proceeded on his own. Hanson's plane was not equipped with radar. He very nearly hit Unalaska Island, turned away sharply, executing almost a wing-over and lost his bearings. The RDF quit on him. He could see no landfall; only mirages. Summer fog was playing tricks on his eyes and the straining effort to see land had its effect. He did not want to climb into the soup because he knew strong winds might blow him into a mountain so he flew right off the only thing he could see: the water.

He turned north away from the Aleutians into the Bering Sea. Dutch Harbor was able to get a relative bearing from Hanson's radio signal and the weather cleared enough for him to see Mt. Makushin. He set a course for Chernofski. By this time his fuel gauges had been registering zero for an hour. Weather closed about him again and he set the plane down outside the entrance. It began to rain so hard that he taxied almost up to the Casco before the tender could see him and send a recognition signal by blinker light.

Hanson then had to taxi downwind alongside the Hulbert and the plane swung into the wind. He gave full throttle to straighten the PBY out to avoid hitting this tender. One engine, out of gas, coughed and quit. This caused the plane to slew around and one wing tip crunched into the ship's stern. After refueling and mooring his PBY, Hanson and his crew climbed into a crash boat which brought them to Hulbert's side. A pilot standing at the ship's rail

turned to a fellow flyer and remarked, "Hanson will probably need a change of underwear."

He had been lost for five and a half hours, been in the air a total of seventeen and a half, landed with his last drop of gas as it was growing dark, in a rain storm, with a dense fog setting in.

For two days Hanson and his co-pilot NAP McKinley couldn't see correctly. They could not shift their eyes without experiencing stabbing, shooting eye pain. Their eyes had become stressed from trying to send out their own private radio direction beams.

Our seaplane tenders continued their hop-scotch routines with Hulbert the lone tender at Chernofski on Monday,June 22. A fierce occluded front roared through Chernofski that evening. Co-pilots and plane captains were ordered to stay aboard their moored PBY's for the night in case the planes broke loose. Hulbert got underway to clear the long narrow bay and reach open sea because it was feared she might break or drag her anchors.

Blue is usually associated with Mondays but it was the first sea duty for most of the pilots and plane crews and almost to the man they got thoroughly sea-sick. I'm certain they will always remember June 22, 1942 as green Monday.

After the frontal passage, (FROPA, in weather parlance), the weather improved enough by morning to send a few planes out on search patrols and several others to wake the Japs up on Kiska. One of those sent out that day was LT(jg) Milton C. Dahl who ran into zero-zero conditions without radar and had to return.

Dahl's plane was equipped with radar but it wasn't working. Things were going wrong with our PBY's daily, and sadly, there was a shortage of spare parts. Patsu units were working around the clock in making bale-wire repairs as best they could.

The pounding our PBY's were taking on rough water takeoffs, landings, and in the air, especially over Kiska, was taking its toll. Mechanical breakdowns were adding to the usual daily hazards and they caused many close calls.

A subtle change had also taken place by then among the pilots of VP-43, our newest squadron. They had lost their initial enthusiasm and were decidedly more cautious in both their regular flying and bombing attacks.

Crew of Submarine USS S-27 Rescued From Amchitka

Island

On June 24, 1942, LT(jg) Julius P. Raven of VP-41 discovered the S-27 impaled and abandoned on one of Amchitka's many reefs. Further searching located the crew holed up in the old Russian Orthodox church of the deserted native village at Constantine Harbor.

None of the six S-boats of Captain Oswald Colclough's North Pacific Submarine Division were equipped with radar. It was not surprising that with S-27 he lost sixteen percent of his fleet. What was surprising was that it hadn't happened sooner.

Under command of Lieutenant Herbert L. Jukes, S-27 left Dutch Harbor toward the middle of June 1942 on a war patrol to the westward. Part of his orders specified that he scout the island of Amchitka to determine if the Japanese had occupied it.

Jukes arrived off Amchitka late in the afternoon of June 19. He surfaced to charge batteries and scout the coast. In dense fog late that night S-27 struck a reef. Heavy seas slammed the boat farther onto the rocks and she rolled over on her side. Flooding sea water reached her batteries and deadly chlorine gas began to fill the boat.

Her crew succeeded in inflating rubber rafts. In inky blackness they also placed in the rafts a supply of food, small arms and ammunition, and escaped the doomed vessel. Upon reaching shore the crew hiked to the abandoned village on the south end of the island where they barricaded themselves in the church to await either rescue or the Japanese. S-27 had run aground only seventy miles from Kiska.

Our submarine base at Dutch Harbor did not know of their plight because it had not been possible for Jukes to send a radio signal after striking the reef. S-27 had been unreported for a week and feared lost when Raven found the hull on the reef.

The castaways had been marooned for six days when Raven landed his PBY on Constantine Harbor. Raven's plane could accomodate only thirteen men under the prevailing takeoff conditions. Next day, three VP-43 PBY's piloted by Jacobson, Johnston, and George landed in rough water and rescued the remaining men.

While this operation was taking place on Amchitka, three other PBY's bombed Kiska to keep the Japanese occupied to prevent interference in the rescue.

S-27 was lost but her entire crew saved. On

patrols I flew over the hulk of this submarine several times until a storm ripped her loose and she plunged to a final resting place.

Ensign Jack Litsey Gets Shot Up Again

June 25, 1942, was an especially busy day for our PBY's. In addition to regular search patrols, bombing Kiska, and rescuing the remaining crew members of S-27, it was also the day that Ensign Jack Litsey of VP-41 used up another one of his nine lives. Zeros had almost got him when they strafed his PBY on the water during the initial attack on Dutch Harbor and he'd survived a number of Kiska bombing missions.

Litsey had taken off on June 25th on a weather/photographic mission to Attu. Aboard his PBY was Photographer's Mate, Gates.

A Japanese cruiser was observed near Holtz Bay, Attu. Litsey's PBY was not equipped with the proper kind of bombs to attack a ship so he decided to photograph the cruiser instead. Maneuvering in and out of clouds he started to work his way in closer for a better angle. As he approached the ship an enemy plane dropped out of the clouds behind him. This plane was believed to be the familiar, slow scout-observation Type 97 Nakajima "Pete", no great threat.

The "scout" plane did not act aggressive and was staying at a safe distance while flying a parallel course. Litsey went about the photographic mission while keeping the enemy aircraft in sight.

This supposedly slow scout plane turned out to be a new type, single float, single seat, fast, deadly fighter. Its pilot suddenly kicked in the after-burners and coming in from the starboard made a lightning fast attack. He was not only a fine flyer but an excellent marksman. Litsey's starboard blister gunner was killed in the attack and the gun destroyed.

With equal swiftness and accuracy the enemy pilot shifted to the other side where his next attack wounded the port blister gunner and damaged this gun. Photographer's mate, Gates, who was attempting to photograph this surprising new plane, was also hit. Gunfire shattered his camera and a bullet lodged near his spine paralyzing him from the waist down.

The float fighter continued the attack with a head-on assault that shattered the plexi-glass nose blister and bombardier's compartment. This man wasn't

killed because he'd hurried aft to help the wounded men.

Litsey gained cloud cover and escaped further attacks but his plane was a shambles. He radioed for an ambulance and a flight surgeon with blood plasma to meet him at the Dutch Harbor seaplane ramp.

Wing Commander Gehres happened to be at Dutch Harbor and he met Litsey's plane upon its safe arrival. Ground crew personnel removed the dead gunner and the wounded men were rushed to the hospital.

Gehres viewed the carnage, the shot up PBY, eyed Litsey, and the other shaken crew members and said, "You men need a drink. Come to my quarters and I'll fix you up."

"Excuse me, sir," suggested Litsey, "but there's a pint of whiskey in the medicinal kit on the plane."

"My God!," exclaimed Gehres, "haven't you given them that already?"

"No, sir," replied the imperturbable Litsey, "We're supposed to save that for an emergency."

A Dispatch From General Simon Bolivar Buckner

Because of zero-zero conditions during the days and nights of June 26 and 27, there were few flights. I was on the Casco at Chernofski and everyone caught up on badly needed rest. The ship received the following message from General Buckner, Alaska Defense Command. A copy was posted on the bulletin board. It read:

"IN OUR JOINT EFFORT TO DESTROY THE ENEMY IT IS A .IVILEGE
TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH MEN AS THE PILOTS AND CREWS OF OUR
AIR SEARCH COMMAND TO WHOM I DESIRE TO CONVEY MY EXPRESSION
OF HIGHEST ADMIRATION X DURING THE PRESENT ALASKAN ENGAGEMENT
THEY SHOWED INDOMITABLE FORTITUDE AND HEROIC COURAGE EVEN
WHILE USING INFERIOR PLANES AND WHILE HAVING EVERY REASON TO
BELIEVE THAT THEY WOULD BE SHOT DOWN WHEN ENEMY WAS FOUND

THEY PERSISTENTLY HUNTED HIM OUT UNDER THE MOST ADVERSE
CONDITIONS XX"

The thought behind the dispatch was appreciated as was the post mortem shading for the men already lost. But it was disturbing because we were still seeking out the enemy, in the same lousy weather, in the same "inferior planes" which were getting more beat up by the minute. It seemed that everyone wanted to wish us well before it was too late.

It is not generally known but the possibility of another decisive carrier-air battle that might have taken place had dissolved on June 11, 1942.

Admiral Spruance with the two remaining U.S. Pacific Fleet carriers, Hornet and Enterprise, plus six cruisers and ten destroyers had been sent to the Aleutians on June 8, 1942 by Admiral Nimitz. This force was halfway there when it became known that the Japanese had occupied Kiska and Attu. Nimitz had recalled Spruance's task force. He did not want to risk his only carriers against the combination of enemy aircraft flying from both carriers and land bases.

Dutch Harbor attackers, Ryujo and Junyo, accompanied by carrier Zuiho were still lurking in the fog several hundred miles south of Kiska and Attu.

When we began to bomb the Japanese on Kiska, the enemy had
plans to ambush our shuttling planes at a midpoint using their carrier based Zeros. These plans had been cancelled because the Japanese considered weather conditions too poor.

These three carriers returned to Ominato, Japan for refueling and replenishing during the period of June 22 to June 29. Zuikaku, a large, first line carrier with a new air group aboard joined the other three.

Zuikaku had lost her air group during the Battle of Coral Sea. Along with carrier Shokaku, which was badly damaged during the same battle, Zuikaku had been scheduled to be part of Admiral Nagumo's striking force at the Battle of Midway. We can only guess what the outcome might have been had these two carriers been available as planned.

Ryujo, Junyo, Zuiho, and Zuikaku sortied from Ominato on a return dash to the Aleutians. For several weeks these four carriers operated primarily in the

area south of Kiska and Attu. During a short period they moved north into the Bering Sea. A PBY made radar contact with a large enemy surface force in the Bering Sea northwest of Kiska at the time the enemy carrier fleet was in that area.

These four enemy carriers represented the most powerful striking force in the Pacific at this time. This gives some indication of Japan's strength at that stage despite her great defeat and the loss of four carriers at Midway. Even in the eleventh hour, Yamamoto might have succeeded in eliminating our two remaining carriers had not Nimitz recalled them to Hawaiian waters.

Neither the U.S. nor Japan relished the thought of conducting full scale carrier operations in the dense, summer fogs of the Aleutians. When the Japanese could find no evidence of a U.S. carrier task force in the Aleutians, they retired to Japan.

The truth about the calamity that had befallen the Empire at the Battle of Midway was kept secret from the Japanese people until the war's end. In addition to a strict censorship imposed upon the men who had taken part, a wholesale shuffling and redeployment of Japanese naval vessels and personnel took place to aid in the cover-up. An engagement with the enemy at Midway was mentioned but it was treated as a minor skirmish. In contrast, there was a great amount of propagandized coverage by the Japanese press and on radio which extolled the great success Emperor Hirohito's Imperial Forces had achieved in the Aleutians. The wisdom of Admiral Hosagaya's insight and the decision of Admiral Yamamoto to proceed with the invasion and capture of the western Aleutians was vindicated.

For propaganda and morale purposes the U.S. treated the Midway-Aleutian Battle in opposite fashion. Our resounding success at Midway was emphasized and after the initial disclosure, the capture of U.S. soil by the Japanese was rarely mentioned. In order to maintain this policy a strict censorship was clamped on all Alaskan operations.

Two "Routine" Patrols

At 2100 hours on June 28, 1942, Ensign Amme took off from the
Casco and Chernofski Bay on an interesting overnight search. When it became too dark to see, he climbed on

top to continue his patrol by radar. Upon returning from the Bering Sea sector the following morning the navigator confessed he was lost. Strong southerly winds aloft had set them back over one hundred miles short of their dead-reckoning position. Amme headed southeast for about sixty-five miles and finally picked up mountain peaks some seventy miles away. He began to look for a hole in the overcast through which to let down.

A small one was found but as he spiraled down the break closed in which forced him to fly on instruments. The altimeter setting could not be checked during the night flying on top and Amme leveled off at an indicated 300 feet.

"I'm glad you decided to level off at this altitude," said
his co-pilot, "because I can see water 75 feet below us."

Altimeters were reset and Amme dropped down to 50 feet. In
thick soup they continued on at that altitude for half an hour.

Dutch Harbor radio reported that Chernofski was currently socked in solid and directed them to try for Dutch Harbor. A few minutes later Dutch Harbor came on the air again and advised Amme not to attempt a landing because present conditions there were zero-zero. Ceiling and visibility, however, had improved at Chernofski. Navigating by radar only, they found Akutan Pass and started through from north to south. There was an indication of land on all sides except dead ahead so they continued on. Nothing could be seen except on the radar screen. South of the islands they broke into clearer weather. Amme set a course 215 degrees magnetic to follow along the south coast of Unalaska Island and headed for Umnak Pass.

He sent in his ETA but ran into zero-zero conditions halfway through Umnak Pass and turned around to head out again. A two hundred foot cliff loomed ahead and Amme pulled back on the Yoke and just barely stalled it over the top. Both gyro horizons had tumbled and he gave the engines all the power they would take and climbed through the soup. When he broke out on top there were mountains all around.

Amme headed south again, established his bearings, let back down and started in for one more attempt. If he couldn't get through this time he planned to set the PBY down in the pass and taxi into

a sheltered bay to wait out the fog. At 80 knots with wing tip floats down he started in again. When fog cut him off he set the plane down and taxied until an anchorage was found. By then it was 0800 on Monday June 29. The crew took a nap. At 1100, the men awoke to find that the wind had changed, the anchor had broken loose, and the PBY was drifting onto the rocks. One wing tip float received slight damage before the engines could be fired up and the plane taxied out of danger.

The fog was lifting so Amme continued out of the small cove. In Umnak Pass he met a cruising destroyer which gave him an exact position. He discovered that he'd become so turned around in the fog that he had been taxiing in the wrong direction. The wind shift rapidly cleared the fog out of Umnak Pass and Amme took off and returned safely to Chernofski to complete one more "routine" search patrol.

Around the first of July I had a somewhat similiar experience on a southwesterly flight out of Dutch Harbor. Our search began on top of fog and solid overcast. Four hours outbound our radar quit and we'd gone underneath, in and out of dense fog, on top again above a lower broken cloud deck, and finally underneath again halfway on the homeward leg.

Upon nearing the Aleutians we ran into socked in conditions. In an attempt to establish our bearings the AP1c first pilot climbed on top.[1] We were above an endless, unbroken sea of soup higher than the peaks. Not even towering Mt. Makushin could be seen. We could ill afford to overfly the Aleutians and end up north in the Bering Sea. Our pilot had no choice but to let back down on instruments to deck level. The sea, fifty feet below, was plainly visible but our wing tips, an equal distance away, were fuzzy to the eye. With wing tip floats down and flying just above stall speed we continued on for about twenty minutes.

Our navigator had to play "chicken" with himself. He double- checked his dead-reckoning calculations but this did not eliminate some nagging doubts. Unable to stand the strain any longer he suggested to the pilot that it was time to land on the open sea before we flew headlong into a cliff. Luckily, sea conditions were favorable. The pilot made a perfect power-stall landing, (chop-flop), in long ocean swells and began taxiing northeast. Land should not be far away provided we were still in the Pacific and not the Bering Sea.

Two hours later a wild, rocky shore was sighted with surf crashing against steep cliffs. That such a bleak scene was viewed with great relief gives some indication of our situation. All such shores look much alike in the Aleutians especially in restricted visibility. A decision was made to taxi eastward in the belief we had made landfall on the southeast coast of Unalaska west of Akutan Pass. Several hours of taxiing brought us to a point where the irregular shoreline turned northward into what appeared to be the more sheltered waters of a deep bay.

Darkness was only a few hours away so we continued on in. There was security here, we thought, for taxiing about in the fog near passes is risky business. Waters in all Aleutian passes can be relatively calm one moment then become Maelstroms the next. Tide rips and fierce currents at these meeting places between the Bering Sea and Pacific throw up gigantic, opposed, confused seas which are no place for even a small ship.

Visibility increased and it became obvious that we were either taxiing a narrow strait or had entered a long fiord. Our navigator determined that the only place on his chart that fit our surroundings was Udalga Strait which separates Unalaska from Sedanka Island. If this observation were correct, then we should soon find ourselves in sheltered Beaver Inlet. This proved to be so, for after missing a number of rocks and reefs and taxiing for an additional five miles, we entered Beaver Inlet from the south.

In truth, our navigator had done a good job. He'd made landfall within a few minutes and a few miles of his prediction. It was only a radar malfunction, heavy radio static, and Aleutian weather that had caused our problem.

Darkness came on like a suddenly drawn curtain, so we
anchored in a small cove where we spent the next five hours. Several hours after daylight the ceiling and visibility improved enough for safe takeoff and flying conditions. Fifteen minutes later our PBY landed at Dutch Harbor.

Our crew had been in the plane for twenty-seven and one half hours, only fifteen and a half of which were in the air. Of the remaining twelve, over half had been spent taxiing. My weather observations of the previous day were of far less value by then.

Aside from being a bit on the lengthy side this

patrol was considered quite uneventful and logged as "routine". Wintertime and/or a severe storm with attendant winds and rough sea conditions would have changed the outcome. I began to feel deep compassion for the army pilots and aircrews who had to find and land at either Umnak or Cold Bay, or else. If we had been in a land plane this time, and many other instances, we would not have made it. Others could damn and curse our PBY's to their heart's content but it was in the summer fogs of 1942 that I developed a fond affection for our slow, ungainly Yoke-boats and their versatility.

In these ways, the days of the calendar flipped to July 1942.

Weather Duty on Bubbling Bogoslof Island

By July many of the "old" weather personnel at Dutch Harbor had been sent to various outposts to set up and operate weather reporting stations. The powers that be had sent Boyd Omang to shakin', quakin' Bogoslof.

Having flown over Bogoslof on numerous occasions and almost flying into it once, I was surprised to learn that anybody had been deliberately assigned there for duty. One could only assume that whoever made this decision had not personally viewed the rock.

This exceedingly small tip of an extremely active volcanic cone lies in a troubled, trembling state in the Bering Sea about sixty miles west of Dutch Harbor and twenty-five miles off the northeast tip of Umnak.

Bogoslof, (meaning "Hand of God" in Russian), is the mystery island of the Bering Sea and has earned the nickname, "The Disappearing Island." Conflicting reports about Bogoslof have continued since its discovery in 1768 by Russian explorers, Peter Krenitzen and Levashef. In 1778 English Captain James Cook reported sighting an island of Bogoslof's description but it was at a slightly different location. Father John Popov Veniaminov, famed Russian missionary in the Aleutians, claimed in 1796 that it rose shooting flames and smoke from the sea during an earthquake. Some claim that Bogoslof does, indeed, sink beneath the surface from time to time because of volcanic activity. This was my understanding because I'd been told matter-of-factly that Bogoslof had risen from the sea in 1927. At that time, its new position had been noted by members of a Coast and Geodetic

Survey team.

Others, including the U.S. Coast Guard, contend that poor navigation and/or faulty charts are responsible for the island's variously reported positions. Magnetic disturbances of six degrees in the rock's vicinity do not help matters. All agree, however, that Bogoslof periodically changes in shape and size. Sometimes it appears as one island, at other times separated clearly into two.

In the summer of 1942, Bogoslof was temporarily and just barely in one piece. A curving, narrow, wasp-waist strip of lava beach and rock connected two small volcanic land masses which almost encircled a tiny lagoon. The whole island was less than 400 yards long on its NNW-SSE axis and only 20 yards wide at the narrowest point. The northern lobe of rock was the larger of the two and rose to a height of perhaps 250 feet.

In spite of Bogoslof's contortions it was the breeding ground of thousands of seals and sea lions that converge there during late spring. These creatures would now have to share the place with navy aerographer's mates who were a discouragingly long swim from their own home grounds.

Omang was in charge of the five man, weather/radio team that included two radiomen, one whose name was Roberts; a pharmacist's mate, and a cook. Gear for one complete weather/radio unit was loaded aboard a destroyer. In addition, a prefabricated Quonset and a three month's supply of food for five men was hoisted aboard. Civilian workmen went along to do the construction work.

Having arrived at Bogoslof, the destroyer anchored offshore and building materials, crated gear, stores, workmen, and unit personnel went ashore by ship's boat. Barrels of diesel fuel for the power generator were floated in.

A small level area on the larger, northern lobe was selected
for the hut site. It was one of the few suitable locations above high water, storm mark. The hut would serve as weather/radio shack, sleeping quarters, cook shack, mess, and reading/ recreation room. A shed for the generator was constructed, the power plant set in place, and wiring installed.

With the completion of this construction work the civilians were taken back to the ship and the destroyer prepared to depart. A twenty-six foot,

motorized whaleboat, fully provisioned for a sea voyage, was left with the five marooned men just in case the volcanic rock erupted or sank.

What kind of weather duty was Bogoslof? It is a multiple choice question and excellent, good, and fair, do not appear on the list.

Five men standing lookout and weather/radio watches twenty-four hours a day, plus trying to sleep, cook and eat all in the same cramped space is not the recipe for cheerfulness. When the hut and the very rock upon which it stands constantly rumbles, trembles, shakes, creaks, and groans, it is a frightening experience--, even in daylight.

To add to the men's misery, all fresh water for drinking and cooking had to be gleaned from whatever ran off the roof and accumulatd in a barrel. Sulphurous waters of a small bubbling pool on the rock were hot enough to boil an egg. Unfortunately, the men had no fresh eggs.

Thousands of sea lions were not only a noisy lot but the hundreds of huge bulls a definite menace when the men stepped outside. It was mating season and bull sea lions can be extremely aggressive. They can also move surprisingly fast on land even though they appear clumsy and weigh over a ton.

To prove the theory that no matter how bad things seem they can always get worse, about a week after the men arrived on their tour, dozens of exploding heavy bombs fell on Bogoslof.

A flight of high flying B-17's mistook Bogoslof for an enemy ship and loosed their bomb loads. To these recently arrived "Wild Blue Yonder" boys of the U.S.A.A.F the waves crashing against the
northern shore of Bogoslof appeared to be white bow foam created by a speeding ship. Bombs killed a great number of sea lions but none of the five men were injured or their hut damaged. Afterward, Omang's greatest fear was that the explosions might trigger a volcanic eruption.

The B-17 flight leader reported they had heavily damaged a
Japanese cruiser.

At the Dutch Harbor weather office we received the following
urgent message from Omang which he sent in the clear:

XX PLEASE HAVE THE ARMY CEASE AND DESIST USING BOGOSLOF FOR

TARGET PRACTICE XX

The 11th Air Force took little heed of Omang's plea for Bogoslof was bombed on two later occasions by single, army heavy bombers.

After Omang returned to Dutch Harbor and made chief he had occasion to confront a Lieutenant Colonel who had participated in one of these raids on Bogoslof. The airfield was in operation by then and this colonel came into the office for his weather clearance. A weatherman at the counter was filling in the data on the colonel's flight form and Bogoslof was mentioned in the conversation. The colonel started to brag that he'd bombed hell out of the rock once. Omang heard this, jumped up from behind his desk, ran across the room, and stuck his face into the colonel's.

"Listen dude," said Omang, "I was on that rock when you were playing your silly goddamn games. You ought to have your bombs shoved up your ass crossways so it irritates!"

The "bird colonel" was taken aback and embarrassed more than anything. Probably, he wasn't certain of Omang's rank. He said nothing, grabbed his flight form, turned on his heel and stalked out of the weather office.

A tour on Bogoslof extended three months and not everyone hung onto his marbles for the full ninety days. Near the end of Omang's stint, the cook cracked and temporarily ran amuck. With a meat cleaver, he chased the other four men around the rock, at night, during a storm. Before anyone was injured he was overpowered and kept in restraint for several days until the group was relieved.

Omang's relief crew included Forrest E. Medaris, AerM2c, who had previously been on isolated duty on Kanaga, and John K. "two-bar" Fogg, AerM3c. Medaris was in charge of this second unit.

One document has been preserved that furnishes us with a true flavor of the desolate duty on Bogoslof. Omang received the following letter from Medaris.

" 6 October 1942

Dearest Omang:

Omang I have the sour ass. Jones has the sour ass. The cook has the sour ass. The radiomen are

too ignorant or they would have the sour ass. Fogg is too young to have the sour ass but he is coming around to it. There have been rumors going around that you have been putting out information to the effect that Bogoslof is a good place to be. The devil has also been advertising the advantage of his realm.

Perhaps I have put in too much time in Alaska to appreciate
the benefits of this lovely little isle of dreams (nightmares).

After several excursions around our lovely little island I feel that we are sitting on a cracker box that is liable to explode at the least excuse. Did you know that the whole beach is a veritable hot box? From three to four feet under the surface of the beach the sand and rocks are so hot it is practically impossible to stand in the sand due to the heat. At the edge of our little lake one foot under the surface of the sand is enough to find water too hot to hold your hand in. Did you know those things? I hope this thing holds together while I am here.

I don't imagine it was so bad while you were here there was considerable work to done and you could keep busy most of the time. Now that there is little or nothing to do it gets mighty tiresome. It is heaven now though to what it will be this winter when we can't get out. If I have to stay here any longer than three months I believe they will have to take me off in a straight jacket.

What I am really writing to you for is to find out how you came out with your subsistance. I don't see how we can possibly divide this up evenly when there are new people coming in and going out of here so spasmodically. If everyone started his (term) at the same time it wouldn't be so hard but the way it is I don't see how it can possibly be kept straight. How's to tell me how they figure on working it. I don't know whether we are supposed to keep on taking inventories all the time or not. You might ask them to send us a radiogram about it. Mr. Mull was here for such a short time the last time that I had little chance to talk to him. The water situation is also acute. It looks to me, to do it right would be to build a separate building for distilling the water. If it were built down by the lake there would be much less work to carrying the water, and since the water is already hot down there it would take much less fuel. It would also get the steam and smell out of the

room in which we live. That seems to me to be a much better arrangement. The rain water is absolutely putrid, what with the taste of paint from the barrels, drinking around the spiders, flies, dirt and gull droppings.

When I have spent three months out here I believe I will have had more isolated duty than anyone else in the Aleutians. What is the attitude toward requests for leave? If it is at all possible I am going to have leave when I get back. I am going to need it. Mr. McQuarrie about half promised me leave at the end of three months here. I certainly hope he meant it. Nine months isolated duty out of a year in Alaska is about enough if you ask me. Dammit, I have to have someone to pull for me, I certainly can't work on it myself from here.

You go right ahead and talk this place up to the fellows in there. The more who would like to come out here the better, they can certainly have my part of it. I thought I would be able to get some studying done out here. Lord knows how many times I have picked up a book to study but it seems impossible for me to put my mind to it. It seems that all I can think of is, "Will I get leave when I get back in?" It seems that is the way isolated duty effects one, especially one who has had as much of it as I have had.

It seems that we have some 'wits' among the zoomies. The other day when they came over they dropped a couple rolls of toilet paper. Or perhaps, it was one of the boys there who are taking aerological hops? Speaking of PBYs it isn't only when the planes come over that we hear their drone. I think you know what I mean.

There is a continual song of woe around here. It swells up
for awhile then it dies down only to well up again.

Well Omang from today I have a month and fourteen days yet to spend in exile, I hope. That is the end of my three months anyway. I believe this is the first time in my life that I have counted the days.

I guess I have sung the blues about long enough. How's to give me the word on the deal around there, such as leave, relief, subsistance etc
In Exile

Medaris "

I don't know whether or not the Aleutian term "rock happy" was coined by navy weathermen as a direct

result of duty on Bogoslof but it was surely the ultimate place for one to acquire, "Aleutian stare".

Weather Duty at Nikolski, Umnak Island

Aerographer's mates Robert D. Darden, L.R. Upton, and A.B. Hultman were sent to Nikolski in mid July 1942. Duty at Nikolski was in sharp contrast to life on Bogoslof and was considered choice by comparison.

Nikolski is a small native village on Nikolski Bay located on the Bering Sea side on the western end of 70 mile long Umnak Island. Umnak's westernmost tip is only six miles from the village. It is about four miles from the village across to the southern shore of Umnak which fronts on the Pacific. To the west of the village, across Samalga Pass and some thirty-five miles away lay the rugged Islands of Four Mountains, visible on a good day. Perpetually snow covered Mt. Vsevidof rose to 7,100 feet of majestic splendor a scant twelve miles to the northeast of the village.

Along with a herd of reindeer which had been introduced years earlier the island was also the grazing home of 15,000 sheep. These were owned by the Aleutian Livestock Company headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah.

At the time of the enemy attacks on Dutch Harbor there were
seventy-two Aleuts living at Nikolski along with three Caucasians: Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Winfield and Mr. Stacy Nastasios.
Barbara Winfield was the school teacher and Sam ran the store. Both were employed by the B.I.A.. Sam Winfield also handled the
radio and took and transmitted weather reports. Stacy Nastasiou was a shepherd employed by the livestock company.

With the exception of Sam Winfield, the people at Nikolski were evacuated by two motorized army personnel barges on July 15. This took place so hurriedly that the villagers were allowed to take with them only a few personal belongings. The barges took them to Chernofski where they were transferred to the Alaska Steamship Co. vessel S.S. Columbia for transportation to a tent camp in Wrangel in southeastern Alaska. Later they were barged to an abandoned C.C.C. camp at Ward's Lake near Ketchikan.

Darden, Upton, and Hultman, along with a half Mexican-half

Jewish cook named Levy went aboard the U.S.C.G. cutter Nemaha at
Dutch Harbor for transporation to Nikolski. Enroute, the Nemaha stopped at Bogoslof to off-load additional supplies for Omang and his group. Upton went ashore with the supplies for a brief visit with Omang. Their beach conversation was carried on at almost shouting level in order to be heard above the continual, roaring bellow of thousands of sea lions.

Nemaha arrived at Nikolski the day after the village was evacuated. Darden, Upton, Hultman and Levy were put ashore with meager supplies. Sufficient weather instruments and an old civilian radio were already in use there. A small stock of food staples such as flour, coffee and potatoes were unloaded along with the men's clothing bags, personal gear, two Springfield 30.06 rifles, two .45 calibre Thompson sub-machine guns, a
shotgun, and lots of ammunition.

Samuel Winfield was anxious to get away. After showing the new men the location of the weather instruments and checking them out on the operation of the antiquated radio transmitter and receiver, he wished them luck and clambered aboard the Nemaha. Within an hour and a half of its arrival, the ship steamed out of Nikolski Bay.

The newcomers looked about them at the deserted village. There were about twenty wood frame native houses, a well stocked store, a Russian Orthodox church, and a large schoolhouse. On a small hill, about a half mile from the village, stood the fine house of sheepherder Nastasious, and a barn and corral.

In addition to class rooms, the school had a manual training shop complete with tools and supplies, a small, well stocked sick bay, and the Winfield's living quarters. This apartment included a kitchen, living room, three bedrooms, a bathtub but no running water. There was a well but the pump was on the front porch. The four men would live in this spacious, well furnished building.

All of the buildings in the village were fairly modern, well constructed, and reasonably well kept but none contained plumbing. Although the three weathermen and Levy had the slight inconvenience of having to pump and carry their water it was pure and abundant. This was a far cry from the fly-specked rain barrel system on Bogoslof only seventy-six miles away.

In addition to two abandoned dogs, wild, flighty livestock was running loose. There were 15 to 20 cows, about 20 horses, three dozen chickens, and the sheep. The sheep, cows and horses usually remained well away from the schoolhouse.

There were also four rowboats, one 14 foot center-board sailboat in need of repairs, and several native baidarkas. One of these Aleut kayaks was a two-seater.

Weather/radio/lookout watches were set and the four men settled into their comfortable quarters. Even by Dutch Harbor standards their surroundings and living conditions were plush. Nevertheless, the village was isolated and there were no shore based U.S. forces to the west--only Japanese.

With the exception of three horses, all were exceedingly wild. One of the tamer ones was a mare in foal. A hay wagon was found along with horse collars and harnesses. Swede Hultman, a former farm boy, was the only one familiar with the ways of animals and knew how to properly harness horses.

Swede occasionally harnessed the other two gentler horses and hitched them to the hay wagon which was used for light hauling. Hultman always drove the team.

Hultman, with everyone's help, rounded up and stanchioned the milking cows that had some bag. Unfortunately, they had not been milked in some time and had consequently gone dry. This was a bitter disappointment because the men had envisioned quaffing cold glasses of fresh milk, something they hadn't tasted since leaving the states.

Fresh eggs, another dreamed of food, became a reality. The flock was mostly roosters but the hens laid three or four eggs a day. First up in the morning got the eggs. During the three months on Nikolski, Darden and Levy seldom, if ever, enjoyed a fresh egg.

One of the two dogs left behind was a friendly fox terrier that lived in the house. The other was a shepherd or collie type. Although he was fed regularly, no crew member was ever able to gain his confidence enough to so much as touch him. He would come onto the porch and eat but only after the feeder went back inside.

The three aerographer's mates were only required to take and transmit four synoptic weather observations a day so they had little to do and a great deal of spare time. They busied themselves

caring for the livestock, reading, hiking, exploring their end of Umnak, fishing, hunting, and boating.

Upton and Hultman patched the fourteen foot sailboat. A search turned up a suitable mast and boom. A sail was rigged and many enjoyable hours were spent sailing about the bay. Upton and Hultman, the only two who engaged in this and other adventurous pursuits, sailed the bay only when Aleutian weather gave its permission. If the bay was too rough they harnessed the horses, loaded the boat on the hay wagon, and hauled it to the large lake a short distance to the southwest of the village.

Upton and Hultman also went boating in the double kayak. They found this a very tough craft to master and flipped over repeatedly. After many cold dunkings they fashioned an outrigger to give the vessel more stability. With this new set-up they ventured far out into the bay. At other times they explored along the bay's extensive shoreline.

About a week after settling in at Nikolski, the men were thrown into an alert by an unidentified float plane that flew suspiciously around the village several times. They grabbed rifles and Thompsons and prepared for the worst. The aircraft, circling ever lower, could not be identified because of the cloud cover. Tension mounted as trigger fingers grew itchy. All four men had undergone the two days' bombing and strafing of Dutch Harbor and they steeled themselves for another attack. This time it was only one plane and a slow one; not a deadly Zero. If it came much lower and closer they felt they had a chance of shooting it down.

Suddenly, the plane dropped down out of sight and apparently landed on the large lake southwest of the village. The men ran toward the lake and up a hill to gain a view. Their intent was to capture or kill a Japanese pilot and, hopefully, capture his plane intact. With nerves tingling with excitement they crawled the last few yards on their bellies and peered over the top. Fortunately nobody cut loose at the plane for it was a catapult type carried on our cruisers and battleships.

Alone in the two-place aircraft, the pilot taxied to the shoreline and the four men went down to the lake to greet him and help secure his plane.

The pilot was overjoyed to be safely down on an American
occupied island. He had become hopelessly lost and

almost out of gasoline while trying to find his cruiser. He was taken to the schoolhouse and fed.

The following morning, Swede Hultman hitched the horses to the wagon. Two fifty-five gallon drums of white gasoline stored at the sheepherder's house were wrestled into the wagon for the trip to the lake.

None present knew whether the plane's engine would run well enough or deliver sufficient power for takeoff but it was worth the try because this was the only fuel available except diesel. One hundred gallons were laboriously transferred into the SOC's* fuel tank and the engine ticked over fine. The pilot taxied around and made several simulated takeoff runs to insure that he had ample power. Satisfied, and with his orientation all corrected, he took off for Dutch Harbor.

He refueled there and learned the whereabouts of his cruiser. Before he took off he picked up the mail for Nikolski plus treats of candy bars, gum, and tobacco. On the return flight to his cruiser he landed once again on Nikolski's lake to drop these items off as a gesture of thanks and appreciation.

Nikolski had been added to the new, separate, small navy weather network centered at Dutch Harbor. Dutch'es designated call letters were NGT. Bogoslof was NGT-13 and Nikolski NGT-8. Sanak Island and Sand Point in the Shumagins were also part of

* Scout Observation manufactured by Curtiss Aircraft Corp. A single float, two place biplane which closely resembled the Japanese Nakajima Type 97 "Pete".

this satellite network.

After about two weeks, NGT-8 had been heard from only on rare occasions so the navy sent out two radiomen and a brand new transmitter and receiver.

One of the radiomen was Chief Heruf, the other, a radioman second class whose name is now lost in the past. This man was at Nikolski less than two weeks. Within a few days of his arrival he decided to go on a bareback canter on one of the two horse that pulled the hay wagon. Because the horse was not used to a rider and a stranger at that, he bolted. Horse and rider took off at a gallop, charging under a clothesline. This tight-lined the radioman off and the fall broke his shoulder.

A radio message was sent to Dutch Harbor requesting immediate evacuation for the injured man. Nine days later a PBY landed and the radioman was

flown to the hospital at Dutch Harbor. No replacement was sent.

Late in July the mare that was about to foal had been running with the wild horses for a week. A storm blew in from the west accompanied by high winds and heavy rain. Swede became concerned about the mare and he and Upton went searching for her. They found her about a mile from the barn and she had foaled. The newborn had fallen into an icy stream and only the foal's head was above water. The mare would not allow Swede and Upton to approach the foal so they tied her.

The rescued foal was so weak and cold it had to be held up to nurse while the frantic mare tried to bite and kick the two men. Having nursed, it gained enough strength to stand spraddle-legged by itself. They led the pair toward the barn, stopping several times to allow the colt to nurse and rest.

Once in the barn, some old rags were found and the foal was rubbed down until it was warm and dry then covered with a blanket. For some strange reason, the mare then turned and urinated all over the colt. Upton and Swede never figured out whether this was meant as some form of medicine, a tonic, or because the foal had been handled by humans. They tied the mare again and fed her while they dried off the foal again. The foal remained healthy. As it grew it adopted Upton and Hultman and followed them around like a pet dog.

Early in August, at Swede's urgings, the men rounded up and corraled all of the horses for hoof trimming. They were so wild that the operation was soon abandoned after several horses kicked hell out of several men. They were turned loose to roam free with their FuManChu style, long, curved up toe nails.

Although the men were enjoying comparative paradise duty for the Aleutians, they were in a dangerous, isolated position and therefore could not relax completely. They had no idea what the military situation was in the area. They realized they were beyond help if the enemy should choose to make a move at that far removed corner of Umnak Island.

This state led to several scary incidents. Upton went out to take a night observation and take readings from the thermoscreen instruments. He got the shock of his life. In the foggy darkness he became conscious of someone's breathing coming closer and closer behind him. He froze. All he had with him was the small flashlight in his hand. Fighting off panic, he waited

until the breathing was close to his neck. Then he panicked. Exploding into motion he ducked, leaped aside, whirled and turned the flashlight beam full in the face of the mare.

Another back-chilling incident occurred on a stormy night when Swede Hultman was on weather/radio watch. The others were sound asleep when Hultman roused them with the whispered warning, Someone's out on the front porch.

Quickly and quietly the men dressed, armed themselves and planned their attack. Hultman and Upton would burst out the front door as Darden, Levy and Heruf rounded opposite sides of the house after slipping out the back door. As these plans were being discussed in whispered tones, they all felt vibrations in the floor as a person or persons unknown moved about on the porch. The five men took their positions. At the shout of, "NOW!", the front door was thrust open, men sprang from around corners of the house, and flashlights were turned on. The large sheepdog was shaking water off himself. Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

Fresh caught trout, salmon, and an occasional duck dinner supplemented the unit's diet. For additional variety in their menu, they began considering the domestic flock, composed mostly of roosters. One rooster in particular had exceptionally large, long legs. From the start, Darden, who was in charge of the unit, had claimed this standout as his personal pet. Accordingly, this rooster's head, along with the few precious laying hens, was spared from the chopping block.

Once a week the men caught and butchered a couple of roosters. Levy cooked these to a turn and the crew feasted. After this had been going on for six weeks or so, Levy asked Upton and Hultman to catch a couple for supper.

The roosters, not stupid, were getting smarter and harder to grab. The two men kept catching Darden's pet and releasing him. They finally caught another rooster, took care of it, then went back for a second bird. After much exertion and a shout from Levy to, "Hurry it up", they could only catch Darden's pet again. They decided, "What the hell," and butchered him, too.

That night the men seated themselves and Levy brought in the steaming, heaped up platter of cut-up chicken which he set down in the middle of the table.

There,--right on top--, were two huge, golden brown drum sticks. Darden took one horrified look and screamed, "You bastards killed my rooster!"

It was about this time that Upton and Hultman seriously considered deserting the others and moving up on the hill and into the sheepherder's house. Nastasiou's home was solidy built, adequately furnished, and well stocked with canned food. The incident over Darden's rooster subsided and the two men did not make the move.

In mid August, Bing Omang paid a surprise visit to Nikolski when he came in on the old 40 foot harbor tug, Point Reyes. Bogoslof's refrigerator/freezer unit had broken down and the tug was enroute to Dutch Harbor to pick up some fresh stores. Omang and Chief Boatswain's Mate, Severs, the tug's skipper, came ashore bearing gifts: a case of spoiled cold storage eggs and a crate of overripe oranges.

The eggs were buried but the oranges were squeezed into a large kettle to which a gallon of aerological 190 proof pure grain alcohol(officially requisitioned to clean weather instruments and thoughtfully shipped only in five gallons cans) was added, a potent punch.

A festive party ensued as the men of Nikolski extolled the virtues of their duty to Omang who by that time had undergone some harrowing experiences on hell-hole Bogoslof. Everyone got thoroughly drunk and neither Omang nor Severs ever wanted to leave idealic Nikolski. After sobering up sometime in the afternoon of the following day, the two visitors left for Dutch Harbor and thence the return of Omang to Bogoslof to finish his tour.

Other than Omang's rotten eggs and oranges, the navy did not bring any additional food supplies to Nikolski. When the stock of staples brought ashore from the Nemaha ran out, the men took flour, coffee and canned food from shelves in the store, the sheepherder's house, and several houses in the village. They had, of course, access to anything that had been left behind. However, the navy aerographer's mates kept a complete inventory of everything they used in order to survive. Other than food items, the native's belonging were not disturbed.

These young navy weathermen showed an uncommon respect, under the circumstances, for the property of the natives. Without warning the people of Nikolski had been uprooted and evacuated with great urgency. In

the ensuing confusion many valuable items of all manner and description had been left behind.

The sailors not only looked after the natives' livestock to the best of their abilities but other than the need of some staples, canned food, 100 gallons of white gas for the SOC, use of the boats, harness and wagon, and the eating of two dozen roosters, they touched little else. This mature, honest attitude and the intelligence to keep a detailed log of items used stood the men in good stead.

In the middle of October 1942, Darden, Upton, Hultman, Levy, and Heruf were taken off Nikolski by seaplane tender Hulbert and returned to Dutch Harbor. When they left, everything was intact and they were the last navy unit to be stationed at Nikolski.

A large detachment of army personnel came in and took over all duties at Nikolski. Some of these army personnel looted the village.

An army officer at Nikolski made a report of the looting and an investigation was conducted by General Simon B. Buckner's headquarters. Aerological officer, LT(jg) Max W. Mull flew to Buckner's Anchorage headquarters in conjunction with this investigation. Mull carried with him statements prepared by the navy weather personnel along with the itemized list of goods consumed.

The U.S. Army Board of Inquiry not only exonerated our navy
men from any wrongdoing but commended them for their conduct.

So ends this previously untold, colorful sidelight to one phase of navy aerographer's mates duty during the Aleutian Campaign of WWII.

Weather Duty at Sand Point, Shumagin Islands

Edward S. "Duck" Hudson, CAerM, William H. Stewart, AerM3c, and Donald N. Livingston, AerM3c, set up the U.S. Naval Weather Station at Sand Point on Popov Island in the Shumagins. Duty here was different from that at either Nikolski or Bogoslof.

Popov, the third largest island in the Shumagins, averages about eight miles in diameter. It is located 85 miles east of Cold Bay, and is separated from the southern shores of the Alaska Peninsula by narrow Unga Pass.

Sand Point had a large, well established salmon

cannery, and a White Russian/navtive village which had been in existence for several hundred years. This village on the north coast was located a short distance from the small U.S. Naval Auxilliary Air Facility(NAAF), dock, and cannery.

Naval administrative offices were in a building on the cannery dock. Nearby were the typical clusters of wooden frame buildings and Quonsets of the naval facility. Commissioned in early 1942, the station had been in operation less than six months.

The naval installation supported three or four single float, scout/observation planes, and a few "Yippee" boats all of which were used for close, in-shore patrols. For a short period in July 1942, several long-ranging PBY's of VP-51 operated out of Sand Point.

In spite of the Japanese capture of Attu and Kiska, Hudson,
Stewart, and Babic were still scheduled to set up a navy weather/radio unit at Nazan Bay, Atka. It was only the subsequent evacuation of this village by the Gillis and Hulbert that changed these plans. Hudson and Stewart were re-routed to Sand Point while Babic remained at Dutch Harbor.

Don Livingston had received temporary duty orders to assist Hudson and Stewart. He arrived at Sand Point on July 1, his having been dropped off by the Hulbert which was enroute to Kodiak. A day later, Hudson and Stewart arrived from Dutch Harbor aboard a merchant marine freighter.

At the dock they met two navy men who were serving in spite of their handicaps, the first being the armed guard who was cross-eyed. At this seaman sentry's side was his dog, Felix.

Felix'es claim to fame was that one could put a small piece of liver on Felix'es nose, count to three, and the dog would flip the liver into the air, catch it and eat it. The sentry insisted that the two newcomers watch Felix do his trick.

After Felix performed, the sentry took the two aerographer's mates in to see the executive officer, a reserve naval lieutenant who was seated at his desk in the office on the dock. This officer stuttered with such gurgling convulsive sounds that his speech was almost unintelligible.

Duck and Stew exchanged quick startled glances that clearly asked, "What in the world kind of place is this?" When the X/O could get the words out he

finally took the two men to see the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Quinlan,USNR.

Quinlan was pleased at the arrival of three weathermen.
Crated aerological gear had been stored in a warehouse for six weeks and he was anxious to get it set up and operating. Unfortunately, at present, there was no suitable office space or room available for a weather station. He assured Hudson that he would commence to round up enough lumber, roofing, a door, some windows so that the SeaBees could build a small weather shack at whatever location Hudson chose. This seemed reasonable enough but Quinlan's next remarks came as a surprise.

"I suggest, Chief," said Quinlan, "that you and your two men
hustle over to the cannery and get jobs."

"I beg your pardon, sir?" answered Hudson, thinking he'd heard incorrectly, and suddenly having some doubts about this third person he'd met since his arrival.

Quinlan explained that the salmon cannery usually imported a lot of Filipinos and others to work there in the summer. Because of the war, the cannery was so short-handed that most of the naval ship's company had been hired and was presently working there on off duty hours.

The three weathermen were hired immediately and given the job of maintaining eight miles of wooden flume that carried water to the cannery from the other side of the island. Stewart's and Livingston's cannery wages exceeded their third class petty officer pay. It was a strange beginning for the aerographer's mates who had been sent there to set up a weather station.

Within a week, SeaBees constructed a 10' X 10' weather shack on a hill above the base. Instruments were unpacked, installed, calibrated, and soon the weather station was in operation as the newest addition to Dutch Harbor's NGT circuit. Between weather watches the men worked at their cannery job.

Hudson was another chief who looked after his men. One of the first things he did upon reporting to a new station was get on good terms with the cook. It was a long time between evening chow and breakfast and because he had men working round the clock he always assured they had plenty to eat. Normally, cooks would prepare sandwiches for those on night watch. The Sand Point cook decided this would be too much bother.

Instead, he supplied Hudson with cured hams and bacon, chubs of baloney, canned vegetables and fruits, bread, mustard etc. Hudson also obtained a couple of pots and a frying pan for cooking using the electric elements of the office coffee brewer.

Navy commissary officers consider their supplies more precious than gold and guard them accordingly. It was against regulations and a court martial offense for Hudson to have such a private hoard of food. He hid the staples in office cupboards. All of the meat was jammed into the thermoscreen where it could be kept reasonably cool.

On the afternoon the weather station went into operation, Hudson happened to step outside and saw the commanding officer reaching for the knob on the thermoscreen door.

"Don't open that door, commander," he almost shouted. "Why not?"

"Because, sir, inside are very delicate instruments that are only to be read on the hour. If you open that door it will throw all the readings off. When Dutch Harbor receives our next weather report they'll know something is wrong and they'll question me. I'll have to tell my captain how it happened."

"Oh, very well, if you insist."

"Would you care to inspect our new office?"

"That's precisely why I climbed all the way up here."

After about five weeks, Hudson received orders to return to Dutch Harbor. A week later the salmon cannery burned down and along with it, poor old Felix, the dog.

It hadn't taken long for the navy personnel to discover the ladies at the village. This caused some problems and repercussions. There was the case of the wheelchair confined young woman who became pregnant. She did not bring charges against the sailor because she freely admitted she had been readily agreeable. She simply wanted to know what the U.S. Navy was going to do about it.

Several times the executive officer called all base personnel together in an attempt to tell the men about the problems they were causing and to propose some possible solutions.
Unfortunately, he stuttered so badly that the message was lost.

One of his solutions was to import a young

religious fellow to straigthen things out. This man, originally from Coffeyville, Kansas, was a U.S. Navy Specialist "A". We called these people, "Tunney-fish" because they had been drafted or volunteered to serve under ex-heavyweight boxing champion, Lieutenant Commander Gene Tunney. Tunney was in charge of the U.S. Navy's WWII recreational program. Many of these people who served under Tunney were celebrities from the entertainment or sports world. Billy Soose, the ex-middleweight champion, for example, set up and conducted boxing tournaments at various bases in Alaska commencing with Kodiak.

The preacher from Kansas decided that the morale of the men at Sand Point was very low and what they needed to make and keep them happy were group activities. He organized a program which included baseball, volley ball, hikes for exercise and nature studies, fishing contests, and indoor get togethers such as sing alongs, bingo, and other parlor games. Little did he know that all the men needed and wanted was plenty of beer, regularly.

After about a year, this man succumbed to alcohol, abandoned
all of his programs, and just sat around happy as a chipmunk.

"To hell with all the games and sing alongs," he'd often say, "Just give me twenty cases of beer and I'll start a recreation center anywhere in the navy."

Although his social reform program at Sand Point was a miserable failure, and the preacher had stopped fighting the men and joined them, he seemed inwardly content. Perhaps this was because the preacher was so well liked by everyone. Stewart believes that this acceptance and friendship by his fellow men outweighed the importance of the preacher's missionary zeal.

Stewart remained at Sand Point for about a year. In the summer of 1943 he received orders to transfer back to Dutch Harbor. Although it is leap-frogging ahead in this story, his stay at Dutch Harbor this time was a fleeting one.

When Stewart walked into the new Dutch Harbor weather office
he was delighted to see J.K. Fogg, his old friend from Seattle.

"Is old skin-head still here?" he asked Fogg, meaning Chief Darr. Equally bald, Chief T.J. Bliss, who had never been one of Stew's favorite people, had come up from Seattle with Fogg and had relieved Darr

in Stewart's absence.

"Yes," replied Fogg, "he's standing right behind you." Bliss, quite naturally, did not think this was the least bit funny. A few days later Stewart was enroute to Adak.

Weather Duty on Sanak Island

Unfortunately, little is known about Kenneth "Shady" Lane's tour of duty on Sanak Island. I never saw Lane again after we were together at Dutch Harbor. Surviving Aleutian "wind-guessors" of that era can add no information except they believe Lane was the first and last navy weatherman stationed there. We can only assume that the duty was somewhat similar to that at Sand Point.

The weather station was located at Pauloff Harbor. There was a small native settlement, a dock, and a small salmon cannery when I flew over the harbor in early 1942 on a patrol out of Kodiak.

Weather Duty on Chirikof Island

Navy weathermen at Kodiak were also busy while war activities were taking place to the west. Kodiak aerographer's mates regularly flew the weather on search patrols from that base. In addition to Kodiak duty there was also a tour of isolated duty on the island of Chirikof that was taken in rotation.

A navy weather/radio range station was installed and commissioned on Chirikof in mid 1942. Joseph A. "Jake" Leahy, AerM1c, USN was designated to be in charge of the unit upon completion of the station.

Chirikof sets isolated approximately one hundred miles southwest of the southern tip of Kodiak. It is about an equal distance to the nearest point on the Alaska Peninsula--and roughly two hundred miles from Chirikof to Popov Island.

First seen by Caucasians during the Vitus Bering Russian expedition of 1741-1742, the island was named in honor of its discoverer, Alexander Chirikof, who commanded the St.Paul, one of Bering's two ships.

Chirikof is about fourteen miles long and eight miles across at its greatest width. The long axis is roughly north-south with the mountainous southern half being the widest, and the highest point an 1,100 foot peak near South Cape.

The northern half is a three-mile-wide, grass

covered plain of rolling hills and level ground cut by numerous shallow canyons. Several small lakes dot this grass covered plain and near the center is a fairly large lake. This plain ends at a gently rounded cape on the north end of the island at which point rather steep, sandy cliffs drop down to the beach. The site selected for the station was at this northern end.

Dangerous rocks and reefs, many of them submerged, ring the island making navigation in the immediate area hazardous.

Either Siems-Drake or Morrison-Knudsen was given the contract to build the station. All materials and equipment was barged from Seattle. Everything had to be brought in through the surf because there were no docking facilities.

The island had no human inhabitants but there remained traces of an ancient village site and cemetary at a small cove on the southern end of Chirikof. Hundreds of shaggy-haired cattle, however, roamed the island. There were several half fallen down cowboy huts on the northern half of the island. One on the northeast coast seven miles from the station site had an attached shed and a small corral. This shelter is etched in my memory because I was destined to periodically spend some miserable nights in this hut in 1946-1947.

When completed, the station consisted of both wooden frame buildings and Quonsets. There were two large, two storied houses that served as officer and enlisted quarters, mess, radio room, weather shack, sick bay, library and recreation room. Huts were used for general storage, canned food , machine shop. One hut housed two large diesel power plants. A separate, insulated, refrigerator/freezer hut was built about a year later when the original unit proved too small.

Navy personnel to man the station were sent from Kodiak. The commandeered fishing boat, Minnie B., skippered by a Warrant Boatswain was used for transportation to and from Chirikof. Although station complement gradually increased during the war years reaching a peak of about thirty men, the initial group numbered six. This original crew included three radiomen, a chief pharmacist's mate, a machinist's mate, and Joe Leahy who was in charge of the unit.

Leahy's orders read in part,....."Defend the island against whomsoever...." The six men had two .45 calibre

Thompsons, three
30.06 Springfield rifles, and two BARs (Browning Automatic
Rifles).

Upon the Minnie B's. arrival at Chirikof, the skipper edged in as close to shore as possible. A pulling boat was lowered away, and men and supplies went in through the surf. Many dangerous trips were made until months of food and other supplies were unloaded.

Leahy's tour lasted six months with most of it during the fall and winter of 1942. Periodic visits by the Minnie B. to bring food, other supplies, and replacement personnel were often delayed by storms. Supplies occasionally ran low.

The only compensation of duty on Chirikof was the limitless supply of yearling beef. One was slaughtered now and then and thus the men had all the fresh meat they could eat, a luxury the rest of us missed. There was no problem keeping the meat fresh; they simply packed it in a snowbank.

On one winter return trip from Chirikof the Minnie B. was almost lost when she was caught in a storm off the east coast of Kodiak. Layers of ice grew so thick on the boat's rigging and all topside surfaces that she became dangerously top-heavy. All hands went on deck to chop away ice to keep her from capsizing.

Leahy was relieved on Chirikof by LT(jg) Burton W. "Smokey" Lindley and returned to Kodiak. A month later, Leahy was sent to the native village of Alitak on Lazy Bay at the southern tip of Kodiak. This trip down and back, which took a week because of weather, was made by "Wigeon" a small, Grumman amphibian. The purpose of the visit was to install a new wind vane and anemometer at the salmon cannery.

This gave Leahy the opportunity to meet, Bill Pere, one of the colorful characters that Lindeman and Anderson had recruited for their emergency/clandestine "Fish Net". Pere was a Portugese civilian from Honolulu. His wife was the school teacher but he wore many different hats. He was the weather observer, held a part-time job as time keeper for the cannery, and was also in charge of the natives reindeer herd. When the industrious Pere wasn't also trapping or panning for gold, he was the Lazy Bay radio operator. It is surprising that Lazy Bay wasn't renamed Busy Pere Bay.

Chapter XVII

The Story of the U.S. Navy's Kiska Weather/Radio Unit

Overwhelming Japanese forces had invaded Kiska on June 7, 1942. By July 1, nine of the ten men of our weather/radio unit had survived this ordeal on Kiska and had already begun years of hardship in Japan. Their story was not revealed until they were repatriated from POW camps.

Thoughts concerning them were overshadowed by events and they were forgotten by most but not the other navy weathermen and not by VP-42's skipper, Commander James S. Russell. What had happened to these men had troubled Russell for many years. He had been one of the last Americans to see them alive when he and Lt. Sammy Coleman took off in their PBY's from Kiska Harbor in mid-May 1942.

At the war's end, Russell, by then a navy captain, was the senior naval air officer to arrive in Tokyo. He was ordered to take a unit of men, fly to various airbases in the northern Japanese islands, and as the official representative of the U.S. Government have Japanese Commandants of these bases formally surrender to him.

Upon completion of this job, Captain Russell was detailed to form a task unit of men, including interpretors and photographers, and locate and interrogate any high ranking Japanese officers who had either taken part in the Aleutian operations during the war or had intimate knowledge about them. This work was for historical purposes and contributed to: The Campaigns of the Pacific War, United States Strategic Bombing Survey(Pacific). It was in connection with these intelligence de-briefing interrogations that Russell first learned news about the navy weathermen who had been on Kiska.

Russell traced them down later in the states and wrote to them requesting they detail their experience on Kiska. The letters Russell received in reply are reprinted in their entirety. Each is a stark, matter of fact document, hitherto unpublished, that records an historical event of the Aleutian Campaign. Events and the letters have been arranged so that the capture or surrender of the men fall in proper chronological order.

With apologies to Agatha Christie:

Ten vulnerable sailormen
Fled into the hills from fate Two ran too straight
Then there were eight

Admiral Hosagaya's Kiska assault was spearheaded by 1,250, crack, Imperial Japanese Marine Landing Force troops. The bulk of these came ashore from assault barges at the U.S. Navy weather station site in Kiska Harbor across from North Head. A detachment of Marines also landed at Reynard Cove about five miles to the northeast.

Rolland L. Coeffield, PHarM1c, and John C. McCandless, S1c, cook, were the first two men captured. This happened within a few hours after the attack and after the ten man weather team fled into the hills behind the station and split up. Coeffield and McCandless chose to head northeastward. In the fog, they ran blindly into the marines who had landed at Reynard Cove and were converging on the weathermen's camp in a pincer movement with the main body.

The two were quickly overpowered and disarmed. Their hands were bound and they were pushed to the front of the Japanese column. With urging from naked bayonet points they were marched back to the weather station.

They were interrogated by a Japanese officer who spoke
English. "Where are the other men?" How many are there? Do they have weapons and what kinds?" Coeffield and McCandless professed to know little; only that the others had scattered into the hills. They were forced to cook two steaks and eat them so the Japs would know whether or not the meat in the reefer was poisoned.

Eight determined sailormen
Trying to survive
Three walked into a trap And then there were five

James L. Turner's letter to Captain Russell,(date believed to be sometime in 1946):

"The Attack On Kiska Island

J.L. Turner, CAerM, USN

On 7 June 1942 between 0200 and 0300 the attack began by machine gun fire from the landing barges, which approached along the bank of northhead and was not observed by the lookout until they left the bank and headed across toward our camp. It was just light enough that you could recognize objects, Visibility (3) miles, Stratus overcast about 400 feet. The lookout fired a burst of our tommygun, which was our General alarm, and the Japs opened fire in return. The rest of us, besides the Radioman on watch and the lookout were asleep and put our boots on laying on the floor as the bullets were penetrating the buildings about 4 feet off the deck. Being first dressed I turned the stove on high and put the codes in so they would burn, Winfrey who had sent the last observation at mid-night crawled over and got the weather cipher and I burnt it too. The radioman kicked on the transmitter switch as I tossed the Dupey board to House and took my rifle and went out to hold them off until we got a message out. As I crawled out the door and around the corner back of the building the gunfire ceased, looking around the corner I could see nothing as the barges had come so close to the shore they were back of the bank along the beach. I then turned back to the power house and to the back of the cookshack where the other five men were behind a lumber pile. Coeffield pointed the spot where the barges went behind the enbankment and said he thought they were also in the tall beachgrass but could see nothing. Owing to the buildings which were obstructing our view and did not afford much protection we retreated for a small rise about 50 yards up from the buildings. Still nothing could be seen of the Japs and no fire. House, Winfrey and Echols the radioman came out of the radio shack. We decided to retreat to the hills where there were large rocks for protection and better sniping, via the ravine west of camp, as the three came up I saw the Japs fire from the beach, the range was far and I thought at first that the tracers were signal flares until the bullets started falling around us and we flattened out, they swung over and concentrated on Coeffield and the cook who were heading across a ravine and out of line of fire. Myself and Palmer remained behind for a rear guard and to attempt to explode the aviation gasoline on the barge on the beach. We climbed a small ravine off the barge, one for a view and a shot at the gas but could not get high enough to see it back of the bank on the beach.

There were no Japs in view and no barges or any firing. We decided not to draw any fire to find out as our retreat was in open ground up the hill. So went back down the ravine and back the main one to a ravine which led off to near the top of the hill to the west of camp. There I knew we could hit the gas easy. As we went up the ravine we overtook Echols-radioman who was exhausted and couldn't keep up with the rest, who had gone on ahead. So took him along with us. As we climbed up the ravine to the top of the hill and could see over North-head into Salmon Lagoon there was a Transport (about 10,000 tons) in close to the shore and two cruisers and a couple of destroyers dimly discernable lying a mile or so off shore, the visibility was restricted further due to fog over north of the island. Here we took a short rest before Palmer and myself were going to run over to the rocks on top of the hill. We were at the cloud base and saw 3 or 4 men go over the top of the hill to the west towards west camp. About that time we heard Japs to the back and across the ravine from us a little less than a hundred yards, we could not see them because the clouds had lowered a little, but from the sounds of voices knew we were well outnumbered. We then decided to go over the hill, using the clouds as cover we dropped down across Trout Lagoon and Palmer and I climbed to the top of the mountain on the other side and watched the Japs for awhile. There was a gun-boat in next to the beach by the barge, but the range was so great it was impractical to try and hit the gas. We went back and got Echols and went back of the mountain and down the ravine towards our food supply on Sand Beach, a little over half way down, as the visibility increased below the cloud base we observed about a dozen or so landing barges lying off and on Sand Beach. We then went back up the ravine and over the hills to the south towards Vega Bay, but as we sighted and started down the hill for it, a Jap float plane sighted it and strafed the shack three or four times, knowing there was very little food there and the boat that one of the trappers had left, was probably damaged by now. We turned northeast for South Camp, which was an old Indian Brabruary that the trappers used and left a little food in. Reached the camp about 2100. Slept that night and Palmer and I started out at dawn, up the valley, towards Sand Beach for another look and food if possible. The clouds were low over the hills and visibility very poor, we reached the

slope to Sand Beach about 1000 8 June and heard the Japs, we then crawled a hundred yards or so further and listened, there were a lot pulling or pushing something heavy, by their voices, and some sawing and hammering lumber, pulling nails or uncrating equipment, so outnumbered again, and they were between us and our food, we turned back to South Camp. When we arrived we collected some mussels off the rocks in the little cove, between times when a Jap float plane patrol flew over every couple hours. We ate and slept that night and rested the next day planning to go over to Vega Bay that night to try and get away in the dory if possible, but a landing barge came in the cove and trapped us with no retreat except on open ground and they landed about 20 yards or so from us approximately 100 men. Our rifles were pretty rusty by this time and so we lay in the tall beach grass until one of the Japs spotted and surrounded us one came forward took our rifles and searched us, then led us aboard the barge which took us to cruiser which was anchored in Kiska Bay. We were taken aboard to the anchor windless compartment and questioned one at a time aft in the officer's quarters, there were about a half a dozen Jap Officers, I told them all I knew was weather and very little of that, because I hadn't been there very long. I was taken in a small office and beaten and slapped by two officers because they thought I knew more and because I was rude and didn't show them any respect. The cook and Coeffield were brought aboard the next evening and questioned. The five of us were tranferred to a Cargo ship, about 10,000 tons and left for Japan, sailing west past Attu and arrived in Yososka on 19 June."

The capture of Turner, Coeffield, McCandless, Harold E. Echols, RM2c, and Gilbert E. Palmer, S1c left five men of the Kiska weather station unaccounted for, namely: Petty Officer in charge, William Charles House, AerM1c; Walter Monroe "Wimpy" Winfrey, AerM2c; Robert Christensen, RM3c; Madison L. Courtenay, RM3c; and Wilfred Ivan Gaffey, S1c. We will now pick up the story with Winfrey's letter to Captain Russell, or:

Five weary starving sailormen
Constantly on the run — Four gave up after nine days

That left only one

"U.S. Naval Air Station
Terminal Island, San Pedro, Calif.

Aerological Office
December 21, 1946

U.S.S. Birroka
NavOperBase
San Pedro, Calif.

Dear Captain Russell,

I hope to be forgiven being so late with this report. On your map is penciled lightly the route we wandered around the island. These marks can be erased if you so like. The numbers in the report correspond to the numbers of stopping places on the map.

I've tried to bring out things of Naval importance as near as I can remember to date.

The copy is very rough as I typed it during slack periods now and then while on duty.

Sincerely,
Walter Monroe Winfrey
Aerographer, USN

December 14, 1946

W.M. Winfrey Aerographer

Aleutian Attack of 7 June 1942

About midnight every night all hands made it a practice to listen to the news broadcast from San Francisco, immediately followed by a Japanese version in English from Tokyo.

The night of June 6, 1942, plus 10 time, I had secured the Aerological watch at midnight. Gaffey, Sea1/c took the outside patrol, to be relieved by Palmer, Sea1/c and Coeffield, PHm1/c until 0600 when the Aerological watch maintained a combination weather and lookout watch until 2400.

At 0210, plus 10 time, I was shot out of bed by a machine gun bullet in the right thigh. House,

AerM1/c sleeping just below me hearing me yell, "JAPS JAPS", thinking I might of had a nightmare, said, "Go back to sleep and quit your yelling," then I ask him what I was doing with a bullet in my leg. That must have shook the drowsiness out of him for just then the rat-a-tat of a machine gun took up again. Right then and there everything began to move at once.

Courtenay, RM3c maintaining the night radio watch left the transmitter after turning it on, then left to make sure the men in the other house were awake, because it took 5 minutes for the transmitter to warm up enough to send. Trying to get back to send the contact report was trapped by machine gun crossfire. Echols, RM2c believing the report was sent, as was the understanding, who ever was on watch was to send it. Although I believe by that time the transmitter had been riddled.

As I came into the Aerological and Radio Room from the bedroom, Turner, AerM2/c was stuffing confidential material into the stove. I asked him if he had the weather cipher, he said no, creeping under the machine gun fire, got it and threw it to him.

The machine gun fire had stopped temporarily because apparently the landing barges had come in too close and the Japs could not range down their guns because of a high mound on the beach blocking their line of fire.

That was our chance to get into the hills. As I was going out the door the last thing I saw was the clock 0210, plus 10 time.

Going up the hill in back of our quarters the machine gun fire started ranging on us again. About the time we reached ravine we had to dive into it for cover.

After we got into the ravine, with Palmer and Turner covering our retreat, yelled, "Get out of here, keep under cover and spread out."

At the top of the ravine there was a fork, House took the right fork with a blanket over his shoulder and the coding board under his arm, no rifle, and thats the last I ever saw of House.

At the top of the hill Christensen, Gaffey and I stopped for a rest. While resting the Stratus clouds lifted for a short time, revealing about 3 cruisers, an indefinite

number of destroyers, transports and small craft. The larger ships were lying to outside Kiska Harbor. The entire party I estimated about 10,000 men.

My leg was getting stiff from the wound, realizing I couldn't rest any longer and expect to travel, for I had heard a story if you wing a deer don't chase him, he'll go off and lay down and get stiff and can't move. This was happening to me it was impossible to observe any more. A few minutes later the Stratus clouds dropped over the hills and covered us, out flanking the two approaching Jap landing parties.

Continuing on over the hill and dropped into West Camp (#1) a trapper "Brobbery". There Christensen and Gaffey ripped up the spread and bandaged the wounded leg. Then made some coffee with the aid of a kerosene lamp. The trappers had left some food from the preceding trapping season. A few cans of food and potatoes, we took about half with the idea in mind to leave some for the other men.

Moving back into the grass to wait for evening. A couple hours later Christensen saw someone moving around and coming closer, then recognized him to be Courtenay the radioman. We called to him and then I put my head above the grass to stare into the muzzle of a 30 calibre rifle. Dropping flat and calling him in. He came toward us cautiously, gun raised and ready to shoot, till he recognized us. He said, "The Japs were all over the hills we had just come through."

That evening Courtenay, Christensen, Gaffey, and myself walked out into the surf along the beach to cover our tracks to a rocky cove where it was no longer necessary to walk in the water. By this time it was dark and started up the west side pass into valley (#2) and curled up together and slept the night of the 7th.

The morning of the 8th we decided to strike out for Vega Bay but didn't quite know the direction of the shortest xay, so the only other alternative was to keep the coastlin*; sight. We fell far short of our goal by nightfall but ran into another Brobbery known as "Ed's Camp" (#3). The trapper had left a small amount of food, so we started a fire with driftwood and made a vegetable stew.

We rested the day of the 9th and started for Vega Bay again on the 10th. I had been at Vega Bay and knew there was some food there. About 1100 we saw the first American plane, a PBY then heard "AA" fire. Some of

the shells must of been duds because they were ric-a-sha-ing off the hill about 50 yards from us. After the attack we continued on our way and ran into a very good "Brobbery" at Gertrude Cove.(#4) Just before discovering the "Brobbery", "Explosion" the dog cornered a Silver Fox and fought with it, when Gaffey came to his assistance with a club. That night we had fox stew instead of "Explosion stew".

The 11th and 12th we rested, collected fire wood, mussels and buttons from the rocks. Several Jap planes flew over, they were quite similar to our old SOCs. Grummans, two imitation PBY's and one land based plane that must have been a Zero from a carrier.

The 13th we made Vega Bay and found everything had been burnt to the ground, the fire had started the dry grass and was smoldering, making visibility very poor. While we were in the Vega Bay area there was an air-raid, of B-17's and PBY's. A PBY dropped a bomb in Vega Bay, a perfect hit on what appeared to be a small submarine. It had fooled us and we were about 1000 yards from the object. What it really was I don't know but it had the appearance of a rock, and a small submarine.

During the raid we lay down in a shallow ravine covering ourselves for in the Kiska Bay area the Japs were throwing everything in the air they could. Firing machine guns even though the planes were well out of range. The dog "Explosion" had a habit of running all over and barking at the sound of a gun. To stop this habit I half strangled him then laid on top of him.

When everything was quiet we made our way back to Gertrude Cove Brobbery, and rested that night and the 14th. By that time the fox stew was at an end, it tasted pretty bad even though we were starving.

The 15th we decided to try to get into the cache of food at Sand Beach. About 0800 we started over the mountains and reached South Camp (#1) about 1300 to find the Japs had torn the Brobbery down, there were foot prints and cigarette packs (empty) all over. So through the pass to the Sand Beach Brobbery. On pass was the wreckage of an American plane. We poked around in the remains to try an identify the make. The only thing we found was Plate with Consolidated Aircraft, then we assumed it had been a PBY, for it had the line of that type.

Finding the Brobbery at Sand Beach to our bitter disappointment, cleaned out of the food we had, for there was enough to last six months with careful

rationing. After resting we decided to go back to Gertrude Cove. About the time we go half way up the mountain it started to sleet getting very wet, cold and tired bucking the wind we could have never made it, so the only other alternative was to turn into the Japs and take our chances or starve in the hills. If we could of got over the mountains we could eat the dog we had tied in the Brobbery, after that then what?

So we turned around and headed in toward the Japs throwing our rifle and ammunition away behind the Sand Beach Brobbery. About 1730 there were a number of Japs working on the beach I tapped one that was bent over working he paid no attention so I tapped him again, something must of dawned on his slow wit for I never heard such a jumble of words, guards came running from all over and took us to our former cookhouse and mess hall. They asked where the other man was, we to them believed he was dead. (Note: As I remember there were 3 flying boats anchored, one ship bow sunk in the bay, two amphibians (similar to our SOCs) on the beach, several transports, a couple of destroyers, and two cruisers). That night they took us aboard a cruiser and fed us our first RICE AND SOUP. The next morning I was taken to an officers cabin and questioned. Was the bay mined? Not to my knowledge although it could have been. Where was the other man? Answer, I believe he's dead. Did I know of anymore food caches? Ans. No or I'd of gotten to them before I surrendered. Then I told him about the bullet in my leg he seemed greatly concerned and called the medical officer who took me to their sick bay, shot the wound with Novicain and took the bullet out, and put a wick in the hole to keep the outside from healing before the inside, then bandaged it.

The night of the 17th we boarded an old type English coal burner transport headed for Japan. We anchored in a bay where I don't know, but it seemed the whole Jap fleet was anchored there, we each took turns trying to peek out the porthole and comparing what we saw.

That night they blindfolded us and took us to the base and kept us there until my leg got well enough to travel. I arrived at Ofuna Interrogation Camp about noon July 2, 1942.

Walter Monroe Winfrey
Aerographer, USN "

Chapter XVII

William Charles House, AerM1c, USN was the one man the Japanese failed to round up. They assumed that he was dead. Further searching was called off and the Japanese forgot about him. House, however, was not dead as everyone believed and his remarkable story will be recounted in due course. For those who

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The Initial U.S. Task Force Shelling of Kiska

With one hour's notice I flew from Dutch Harbor to Kodiak on July 17, 1942 with Lt.Cmdr. Tatom. We would go aboard heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis for temporary duty as additional flag of Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald. Our army and navy planes were not succeeding in bombing the enemy off Kiska. An attempt would be made to blast them off by means of heavy, ship's guns.

Although Theobald's Staff aerological unit consisted of four enlisted weathermen, including a chief, Tatom desired to have one of his own Wing men along for the operation.

"It will be a nice change for you," Tatom said. "I understand
you've been rather busy flying."

'Sweet Jesus,' I thought,'what sarcastic gall. I've logged
over 220 hours since I last saw him in June' but I replied, "Yes, sir."

I turned to look at Tatom as I answered and saw that his eyes
had a merry twinkle. He was pleased with his little joke.

Admiral Theobald had shifted his flag from light cruiser Nashville for the initial shelling of Kiska. Our task force was made up of heavy cruisers Indianapolis and Louisville, light cruisers Honolulu, St.Louis, and Nashville, and nine destroyers, four of which were high speed minesweepers (DMS).

When an admiral shifts his flag it creates a certain amount of temporary turmoil and reorganization aboard the new ship. This settling in process was evident in Indianapolis. A spacious compartment had been vacated by ship's personnel and turned over to Theobold's flag yeomen and weathermen. Although it was

four times the space needed, one half of the office was the weather shack. This was located on the starboard side immediately forward of the hangar deck. Thin steel of a bulkhead was all that separated our weather office from the starboard catapult.

I was assigned a bunk far below the waterline and directly across from the hatch that led into a powder magazine. This magazine fed the massive, number two, three barreled 8 inch turret far above. This was the last place in the world I would sleep. I rolled up the thin mattress and carried it topside to the weather shack. A half dozen unused typing desks were stored side-by-side against the outboard bulkhead of the office. I pushed two together into a corner and adopted these as my bunk. My lifejacket became my pillow. When not in use I simply rolled up the mattress and stored it in one of several unused metal lockers. If I were off watch and trying to sleep, I was available immediately if Tatom required some extra work done. No one said anything about my sleeping arrangement except AerM3/c Gerald D. Goodwin.

"Welcome to the Snafu Maru." he said as I placed the mattress
on the desks. "It looks like you'll fit right in."

It was thus I first heard the crew's nickname for Indianapolis. A politely phrased definition of the navy term "snafu" is -- strictly normal all fouled up.

Lieutenant Commander William R. "Lefty" Franklin, USN, was Theobald's staff aerologist. Of medium height and build with light brown hair, Franklin's pleasant features seemed to fit his disposition. He impressed me as being unruffled, confident, competent--a fine, low-keyed officer and excellent weatherman.

Senior petty officer was CAerM Olaf A. "Swede" Thoen, USN. Swede was tall, rather rawboned with a longish face, blue eyes and receding blond hair. His greeting was pleasant enough but he struck me as being a reserved individual and on the quiet side.

Gerald D. Goodwin, AerM3c, USN was short and stockily built. His brown hair always had a tousled appearance. Goodwin was savvy and possessed a fine sense of humor coupled with a bit of devil-may-care attitude. Although we hadn't met at Lakehurst, Goodwin had graduated from primary weather school one class ahead of me. Nicknamed "Cornball" which was often shortened to "Corn", Goodwin hailed from the midwest.

William J. Turnbull, AerM3c, USN was of medium height and

build, had light brown hair and handsome features. He was intelligent and had a sunny disposition with a nice sense of humor.

Spence, a Seaman First Class striker, USNR was also intelligent and conscientious about his work. He was of medium height, wiry build, and combed his rather thin brown hair straight back. Spence wore glasses which seemed to fit his more serious nature. All of these aerographer's mates were good workers and we got along fine.

Tatom was senior to Franklin and took charge of the weather operation. He got the enlisted men together and outlined special requirements in addition to our regular twenty-four hour duties. This extra work included a massive forecast delivery list. Tatom also ordered us to enter four synoptic maps a day. Not even the Fleet Weather Central at Kodiak entered four maps. Tatom would draw the early morning map on which he'd base his daily forecast. Commander Franklin would analyze the afternoon map and put out an updated forecast if one were necessary. Either Thoen, Goodwin or I were to analyze the other two maps. This was to be done lightly in pencil so that Tatom or Franklin would not have to wear out too many erasers.

The main crusher on our work load turned out to be the necessity to take balloon soundings and work up ballistic density for gunnery control. In addition to the two regularly scheduled daily pibals we were to make every effort to obtain a sounding any time, day or night, that a break in the low stratus or fog permitted.

"Get a balloon up through any decent break you see," said Tatom, "even if its only a sounding of several minutes."

Chief Thoen's face became longer and longer as Tatom detailed this heavy work load. Goodwin had told me that Swede spent a good deal of time in the chief's quarters and did not like to be called to the office unless it was an emergency. Thoen would have to spend far greater time in the weather shack to see that his peons efficiently performed all of Tatom's requirements.

Tatom had failed to explain how we would find time to accomplish this work unless we gave up sleep completely. It did not appear to me that this was going to be much of a vacation.

Kodiak Air Raid Alert

Our task force was moored bows to shore on both sides of the long, wooden pier at NAS Kodiak. Indianapolis was berthed with her starboard side to the dock. She was hemmed in with heavy cruiser Louisville astern, St.Louis forward, and Nashville outboard. Across the narrow pier was Honolulu with a destroyer moored outboard of her. Immediately forward of Honolulu was a U.S.C.G. cutter. Forward of the cutter was a large barge with four hundred mines on deck. Astern of Honolulu were six or seven destroyers tied up two-by-two.

The task force was scheduled to sortie early the following morning but an emergency transfer of ammunition had not been completed. Word had been received from naval intelligence the previous day of the possibility that a large Japanese task force was operating several hundred miles south of Kiska. With hindsight this was undoubtedly Admiral Kakuta's beefed up task force of carriers Ryujo, Junyo, Zuiho, and Ziukaku. A portion of each ship's supply of high explosive projectiles for use in shore bombardment was being exchanged for armor piercing shells. Many ships still had tightly packed rows of various kinds and calibres of projectiles stacked topside. Shells were also being off-loaded or loaded from barges alongside and from trucks on the dock.

It was after evening chow when General Quarters (GQ) clamored throughout the ships. Seven enemy bombers were reported over the southwest tip of Kodiak and headed our way.

Not counting the four hundred mines there were hundreds of tons of TNT packed in neat rows on open decks, dock, barges, and in trucks. It was one helluva inconvenient time for Japanese bombers to show up. Pandemonium broke loose. The keel of Indianapolis was resting mostly in mud because of low tide. Moored the way she was there would not have been time to get underway even if there had been sufficient water under her keel.

By crane, all cruisers that could, swung their SOCs outboard, lowered them into the water and they took off. Our two were transferred first to Nashville outboard of us. Army P-40s and navy F4F Wildcat fighters were airborne quickly from the field at Kodiak. It was growing dark and nobody was certain whether or not all of the planes flying around were ours or Japanese.

All anti-aircraft guns were manned but the

inboard, dockside guns of all ships were almost side-by-side and useless. In the case of the Snafu Maru and several other ships, most all of our AA guns could not be used because we had ships on both sides. If these guns with restricted lines of fire had opened up we would have shot ourselves to pieces.

A tug made fast to the mine-loaded barge and got underway with it for open water. Several destroyers cast off lines and moved out while others did not have steam up. Trucks loaded with ammunition, or empty, sped from the dock.

Shortly after 2200 hours the all clear sounded. It had been a false alarm. The approaching aircraft had been identified as U.S.A.A.F bombers. This was the second time in five months that
U.S. Army bombers had caused me to age prematurely. Betwix and between U.S.A.A.F bombers, PBYs, and Nip planes I would likely be
either old or dead long before my time.

If it had been a Japanese air raid in this instance it would have taken only one hit, by one bomb, and we would have lost the entire North Pacific Task Force in a gigantic explosion that would have been heard in far-off Anchorage.

Our task force sortied from Kodiak the following morning. In no time at all the ships were enveloped in dense fog as they drove southwestward plunging up, over, down, or through mountainous swells.

The First Attempt To Shell Kiska

Swede Thoen dreamed up a watch schedule designed to have one man on duty during the few slack periods and two or more men on watch during peak load times in order to comply with Tatom's orders. We were so shorthanded that no known watch schedule could have worked well. Day or night usually found Goodwin, Turnbull, Spence and me all working together as official watch standers or lending a hand.

After a rough, foggy passage our force reached a position about a hundred miles south of Kiska on July 22, 1942. Weather reports from PBYs indicated dense fog extended to Kiska and beyond. The shelling could not be carried out under these conditions so the task force retired to the southeast to await a break in the weather. Because of weather conditions we had not obtained a single balloon sounding longer than one minute since leaving Kodiak although our attempts were

numerous.

I'd better take the time to explain how an upper wind balloon sounding is obtained. A balloon, approximately six inches in diameter, uninflated, is used. If the sky is clear or clouds scattered, a white balloon is used for contrast. A black one is substituted when the sky is cloudy or overcast. A night sounding is taken by means of a small light bulb screwed into a tiny dry cell battery attached by cord to the balloon's neck.

The neck of the balloon is stretched over an adapter which is connected to the helium tank by rubber hose. A number of tiny, brass weights are placed in receptacles on the adapter base and the balloon inflated until the adapter plus the weight is lifted and supported by the balloon. When this equilibrium is reached the neck of the balloon is twisted, removed from the adapter, and sealed with a rubber band. At this time the balloon is expanded to roughly thirty inches in diameter. When released it rises at a known ascentional rate. This can be either 180 or 280 meters per minute depending on the number of weights used.

Flight of the balloon is tracked visually by means of a theodolite which is similar to a surveyor's transit. This instrument has a telescope mounted on a base plate marked with the 360 degrees of the compass or azimuth. The telescope is also pivoted for elevation which is marked by a left side scale with degrees from 0 to 90. There are two knurls for control and adjustment of the vernier scales, one for azimuth and one for elevation. These knobs may be moved in slow, clicking increments or both can be thrown out of gear for free wheeling and fast tracking.

Two men usually take this sounding. One man observes and the second records. A stop watch is started when the balloon is released. At fifty seconds the recorder with the stop watch says, "Stand by". The observer centers the fleeing, rising, bobbing balloon in the crosshairs. When the sweep second hand reaches one minute, the recorder says, "Mark". The observer reads the elevation and azimuth degrees to tenths. He then attempts to locate the balloon again. This process is repeated each minute until the balloon is obscured by clouds, enters the cloud base or is otherwise lost from view.

Under ideal conditions it is possible to track a pibal for well over an hour and to altitudes

approaching 50,000 feet. In four and one half years of Alaskan duty I can recall taking only a half dozen such soundings; all on cold, clear winter days. A ten or twelve minute sounding average for this same period would be an optimistic estimate. For long periods in the Aleutians we did not even attempt a pibal because of low ceilings and/or extreme winds.

Upon completion of the tracking phase, the information is taken inside and worked up on a large plotting board to determine the wind direction and velocity aloft at any given level. This data along with pressure, temperature, and humidity values is taken through a set of tables to determine ballistic density.

There are considerable differences between taking a balloon sounding from a land station than taking one from the deck of a ship underway. At a shore station the theodolite is permanently mounted on a level, solid stand and the azimuth plate is locked on true north. Additionally, the theodolite has a protective, four-sided wind screen. Aboard ship a portable model theodolite with three adjustable, telescoping legs is used. The instrument is set up on any suitable location on the exposed deck. It also has to be set up perfectly level each sounding or the data will be useless. This is done by means of two sets of carpenter's, bubble type levels built into the base plate for port and starboard and fore and aft leveling. It is a difficult task to level a theodolite on the shaking deck of a speeding, rolling, pitching ship.

In addition, the instrument's base plate must be lined up exactly parallel with the fore and aft line of the ship and locked on the ship's heading. Course and speed must be noted each minute for reference corrections. The problem could be compounded if the ship made any change from this original course and speed. This occurred periodically during a standard, evasive, anti-submarine zig or zag.

On a moving ship, therefore, the flight of the balloon is always <u>apparent</u>. To obtain <u>true</u> wind direction and velocity the ship's course and speed each minute during the observation must be worked into the plotting board calculations. This is simple work. The main problems were setting up the theodolite properly and observing the balloon.

The fantail of <u>Indianapolis</u> was the only place we could set up. A room with still air and free of sharp

objects is needed to properly inflate and balance a balloon. There was no such compartment handy to the fantail. Quite a number of balloons were punctured either in the only sheltered inflation location we could find or between it and the fantail.

Tatom kept us hard at this work. We blew up balloons by the dozens and tried vainly to slip them up through elusive, small holes in the soup.

Our weathermen woes multiplied like rabbits after we retired into the dense fog southeast of Kiska. Here, for five days, we circled the International Date Line. For those who might not be familiar with what happens upon crossing the date line I'll try to explain. Do not try to follow too closely or ponder too long or they'll come and throw a net over you.

The International Date Line runs along the 180th parallel from South Pole to North Pole and separates the eastern and western hemispheres. It is directly opposite the zero meridian which passes from pole to pole through Greenwhich, England. Greenwich time is the basis for standard time throughout the world.

With two exceptions the International Date Line is synonymous with the 180th meridian. One departure occurs from a point southeast of New Zealand to northwest of the western Samoans. This offset about seven degrees to the east places New Zealand, Tonga, and the Fiji Islands on the same date. The major deviation takes place southeast of Kiska and Amchitka. Here the date line makes a sharp bend to the northwestward to include Attu before angling northeastward where it recrosses the 180th meridian in the Bering Sea. A sharp bend to the north-northwest provides a straight shot between Soviet Big Diomede and U.S. Little Diomede Island and through the narrow Bering Straits. The date line eventually becomes the 180th meridian again in the Arctic Ocean. This jiggyedy-jog keeps Alaska and her Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands on the same calendar day. It also serves as a geo-political separation of U.S.S.R. and U.S. territory.

The date line is the meridian at which a new calendar day begins at noon local time because it is then midnight Greenwich time. In addition, the moment one crosses the International Date Line going west, it becomes the corresponding moment of the following day. When the date line is crossed easting it becomes the corresponding moment of the preceding day. Still with me?

Chapter XVIII

Weather work requires keeping a great number of records. This includes charts on continuously recording instruments. These charts revolve on drums driven by spring-wound clock mechanisms. Date, time, and day notations had to be made on all charts, maps, logs, and records each time we crossed the date line. Some of our data and observations such as hourly weather reports were based on local time. Other information such as synoptic observations and maps was based on Greenwich time.

Because of the dense fog the ships were steaming close together in order to keep formation. Another ship was seldom visible but position was maintained by radar and with the aid of a flotation marker attached to four hundred yards of line which each ship trailed astern. Our task force was making fairly tight circles, sometimes crossing the date line four or more times in one twenty-four hour period. Things became extra confusing when a crossing was made shortly before midnight or noon.

Consider this example: Remember?...Add a day westing, subtract a day easting. On a westward course Indianapolis crossed the date line at 2358 hours on Wednesday. At that moment of crossing the day was added and it became two minutes until midnight on Thursday. Notations were made on all of our charts. Two minutes later, at the last stroke of 2400 hours, it became Friday because a new day begins at midnight. In a span of one hundred-twenty seconds, it had been Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Or had it? Doesn't a new day begin at midnight? Turnbull said no, not at the date line. Here the new day starts at noon. Goodwin thought that it all depended upon whether one was speaking about local or Greenwich time.

Spence wondered aloud if it might not still be Thursday all the way to Greenwich on this minus time zone side of the date line. I held out for the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday interpretation.

"There would not have been a three day swing if we'd been
easting," said Spence.

"Certainly there would have been," I said. "The reverse would
be true. Here, I'll prove it."

After drawing a sketch of the date line and ship I said, "Okay, here's the ship easting on Wednesday. It crosses the dateline at 2358 and it becomes Tuesday. Then at 2400".....I

paused.

"It becomes Wednesday again," finished Goodwin.

All that I had proved was that Spence and I both appeared to be wrong. He thought it would be Tuesday. It seemed to us that in my example we had crossed the date line AND gone past midnight and it was still the same day.

Our crossings were not always east or west which added further confusion. From the dogleg southeast of Kiska to west of Attu the date line assumes what could arguably be termed a horizontal rather than vertical posture. In circling we also crossed the date line while steaming north and south. Whether to subtract or add a day going north, south, east, and west became a most difficult thing for many people to remember.

Most everyone aboard became bewildered to some degree. There were those who became so lost in the maze they turned glassy-eyed. After thirty-six hours of crossings no one was certain what day it was. Discussions were going on in every compartment and within every department in the ship. At least two became so heated they led to fist fights.

Our weather office records grew messy with ink eradictions and cross-outs. One evening we each sat down with pencil and paper and began at the first crossing of the date line in an attempt to straighten out our time log. The session turned hilarious and we threw our pencils in the air. The only thing we could agree on was that it was a fubar situation. This term meaning: fouled upon beyond all recognition, is believed to have been coined by Aleutian aerographr's mates. We had reached a point where we were too busy and too tired to care.

Scuttlebutt spread one night that the ship had crossed the date line twice in two directions in a twelve minute span. This had occurred during one of our zig-zagging, anti-submarine course changes. These had been resumed briefly because the visibility had increased to several miles. I believe this scuttlebutt was true but I also believe most everyone in the ship simply ignored these two crossings.

Several times daily we checked with the navigation department and used their calculations for the correct date and day. In so doing I noticed that they were also busily figuring because their circular files were full of scrap paper.

Commander Tatom got involved with the issue one night. "You have the wrong date on this map," he

said to Goodwin. "I got it from navigation," answered "Corn".

Tatom harrrrumphed, picked up our rough, muddled time log, studied it for a moment, did a little figuring, then folded a piece of scratch paper which he put in his pocket. Without another word he started to draw the map. We were bursting with curiosity to know what day he thought it was but dared not ask.

By the fifth day of circling the date line, the range of guesses throughout the ship as to what day it was included every day of the week. There was agreement, however, on two things: It was July and Foggy.

I could never figure out why our task force didn't circle a hundred miles farther east or southwest. This would have eliminated the problem. I guess I just didn't understand how to run a war.

An Old Friend and a New One

Occasionally, Admiral Theobald surprised us by dropping into our weather shack. Several times he popped in before retiring for the night. His quarters in "officer's country" were not far away.

During his daytime visits he was accompanied by a flag lieutenant who stood dutifully and silently by while his admiral studied the latest analyzed synoptic chart and checked with Tatom or Franklin to see if any significant weather changes might bring an updated forecast. If Tatom or Franklin were not present at night Admiral Theobald readily discussed the weather with the senior man on duty.

Admiral Theobald was always courteous, if not cordial. He asked intelligent questions in a matter-of-fact way. Sometimes, as he listened to the answer he appeared to be preoccupied with many weighty problems. That his most pressing one should be the weather must have been irksome. Admiral Theobald seemed a lonely, dour individual to me.

There were two much more frequent visitors to our weather
office. One was an old friend, Lt. Cmdr. Carl "Squeaky" Anderson.
He was along for the shelling of Kiska because of his intimate knowledge of the island and its surrounding waters.

The second man was, Keith Wheeler, a war correspondent for the Chicago Daily Times. Wheeler, a

fine gentleman and excellent writer/reporter, was the only correspondent with the task force.

Wheeler had already covered considerable action in the Pacific. He had been in another cruiser attached to Admiral "Bull" Halsey's carrier task force that had raided Japanese installations in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands of the Central Pacific. Wheeler had sailed north to Alaska from Pearl Harbor with Theobald's North Pacific Force at the end of May 1942. At Kodiak he had received clearance to accompany Theobald in Indianapolis.

Keith Wheeler was, perhaps, a somewhat different kind of WWII corrrespondent for he spent a great deal of time talking to the enlisted men. Keith poked around in every nook and cranny of the ship. One day I went to the laundry to check on a pair of dungarees and a skivvy shirt of mine that were missing. I found Wheeler deep in conversation with three seamen laundrymen.

Wheeler asked lots of questions and probed for the personal feelings of everyone he interviewed. "How do you think they felt about this?" he might ask. Or, "Why do you think it was done in this way? "Do you recall your thoughts at that moment?

In our weather office, usually at night, he asked Goodwin,
Turnbull, and Spence about their experiences. Keith spoke at great length with me about doings in the Aleutians from the beginning of my arrival. He wanted to know about Patrol Wing Four and our PBYs and seaplane tenders. He was very much interested in the part weather was playing and would continue to play in the campaign. Wheeler asked me many questions about the two-day attack on Dutch Harbor. Several times my answers brought forth an "I thought so," or "That makes more sense than the official press release given," as he scribbled in his notebook.

Wheeler asked about the PBY patrol flights searching for the elusive Japanese carrier task force. He asked me if I'd known House, Turner, and Winfrey, the navy weathermen who'd been on Kiska. I told Wheeler about our pre-Pearl Harbor organization of the four Aleutian aerological expeditionary units. He also asked many questions for which I had no answers.

One night I asked Keith, "Why do you spend so much time
talking with the enlisted men?"

"There are many more of you to begin with," he

answered, "and therefore a greater variety of personalities." He also found the enlisted men to be much more candid. He felt that officers' opinions often had a sameness about them, were more guarded and less critical because of rank, responsibility, and the dictates of high brass passed along. Wheeler was also quartered and messed with the officers and, "I can talk to them anytime."

Anderson and Wheeler took an immediate liking to one another. Wheeler found "Squeaky" to be one of the "most interesting men I've ever met." They both spent many evenings in our weather office speaking with each other and with us. Tatom also took part in several of these breeze-shooting sessions with Anderson and Wheeler. I'd never seen Tatom so affable.

Fiasco in the Fog

After circling the date line for five days the task force straigthened on a course that would take it back to Kiska. The shelling attempt was to be made according to a revised timetable. There was to be a coordinated airstrike by lumbering PBYs and 11th U.S.A.A.F B-24s.

These planes circled high above fogbound Kiska on July 28 while waiting for our ships to open up with the big stuff. When this shelling had not begun by late afternoon the army bombers returned to Umnak. Our PBYs continued to circle until near dawn. Low on fuel they groped their way home in heavy fog but landed safely at three bases.

Far below the milling bombers that afternoon of July 28, with ceiling and visibility hovering around zero-zero, our task force had run into shoaling water without catching a glimpse of Kiska. Rather than pile his fleet up on Kiska's rocky beach, Admiral Theobald ordered a reversal of course. In this maneuver one of our criss-crossing destroyers ran into a minesweeper, another minesweeper plowed into the first two ships, then a fourth destroyer slammed into the tangled wreckage. The shelling had to be cancelled. The PBYs had no way of knowing about this mass collision in the fog because our task force maintained radio silence.

With tails between legs we slunk back to Kodiak. Four of our fourteen ships were damaged, two severely. Not a single shot had been fired. Weather had again shown the admirals and generals who was the real boss in the Aleutians. There was no high level argument or

petty bickering over this fact.

Patrol Wing Four's handful of weathermen, ashore, afloat, and in the air, were at the very hub of this overpowering, spinning-wheel force of Aleutian weather that continued to dominate all activities. Aleuts could live there for thousands of years; Russia could later claim the Aleutians; The United States could purchase them from Russia; The Japanese and Americans could fight over them but they would always belong, solely, to the unthinking, brutish, unlimited authority of Aleutian weather.

Sheepishly our force arrived at Kodiak. Morale was low throughout the ship and entire task force. Crews of fighting ships could be proud and boast of their accomplishments but the North Pacific Task Force, so far, accomplished nothing since it had arrived in Alaska except to "fight" the fog and Aleutian weather.

Tatom came into the "Indy's" weather office after the ship was moored at Kodiak. He was leaving to take care of some business ashore but would return to the ship that evening.

"How are the supplies holding out?" Tatom asked.

"Fine, sir, except for helium and balloons," I replied. "Double check the inventory just the same. When you finish
make out an urgent priority requisition for whatever we need. I'll sign it now. Take it to the aerological supply pool on the base. See that the supplies are onboard by this evening."

This short conversation with Tatom was the first verification
of scuttlebutt that foretold a second attempt to shell Kiska.

I'd helped take monthly inventory at the end of July on our return trip. Goodwin got his report out of the files and we went over it again before I typed up the requisition. I decided to order twice the anticipated supply of helium and balloons. Shortly prior to the mass collision, "Corn" and I had obtained a four minute sounding. This happened when the ship steamed unexpectedly and briefly through a clearing in the fog. We were lucky because even in good weather a balloon can disappear quickly far astern of a speeding ship.

Everyone had been elated about this balloon sounding, Tatom particularly. He'd commended us with, "good work." He was not aware that there were only

seven balloons left and less than a quarter tank of helium. If we had prematurely run out of either, Tatom would have been seized with a screamin' s--- fit.

By that afternoon our requisitioned supplies were aboard and stored. The task force was being refueled and replenished.

Emmett Smith, AerM3c arrived late the following day. Tatom had had Emmett fly from Dutch Harbor as a passenger with high priority orders.

"What's up?" Smith wanted to know. "Where do I bunk?" I introduced him to Goodwin, Turnbull, and Spence then told him to follow me.

"I'll fill you in on the way to your sack."

On the way down to the magazine I gave Smitty a brief resume' of our epic voyage. I showed him his bunk and locker, the ones originally assigned to me. There was another mattress on the bunk. We put his gear down then he noticed the magazine hatch directly across from his bunk.

"Is that really a magazine?" "Yeh, but don't fret. If it blows the whole ship goes." "Where's your bunk?"

"I sack out on a couple of desk tops at the back of the office."

"Sounds good to me and I'm sure there's room for one more. Let's go. I don't want any part of this place even if I have to sleep standing up."

As we headed back topside I said, "You'll be lucky to find the time to sleep standing up. Tatom's been cracking the whip on us."

"Did you volunteer me for this deal?"

"Nope, although I'm glad to see you. When I learned we were heading back to Kiska all I suggested to John T. was that we could use some good help, perhaps another wing aerographer's mate."

When we walked into the office with another rolled up mattress, Goodwin laughed.

"What's the matter, Smith?" he asked. "Didn't you like the bunk Carrigan picked out for you? I don't know what the hell Tatom is going to say about both of you sleeping in the office."

"It's worth a try," said Emmett.

The Second Run At Kiska

CinCPac, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz appointed aggressive, bold, Rear Admiral William W. "Poco" Smith, USN, our new task force commander. Admiral Theobald, for the time being, would remain Commander North Pacific Force at his Kodiak headquarters. Cmdr. Franklin and Chief Thoen had gone ashore with Theobald.

From the moment Admiral Smith came aboard there was a noticeable change throughout Indianapolis and the other ships of the task force. He seemed to convert a fleet of docile ships into wild mustangs. Old timers who knew of him said, "Watch the fur fly now. This guy is a real charger."

Two additional DMSs had been added to our force. With Admiral Smith in command we sortied from Kodiak on August 3, 1942. Moderate swells glided toward us out of the wet-wool blanket of ever present fog as the ships sliced southwestward.

When we'd first come aboard Indianapolis Tatom had issued a standing order to be awakened at 0300. Goodwin had suggested to me that I do this because Tatom was my commander. Although it was an extra chore the arrangement had worked well for ten days because I was either on watch or sleeping lightly on my desk tops.

Tatom had to arise at this wee hour to have time to get wide awake, have his several cups of steaming coffee while he checked over the clip boards of weather data received during the night, analyze the map and prepare his daily early morning forecast.

Commander Tatom, who shared a small compartment with a fellow officer, was a sound sleeper. I thought I'd awakened him on my first attempt but he was very late getting to the office. He walked in just as I was about to leave to see what had happened to him.

"From now on, Carrigan," he said gruffly, "don't leave the
compartment until you're certain I'm wide-awake."

I could seldom awaken him with my lowered voice and I did not wish to raise it for fear of disturbing the other officer. Although it was strictly against navy regulations to lay hands on an officer I had been shaking Tatom's shoulder, sometimes vigorously, to awaken him. As soon as he stirred I would tell him it was 0300 and time to get up. He'd say, "All right, Carrigan, thanks. I'm awake," or "Any change in our

weather?" or "Have some fresh coffee on I'll only be a few minutes."

That first night at sea after Emmett Smith joined the ship I had sacked out about 0100 after the 1600-2400 watch. At 0255 Goodwin hollered that it was time for me to awaken Tatom. I mumbled sleepily that I was beat and asked him to do it. Emmett, who was also on watch, volunteed and asked Corn where Tatom slept.

Emmett must have returned quickly.

"You're back in a hurry," I heard Corn say. "Are you sure
he's awake?"

"I hope to s--- in your flat hat that sob is awake," Emmett answered. He said this with such agitation it caused me to raise up on one elbow to ask what had happened.

Smith's softly repeated, "Mr. Tatom", had brought no response. The moment he'd placed his hand on Tatom's shoulder and spoken his name again, Tatom had sat bolt upright. He ordered Emmett out of the room after telling him sharply that under no circumstances was Smith ever to touch him again. Emmett was equally furious and hurt by this treatment.

"That's the thanks I get," he said to me, "for trying to do you a favor." I felt uncomfortable for both of us because I anticipated what he was going to say next. "Do you take crap like that every morning or do you have some special way of waking Tatom?"

I had to admit that I'd been shaking him awake but he'd never
jumped all over me for doing it.

"Good," said Emmett. "He either likes you or hates me, maybe both. You've got a permanent job because I'll sure as hell never attempt it again."

I could have cited a dozen misfortunes that had befallen me during the past five months by being "liked" by Tatom but I let it rest. This incident was stored in our mental file of trials and tribulations of enlisted men who serve under commanders quirky or otherwise.

Two days outbound a destroyer joined us. It had been dispatched from the Pacific Fleet to beef up our destroyer screen. This "tin-can" was desperately short of bunker fuel, food, and other stores. We did not have an oiler with us so the Indianapolis refueled the destroyer while underway. Our task force reduced speed to about twelve knots and the destroyer came

alongside. A light line was shot over and succeedingly heavier lines passed until the heavy oil hose could be hauled across.

During this operation a deck force sailor caught his foot in one of the rapidly paying out coils of line and flipped over the railing into the 42 degree Fahrenheit water. A Franklin life buoy was immediately cut loose. With powerful strokes the seaman reached the buoy just before he was enveloped by the fog astern. One of the screening destroyers sliced in, found him, and fished him out but he died of exposure.

The sailor had been in the water only eighteen minutes. He was a big, raw-boned blond kid about twenty-two years of age. His buddies said that he was exceptionally strong and in excellent health.

Except for the rescue destroyer, the other ships retained course and speed. Our destroyer refueling operation continued as if nothing happened. There was no other choice. The hungry sea had simply claimed another victim. It was strangely reminiscent of a scene one often sees in any documentary African safari film: the hungry lion pounces on an unwary impala. It happens so quickly. Once the victim has been singled out, the kill made, and the lion feeding, the remainder of the herd continues to graze peacefully, secure in the knowledge that it is safe, --the lion satiated--, until next time.

Along with the bunker fuel we transferred stores, mostly food. At this time another scene occurred that has also haunted my memory.

During the final stages of retrieving our lines and gear, the
destroyer came very close to the side of the much larger, higher, "Snafu Maru". Our crew showered the tin-can's deck with a great assortment of candy bars and packs of cigarettes. Hollow-eyed, haggard, bearded destroyer sailors fought and scrambled around on their hands and knees for these precious items. Among the men on their knees were a number of junior deck officers. I don't know where the destroyer had come from specifically or how long it had been at sea but it must have been a long time.

Our task force arrived south of Kiska on the afternoon of August 7, 1942 and Admiral Smith did not waste time. The fleet was ordered to proceed directly to our firing line and we boiled straight ahead for the enemy fortress. Seas had calmed and there were occasional breaks and thin spots slipping past

overhead. Visibility was still so poor, however, that we caught only glimpses of the light cruiser ahead of us and the Louisville four hundred yards astern.

Tatom was upset because we had not been able to obtain a sounding of more than a minute for ballistic density. Our task force once again ran into dense fog and we were within fifteen miles of Kiska. Admiral Smith ordered his task force to reverse course. This time the manuever was executed without collision.

An hour later our task force received a report from a PBY that the dense fog bank extended only to within ten miles of Kiska. Beyond that it was clear although there were fog patches in Kiska Harbor and heavy cloud cover over the island mass. This in-flight weather reconnaissance PBY had a Wing weatherman aboard and was piloted by LT(jg) Carl "Bon" Amme of VP-43.

Upon receiving this weather report, Admiral Smith ordered another reversal of course to take us back to Kiska. He was assured that he would break into the clear before he piled his ships up on Kiska's rocky beaches. Relative bearings could be taken on Kiska's landmarks and an offshore island. This would enable Admiral Smith to place his ships exactly on the predetermined firing line and each ship to reach its precise position to open fire.

While this latest course change was in progress, Tatom came aft to the fantail. Emmett Smith was holding an inflated balloon in anticipation of a break and I was standing by the theodolite. Tatom gave us orders to remain there until we had obtained a balloon sounding. As soon as this had been accomplished we were to work up the data and get ballistic density to gunnery control.

"I'll send Spence back to help you. He can blow up extra balloons and keep you supplied. I'll be up in the foretop if you need me."

Emmett and I were still trying to figure out where the foretop was on a heavy cruiser when Spence joined us. When the task force was turned around and each ship had assumed its position, Admiral Smith ordered flank speed. At thirty-three knots the ships raced toward Kiska. I had no idea that an old, heavy cruiser could plow through the water at that speed.

"Snafu Maru's" fantail began shaking and rumbling so violently I wondered if the old girl were coming apart. "Awesome," describes the deepness of the trough in our wake, a depth that would have swallowed a

two-story house.

Breaks slipping past overhead became larger as if Admiral Smith and Tatom had willed them. We squeezed in a seven minute sounding with Emmett and Spence steadying the legs of the theodolite. I had taken pibals by myself as all aerographer's mates have but never again, during my ten years as a navy weatherman, did I run into conditions that required three men.

Each of the five cruisers had catapulted two SOCs for gunnery spotting. This had been done shortly before the task force ran into the dense fog that had forced Admiral Smith to reverse course and temporarily steam away from Kiska.

Indianapolis carried four or five SOC teams of pilot and radio-gunner who flew the ship's two SOCs on a rotation basis. One SOC that day was flown by senior pilot, Lieutenant Robert A. O'Neil with Aviation Chief Radioman, Aubrey E. Lewis as radioman-gunner. Our other SOC was piloted by Ensign Ralph Sagesor whose radioman-gunner was Aviation Radioman First Class, Bobbie Crawford. Crawford was the only one of the four I knew well. He was a friend of Goodwins and spent considerable time in our weather office.

About a half hour before our two SOCs were catapulted I ran
into Bobbie in the head and wished him luck.

"Thanks," he said, "I think we're going to need it." When he turned to me and said this he had a strange, haunted
look in his eyes. I'm sure that Crawford had had a premonition that he would not come back from his flight.

Both SOCs were on deck having been pushed out of their respective hangars. A crane was preparing to lift and swing an SOC into position on the starboard catapult. It would be awhile before planes were launched. In due course, the ship would turn into the wind, the catapult would be swung out away from the ship's side, the first plane would rev up its engine to flying speed, the launch button pushed, and the moving part with the SOC would shoot down the sixty-foot slide track at the end of which the dolly would be arrested as the plane was sling-shot into the air. A catapulted plane goes from zero to flying speed in a second or two. I don't see how the crew avoid broken necks.

I was busy in the weather office when the first plane was launched. Although word had been passed on

the loud speakers I wasn't prepared for the explosion a few feet away that almost stopped my heart. The catapult mechanism is just like a ship's turret gun in that its breech is loaded with a silk powder bag charge the same as those used to hurl a projectile. The noise is ear-shattering, especially in a "tin-drum" office a few feet away. I thought the ship had blown up.

Seven of the ten SOCs had milled around and maintained contact with the ships in the fog when the task force reversed course away from Kiska. These had subsequently landed safely alongside their respective cruisers and been recovered. Neither of our two had returned and we were racing for Kiska again, this time boldly.

Aboard as temporary flag personnel, Emmett Smith and I did not have a Battle Station. After we had quickly worked up the seven minute balloon sounding and ballistic density we were momentarily free of chores. Smith and I donned steel helmets and life jackets and like tourists, moseyed out on the hangar deck to join about twenty other sightseers to watch the coming fireworks,--the battle--.

A few minutes later our task force came boiling out of the swirling mists into the clear. At the speed we were traveling, each ship had a huge white bone in her teeth. Our force had approached Kiska from the south-southwest. Large Vega Bay opened on our port beam. Bukhti Point was almost dead ahead.

Kiska looked serene, green, and deceptively peaceful. It was hard to believe there were an estimated 6,000 dug-in Nips on the island. Speed was reduced, bearings taken, and the ships turned onto their firing courses.

As so often happens narrations of war engagements are written long after the fact by persons who were not present. Although there are precious few accounts of this initial shelling of Kiska most of them incorrectly depict it as a haphazard affair which did little or no damage.

A grid overlay was placed on a detailed map of Kiska Harbor and shore installations. Aerial photographs pin-pointed targets which were positioned precisely within the grid squares. There were numerous Japanese ships in the large harbor. These included a light cruiser or heavy destroyer, several other destroyers, a net tender, patrol boats, three or four submarines at anchor, and half a dozen cargo ships,

two of which were in the 10,000 ton range.

For coordination our columns of ships reached a designated position then turned on a rhumb line. Three DMSs cleared our path followed in single file by four destroyers. To accomodate their smaller calibre guns the DDs were inshore of the cruisers. An echelon of three light cruisers, also in single file, stretched out astern of the destroyers. Indianapolis was next in line followed by Louisville with a fifth destroyer bringing up the rear. As each ship reached a designated position along the rhumb line, it opened up and fired independently at assigned targets. The lead destroyer opened the shelling and the heavy bombardment of Kiska began. Many surprising things happened in a short space of time.

The first thing noticed was a tremendous mushrooming of black anti-aircraft bursts above the cloud mass directly over the harbor. There were no U.S. heavy bombers over Kiska. A coordinated air-strike had been eliminated from the operations plan this time because of the uncertainties of Aleutian weather. Our task force had been in plain sight for many minutes before the four destroyers' shell fire erupted inside Kiska Harbor. Evidently our ships had gone undetected because the Japanese thought they were being bombed through the overcast.

Indianapolis began firing at 2000 hours. When our main eight-inch batteries opened up with the first combined salvos, I thought the world had come to an end. Emmett Smith and I had thought the catapult was terrible but the eruption of the large bore turret guns was stunning.

Neither of us had ever been around anything larger than Casco's five inch cannon and she had single gun turrets. We were standing to the right of the group at the port railing and could see the muzzles of the guns. Like a little rag doll, a diminutive negro mess attendant standing on our right and nearest to the guns was blown off his feet and knocked flat on his back. Emmett, who was closest to the mess attendant, was blasted back past me. His helmet, which he had failed to fasten, was blown off and went spinning across the deck. For a fraction of a second I thought he'd been beheaded. The blast almost ripped my clothes off. The skin of my face was stretched so tight it felt like it had split. I had to feel to make certain it hadn't. With a numbed brain I stared dumbly at the mess attendant. He was

semi-conscious. Blood streamed out of his nostrils and both ears. Someone was kneeling beside him. I wondered what had hit the ship and if she were sinking. It wasn't until the guns fired again that I grasped what had happened.

The ship appeared to get thrust sideways several feet each time the turret guns roared. Red-orange flame that shot out of each muzzle seemed to reach halfway to Kiska. It was frightening enough on the ship and I prayed I would never be on the receiving end of a naval bombardment.

Our heavy cruiser had commenced firing at a range of fourteen thousand yards, about eight miles. Our firing line would take us to within one and a half miles of the South Pass to Kiska Harbor. This passage is between Little Kiska Island and South Head.

After our first few salvos, the rest became part of the general din and excitement and thus were hardly noticed. Indianapolis had been steaming and firing for about four minutes when a lot of little red lights began blinking at us from Bukhti Point and from two places on South Head. I thought these flashes atop the cliffs were from our exploding shells. A second or two later, tall, skinny geysers of water jumped up from the sea about two hundred yards off our port bow and between us an Honolulu.

Someone off to my left, managing to combine disbelief and outrage in his voice, hollered, "For Christsakes the bastards are shooting at US with shore batteries."

"I'm gettin' the hell outta here," said a man by his side. Most of the men on the hangar deck ran to the partially raised port hangar door and poured under it. Two hospital corpsmen who had been tending the mess attendant got him to his feet and led him away. Emmett and I remained on the hangar deck with about six other men. Our turret guns kept booming and sending out projectiles that rumbled with a freight train noise.

Sheets of flame and smoke from the muzzles blew away and someone nearby said that enemy float fighters were bombing and strafing the lead destroyers. I did not have time to look.

"What's that?" asked the sailor next to me.

He was pointing straight up. Against the brilliant blue sky a startlingly white smoke bomb hung motionless. Squiggly tendrils snaked out from its center.

"It's a smoke bomb," I replied,"dropped by a Nip plane over our ships for their gunnery control." I searched the sky but could not see the plane that had dropped it.

A few seconds later more columns of water made by shore battery shells leaped from the sea. This time the geysers were within fifty yards of the ship's port bow. Our turret guns were still bellowing at targets inside the harbor. The range decreased steadily as we closed the distance to South Pass.

"Jesus, here comes a Jap warship," said a voice nearby. The Japanese heavy destroyer had gotten underway and was full of fight. With both forward turret guns firing she was coming out South Pass to face overwhelming odds. I learned later that it was the light cruisers ahead of us that swung some of their six inch turret guns on this enemy destroyer. There was a massive explosion that was felt in Indianapolis. When the smoke cleared the Japanese destroyer had disappeared from my view. Her magazines had blown up.

No sooner had this happened than a man exclaimed, "There's a float zero!" A split second later he added, "There's two of 'em."

I looked where he was pointing but saw only one which peeled off in an almost vertical dive toward Louisville astern. Our ship's anti-aircraft guns cut loose and to the din was added the urgent yammering of 20mms., slower, deeper, pow-pow-pows of 40mms., then reached a crescendo when a multiple barreled 1.1mm. "Chicago piano" added its excited chatter. This AA fire was directed forward at another plane which I could not see.

Having strafed Louisville the other float zero came streaking toward us.

"I've seen enough," a man said.

"Me too," echoed his buddy, "Let's clear the hell out of here."

Those who had remained on the exposed hangar deck left in a hurry and I found myself alone. I stayed neither because I was foolishly brave nor rooted to the spot by fear. I simply did not care to run and hide in a darkened hangar behind a thin wall of tin where I could not see what was going on. Perhaps it was because of the hours I'd spent in the open, airy

gun blisters of PBYs. I did not want to just stand there with my bare face hanging out an die but I felt helpless, frustrated.

In quiet desperation I looked around and to my surprise saw two, light, .30 calibre Lewis machine guns on the deck. They had not been there moments before. These Lewis guns were designed to fit on top of the steel stanchions that supported the cables which formed safety barriers around open deck spaces. I ran over and picked one up but could not see any ammunition cans.

All hell had broken loose back aft where our anti-aircraft guns that would bear were turned on the Zero that had attacked Louisville. At an altitude of fifty feet and point blank range this float fighter was strafing Indianapolis from stern to bow. With the gun cradled in my arms I was frantically turning this way and that while my eyes searched the deck for the missing drums of ammunition.

As the Zero roared past the hangar deck and less than 100 feet from the portside of the ship, a big, ugly, gunner's mate first class came hurrying out on deck with two more Lewis guns. He crouched down, sprinted across the deck toward me and quickly put the two guns down by my feet. Before I could ask where the ammo was, he ripped the machine gun out of my grasp.

"Wadda hellya tryna doo, kid," he snarled, "Hurd yaselve?" He placed the gun on the deck with the others and hurried away. I stood there feeling furious and foolish.

Our turret guns were still blasting away. Anti-aircraft guns cut loose again but I did not see the enemy plane. Our light cruisers concentrated some attention on the shore batteries. Simultaneously at three locations, flame, dirt, rocks and black smoke erupted along the cliffs. After this cleared away I saw no more blinking red lights, or geysers in the water.

When the destroyers completed their shelling they sped back toward our cruisers to take up screening positions. Indianapolis fired her last salvo around 2020 hours and Louisville a minute or so later. Our task force made a ninety degree turn to the southeast and increased speed. We said goodbye to Kiska with our sterns presented in a kiss my ass attitude and headed back for the protective fog bank. Anti-aircraft guns of this ship or that opened up several times to ward off strafing attacks by lone float Zeros but the big,

ugly, gunner's mate did not return with any ammunition.

One of these "Rufes" pounced on an SOC that came wobbling out of the clouds off our port quarter. The Zero made one pass but the SOC escaped into cloud cover. AA fire from two destroyers on our flank drove off the attacker. Indianapolis slowed a few moments later and turned to make a lee for an SOC that dropped out of the overcast. The pilot landed quickly with a kerplunk very close to the ship and taxied to our starboard side. An aviation machinist mate said that the SOC was not one of our two planes.

A crane was swung outboard, the hook lowered and secured in
the ring. Hardly one minute had gone by since the plane landed but it was riding very low in the water. When it was hoisted up, water squirted out through a hundred holes. As the crane swung the SOC inboard to the hangar deck it looked more like a giant's arm holding a sprinkling can.

This SOC was piloted by Lieutenant John R. Brown, senior pilot in heavy cruiser Louisville. He was helped from the cockpit having been wounded in the foot during the Zero attack witnessed a few minutes earlier. With blood dribbling out of a hole in his boot Lt. Brown was taken to sick-bay. His gunner said that, along with our two SOCs, they had been jumped and shot up much earlier over Kiska by two "Rufes". He was afraid that our two SOCs had been shot down. He and Lt. Brown had not been able to do any gunnery spotting. One hundred sixty-seven bullet holes were counted in Lt. Brown's SOC.

About 2040 hours, just before Indianapolis was about to be swallowed by fog, another battered looking SOC came staggering out of the clouds toward the ship. This was our SOC piloted by Lt. O'Neil who, unknown to us not in communications,
fire-control, or on the bridge, was not only alive and well but had been in radio contact with the ship both before and after the shelling began.

As O'Neil slowly circled to make an upwind landing it was clear that his plane, too, had been hit by either "Rufes" or Jap ack-ack. Jagged holes were visible and a large chunk was missing from the starboard wing. Strips of wing fabric, like a tattered battle flag, fluttered in the slipstream. "Indy" slowed again, turned to make a lee and O'Neil's plane was recovered. There was no sign of Ensign Sagesor

and Bobbie Crawford. A most surprising thing happened during O'Neil's
gunnery-spotting flight. Side-by-side, he and Ensign Sagesor had continued on to Kiska when the task force reversed course for about an hour. Near the same time the ships received the favorable weather report from "Bon" Amme's PBY, O'Neil had contacted Indianapolis by radio and sent a similar weather observation. Most remarkably, O'Neil also reported that he and Sagesor were, at that moment, flying round and round, in and out of fog patches, inside Kiska Harbor and over Japanese ships. O'Neil then proceeded to give grid map ordinate and abscissa for each enemy ship so that it could be placed precisely in its square.

For about fifteen minutes, the Japanese had paid no attention to the two circling SOCs until the planes had passed very low over an anchored enemy destroyer. Someone in the ship had evidently taken a closer look and recognized the aircraft as American. This destroyer had opened fire and was quickly joined by several AA batteries ashore. O'Neil and Sagesor escaped from the harbor before either SOC received a damaging hit.

O'Neil believed that he and Sagesor had not been fired at for a quarter of an hour because the SOC so closely resembled the Japanese Type 97 "Pete".

Outside the harbor they had suddenly been attacked from the rear by two diving "Rufes". It was during this attack that O'Neil's plane was hit in the starboard wing by an explosive 20mm. cannon shell. He had escaped into heavy cloud cover. This was the last time he saw Ensign Ralph Sagesor and Bobbie Crawford.

When the bombardment began O'Neil had reported a damaging salvo that exploded alongside the hull of an anchored cargo ship. He later reported that he could no longer observe because of dense fog inside the harbor.

After recovering O'Neil's SOC the ship and her screening destroyer cracked the throttles open to catch up with the task force. Indianapolis had just assumed her assigned position four hundred yards in front of Louisville when a Japanese four-engined "Mavis" dropped out of the base of low scud on our port beam. This patrol bomber flew parallel with our course but out of range of our guns. Soon, the "Mavis" overtook our columns of ships and the nearest ones fired at it. The enemy bomber climbed back up into cloud cover.

About twenty minutes later the "Mavis" showed herself again, was shot at again, then took up a shadowing position astern and well beyond gun range. For the next several hours, precisely on the hour, this enemy seaplane bomber came up on our ships from the rear and dropped one bomb through the overcast. Each bomb landed about halfway between Indianapolis and Louisville.

Around a quarter to ten that evening a lookout reported a periscope. This was an unconfirmed report and several other lookouts reported it as a bomb splash.

Radar contact with the shadowing "Mavis" was lost and the task force finally secured from General Quarters about midnight on August 7.

Smith, Goodwin, Turnbull, Spence and I were all in the weather shack about midnight. Although we'd been up seemingly forever without adequate sleep, we were wide-awake. The day's prolonged excitement had pumped so much adrenalin into our veins that it hadn't drained away. Goodwin recounted how it all began in mid morning sixteen hours earlier when we were still a long way from Kiska. At the unexpected sound of machine gun fire he'd run out on deck. Like a giant metal porcupine there was a drifting Japanese contact mine sliding past between the rows of ships. Gunfire exploded it a second later. Emmett Smith turned to me in the course of discussing other events of the day.

"You know," he said, "You've got to be crazier than a loon." "What do you mean? I asked, puzzled.

"Standing out in the open like that firing that damned machine gun," he replied. "Who the hell did you think you were, Victor McLaglen in a movie or something?" Turning to the others he said, "It wasn't on a mount. He had it cradled in his arms."

"Emmett, you've got to be joking. There wasn't any ammo for the gun and you must have seen that big creep take it from me and put it on the deck."

"Like hell," Smitty said, "I didn't see anybody take the gun.
You put it down after you'd emptied the drum."

"Emmett, I think you're the one that's crazy and blind as a bat, too. That big, dumb sonavabitch kept bringing out guns but no bullets."

"You must have hit the Zero", Emmett said. "It was so close I
think I could have clobbered it with a rock."

It didn't matter what I said. Smith insisted that his version was true. He would not accept the fact that his eyes had played a trick on him during the excitement of the moment. Worst of all for me, Smith was responsible for spreading this story among the aerographer's mates in the Aleutians. "Guess what the Black Irishman did during the shelling of Kiska..." became the latest wild tale about me. Enough trouble was generated by bizarre things that did happen to me without having pure baloney thrown in. Predictably, with each retelling, frills were added to the stories until the tale spinners could no longer distinguish facts from their own malarkey.

Emmett Smith and I were close friends during and long after the war. Through all the years no line of reasoning could convince him that he'd seen an illusion.

"Emmett," I once asked, "if what you say about the machine
gun is true give me one good reason why I would not admit it?"

"I'm not sure but probably because you're so contrary."

After securing from general quarters late the night of August
7 our task force ploughed undisturbed toward Kodiak during the
following twenty-four hours. Around midnight on 8 August the ships went to battle stations again. An unidentified blip had been picked up by a ship's radar. This surface contact was about a mile off our port beam. The object had quickly disappeared off the reporting destroyer's radar screen. This short scenario was precisely what would happen if an enemy submarine "pulled the plug" and dove.

The task force immediately zigged away from the contact and increased speed. This quickly executed manuever turned our stern to the threat thereby offering a narrower target. We could only hold our breaths and wonder if a spread of "tin-fish" had already been fired at us. If so, the enemy torpedoes would be racing, unseen in the darkeness, at forty-five knots toward our ship. A sickening explosion could rip the black night apart at any second.

It might have been "chicken" to move my bedroll to the office because everyone in Indianapolis could

not sleep topside but I didn't give a damn. If a guy is forced to gamble he should never pass up any good odds offered. I had at least eliminated the possibility of being trapped below the waterline. During the next tense, expectant moments I silently congratulated myself on a smart move.

It was assumed that an enemy submarine would not accidently be this far south of the chain but would have been directed to this intercept position. It could also be logically assumed that this action had been a direct result of our task force being bombed and shadowed twenty-four hours earlier by a "Mavis". The enemy flying boat had maintained contact with us long enough to have determined our base course.

Two of our destroyers were sent to investigate the area of
the brief radar contact. The task force's position was approximately two hundred-fifty miles southwest of Dutch Harbor.

Forty-five minutes later an unidentified multi-engined plane
roared over our ship. It was not seen because of the night's blackness but from the sound of its engines it had crossed over at mast height. No bombs were dropped and the ships did not open fire. If the plane was a "Mavis" it might not have detected our presence. Gunfire in the night would have revealed our position. When no further contacts occurred we were secured from GQ at 0100 hours on 9 August.

Win Some-Lose Some

In that short space of forty-five minutes we had unknowingly steamed through a tiny area of high drama. This had been unfolding since late on the night of our bombardment of Kiska and would continue for another twenty-four hours. It was directly connected to the task force shelling and resulted in another tragic loss for Patrol Wing Four.

Two VP-41 PBYs had been assigned as far-ranging scouts for our task force during the shelling of Kiska. Our ships were operating without aircover in enemy controlled waters. One of these planes, piloted by Lieutenant (jg) John H. Herrin, Jr., had patrolled our exposed western flank from predawn until long after the bombardment ended. Herrin's fuel gages indicated he should head for home as darnkess fell on August 7.

The generator that supplied power for his radio chose this time to quit. Aleutian peaks were shrouded in heavy fog and cloud cover that night. Without communications in case of emergency, Herrin decided to stay well south of the island chain and fly under the soup until daylight. This route put Herrin's PBY far ahead on the same path as our homeward bound task force.

Herrin leaned the carburetors to conserve his dwindling fuel reserve. Several hours later and 250 miles southwest of Dutch Harbor both engine generators also quit. He and his crew of seven plunked down on the open sea. Night winds were light but moderate swells were running. Fortunately, the plane held together during the rough landing and throughout the remainder of the night but half the crew had to bail while others worked on the generators.

Most available PBYs were either sent to bomb Kiska on August 8 or out on regular search patrols. A few were assigned the task of searching for the unreported Herrin. Army bombers also hit Kiska that day to keep pressure on the Japanese following the heavy shelling.

Two PBYs caught two small transports leaving Kiska Harbor via South Pass. One ship took a direct hit on her stern from a 1000 pound bomb. The other vessel suffered a damaging near miss that set her afire.

PBY pilots reported that our shelling had beached one of the two largest cargo vessels which was aground with its decks awash just inside South Head. It was not known if other enemy ships had been hit and sunk at their moorings in the deep harbor.

Many buildings were reported destroyed. Anti-aircraft positions, including the majority on North Head, were destroyed along with the shore batteries on Bukhti Point and South Head. Numerous craters pockmarked the runway under construction at Salmon Lagoon. Wreckage of many barges and other landing craft littered the beach. Three "Mavis" bombers had been sunk at their moorages just offshore.

Meanwhile, one the morning of August 8, Herrin got one engine started, the torque of which pivoted the plane around into the troughs of the swells. One wing tip float was almost ripped off and great quantities of sea water were shipped into the hull. Before Herrin cut the engine to save the plane his

radioman got off a brief distress signal. Alert monitors caught it. Radio direction finders places the downed, crippled, leaking, and up to that moment--lost plane, as bearing 231 degrees from Dutch Harbor and 250 miles distant at 0600 hours on August 8, 1942.

One PBY engaged in follow up activities around Kiska that day was piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Hamilton O. "Ham" Hauck of VP-41. Hauck and his crew had been flying day and night and had landed at Dutch Harbor for fuel and rest when they learned that Herrin's PBY was believed to be down and adrift at sea. Although several PBYs were searching the area of the distress signal they had not found Herrin because of fog and poor visibility. Hauck suggested to his bone-weary crew that they volunteer to search for their squadron mates. This they did immediately.

After refueling, Hauck took off. His crew included co-pilot,
Ensign T.M. Davidson; Navigator, Ensign J.C. Erwin; Plane
Captain, Aviation Chief Machinist's Mate, I.F. Shultz; First Radioman, AVRM1c W.C. Denning; AVMM2c, G.W. George; and two
survivors from Jep C. Johnson's crash on Mt. Carlisle in the Islands of Four Mountains--, AVMM3c D.F. Pribble and AVRM3c R.L.V. Nielsen.

They arrived in Herrin's area but several hours' searching in the fog and poor visibility was to no avail. Herrin's PBY, large on land, was but a tiny speck lost among the haystacks of grey-green Pacific swells surging endlessly past underneath Hauck's wing.

Herrin, meanwhile, was aware that his PBY would not remain afloat long if wind and waves increased which they were likely to do at any time. He knew that his only chance of rescue was to get off another radio signal to guide searching planes to his precise location. Herrin gambled with the trough again and cranked up the operable engine. With power on, the radioman transmitted a bearing signal that was picked up by Hauck's navigator, Erwin, who got a fix with the RDF. Herrin's PBY was located a short time later. Hauck took station over the crippled plane and sent homing signals to other PBYs and to a seaplane tender that was speeding to the scene.

Hauck continued circlig until he was relieved by another VP-41 PBY piloted by Lieutenant (jg) Julius P. Raven. Raven, you will recall, had discovered and rescued part of the marooned crew of submarine S-27

which had run aground on Amchitka in June.

Hauck landed at Dutch Harbor at 1830 hours August 8th. He had his plane gassed and after the crew ate they took off again to relieve Raven. Enroute, Hauck kept calling Raven for bearings. Unfortunately, Raven had to leave station over Herrin's drifting PBY because of a dwindling fuel reserve. Hauck and Raven passed each other about midpoint just before dark. This time, in fog and darkness, Hauck could not locate Herrin's disabled PBY.

Out of the black night our speeding task force had come slicing through the area some twenty-seven hours outbound from Kiska to Kodiak. We passed within a mile of Herrin's downed plane. GQ had sounded in Indianapolis when a screening destroyer reported a possible enemy submarine contact off our port beam. This radar blip must have been Herrin's bobbing PBY. Our task force had made a course change, increased speed and sped away.

The unidentified plane that had skimmed over us, forty-five
minutes later, was that of Lt. Hauck searching for Herrin.

After several hours of circling the area, Hauck had become unsure of his exact position. He homed on the seaplane tender which was within seven steaming hours of the scene and located her at 0245 on August 9. With his bearings reestablished he found Herrin's PBY again at 0600 hours.

At that same time and about 100 miles to the east, two of our destroyers caught up with the task force. They had stayed behind to criss-cross the area of our brief radar contact. Their primary search was by echo ranging sound gear which probed the depths for an enemy submarine. Results were negative and the search was called off. In the swells and darkness neither radar nor extra lookouts had detected Herrin's PBY.

Back at the scene, Hauck shuttled between the downed PBY and seaplane tender until he led the vessel to the site at 0930 on 9 August.

Hauck was low on fuel by this time and he did not wish to overburden the tender which would be busy with the rescue of Herrin and his crew. Escorted by two other PBYs that had come out to assist, Hauck headed for the nearest base, Umnak. He landed at 1245 with only twenty gallons of fuel left.

Out of the past twenty-five hours and five

minutes, Hauck had been in the air a total of twenty-four hours and thirty-five minutes. He and his crew received Air Medals for their heroic work.

Meanwhile, Herrin and his crew were taken aboard the ship which is believed to have been Hulbert with AerM3c Don Livingston serving as acting aerological officer. Herrin learned that the Captain's orders were to rescue the plane crew and sink the PBY. Herrin, and his crew, became furious. They had survived thirty-six hours of being slammed about and bailing to stay afloat. Herrin argued that there was nothing wrong with the plane that fuel and repaired generators would not cure. He insisted so strongly on saving the plane that the skipper agreed to his requests. When work on the PBY was completed, Herrin took off and returned safely to Dutch Harbor late that afternoon.

Raven, on the other hand, had arrived back at Dutch Harbor the previous night, low on fuel, in a black fog. The rocky entrance was socked in solid. His PBY was heard circling outside. Blackout restrictions were lifted and all station lights were turned on to aid Raven. Apparently, the fog was too thick for Raven to see the lights. After a time his PBY was heard flying away. No trace of Raven's PBY was ever found and after a week the intensive search was called off.

Bits and Pieces

On our return trip to Kodiak the weather shack gang in Indianapolis learned of some additional things that had happened during our shelling of Kiska. Keith Wheeler, Squeaky Anderson, and Tatom provided much of this information.

Wheeler had viewed events from sky control high in the foretop. He had been joined briefly by Tatom while the ship was still steaming through the dense but shallow layer of fog. Tatom decided to make the perilous climb up a ladder from the foretop to a tiny perch at the very peak for what he termed a, "look-see." After he'd made the dangerous ascent he had called down to Wheeler that he was looking at the damndest sight he'd ever seen. Tatom was above the fog and so were the topmasts of the speeding task force. Wheeler had wisely declined Tatom's offer to "Come up and see for yourself."

I was impressed when I heard this about my boss, who although reasonably fit, was perhaps twenty years older than I. Even with the ship at anchor I would not

have attempted such a climb unless ordered to do so.

When the shooting began, Wheeler checked the time of each succeeding event, shot movie film, took snapshots, and made notes. From his high vantage point he'd had a clearer view of the large Japanese destroyer that attempted to sortie through South Pass. Most importantly he also had her in view after she exploded. This had not been visible to me at deck level. The enemy destroyer had capsized. Her dark, upside down hull, still being struck by turret gun fire, was visible for a brief moment before she sank. She had been destroyed so quickly Wheeler doubted there were any survivors.

Several "Rufes" had strafed our ship. One bomb had narrowly missed our stern. Another had been dropped close to our port bow. Shore battery shells had bracketed the ship although I'd seen only those that fell short. These batteries were getting our range when turret guns from destroyers and light cruisers silenced them.

In a few minutes time our small task force had hurled more tons of high explosives at the Japanese on Kiska than several hundred U.S. bombers could have carried from the nearest land base over twelve hundred round-trip miles away.

Keith Wheeler felt fortunate to have been allowed to cover the shelling. There were few war correspondents in Alaska at that time. This situation would hold true until the late stage of the Aleutian Campaign. Aware of the news blackout imposed, many newspapers and magazines saw no point in attempting to get their war correspondents accredited for Alaskan assignment. Many others that tried were turned down.

Understandably, Wheeler was pessimistic about how much of his story about our task force raid would be censored. He also feared that it might be weeks or months before permission was granted to file any of his copy.

Within a few hours of the task force's arrival at Kodiak, Emmett Smith and I found ourselves in a replacement PBY headed for Dutch Harbor. Evidently, Tatom didn't want us to get spoiled by all the modern conveniences and the few luxuries aboard a heavy cruiser.

"I want you both back out west where there's work to be
done," Tatom had said in parting. "Your vacation is over."

Chapter XVIII

That night in the Dutch Harbor weather hut, Emmett Smith didn't waste any time spreading his tall tale about the machine gun incident.

"You know, Paul," said a man, "I'd always believed that was an accident on the hangar roof at Kodiak when your tracer almost took Gile's head off. Now I have serious doubts."

At that moment, I could have done away with Emmett Smith.

19

Our Seaplane Tenders Inch Ever Westward

While I was with cruiser Indianapolis for the shelling of Kiska several incidents of note took place in relation to our seaplane tenders, PBY squadrons, and PATWING Four aerographer's mates.

A few days before our task force left Kodiak for Kiska on July 22, our four tenders were again ordered westward from the Dutch Harbor area. Hulbert, with Don Livingston, took up station in Chernofski Bay. Chief Herold relieved Lt.(jg) Max Jack as aerological officer in Casco. Along with George Martin, AerM1c and Fred "Killer" Maurer, AerM3c, the ship moved out to Nazan Bay, Atka. Williamson, with Roberts and Carey, accompanied Casco. This westward shuffle was spearheaded by Gillis with aerographer's mates Max White, Calderon, Carter, and Olson. This tender was ordered beyond Atka to establish a floating base for Motor Torpedo Boats and PBYs at Adak in the Central Andreanofs.

This would be the farthest point west from which we had attempted to operate. Kuluk Bay, on the eastern end of Adak, is 110 miles west of Nazan Bay and about 240 miles from Kiska in the Rat Islands.

Lieutenant (jg) Roy Green's Crash

While flying around the northhead of Nazan Bay in foggy weather on July 20, 1942, VP-43's LT. (jg) Arthur Jacobson saw a wing tip float sticking out of the water. He reported this to the Casco. The PBY that failed to answer Casco's radio call was that of Lt.(jg) Roy Green of VP-43.

Green had taken off in zero-zero conditions and hit a cliff. It had been one of those days when the fog was so thick the O.O.D. had to give boat coxswains

a compass course so they could find the moored PBYs.

Casco proceeded dead slow ahead to the crash site. The hull of Green's plane, clearly visible, was resting on a rocky shelf forty feet below the surface just off the cliff face.

Commander Willis E. Cleaves, USN, skipper of Casco called away a ship's boat, in charge of Chief Boatswain's Mate Johnson, to search for possible survivors or to recover bodies. Johnson returned to the ship and reported his search was negative.

The setting of the PBY's depth charges was not known. If the strong current dislodged the plane causing it to slide off its precarious perch into deeper water the depth charges might explode. Cleaves stood the risk of losing his ship and additional men. He ordered the ship's boat recovered and Casco cleared out of the area.

It was impossible to determine what had caused Green to hit the cliff. In zero-zero conditions the crash could have been related to the procedure used to power check each engine in turn. On land, at the end of a runway this was done with the brakes locked and the PBY stayed put. On water, it caused the plane to slew around first in one direction than another so that an "S" was described. Sometimes, complete circles were made before the pilots and aviation machinist's mate were satisfied with the performance checks of their engines. Perhaps Green's power check taxiing in the fog resulted in a miscalculation of the proper position relative to takeoff compass heading. Whatever the cause, VP-43 had lost two complete crews and eight of their original fourteen PBYs in less than six weeks of Aleutian operations.

Killed with Roy Green were copilot Machinist NAP, Wiemer Neunzer; Navigator, Ensign Joseph Segall; Plane Captain AMM1c James M. Smith; First Radioman ARM2c H.M. Mercer; AMM2c Jack Heath; and ARM3c E.R. Hulse.

USS Gillis Bombed in Kuluk Bay, Adak

Japanese bombers had arrived over Nazan Bay, Atka one day late to catch Gillis June 14, 1942. They finally caught up with the old AVD at Kuluk Bay, Adak on July 22, 1942.

On her foray far to the west she had first nosed cautiously
into Adak's Bay of Islands on July 19 to set out buoys for PT boats and PBYs. Chief Max White considered the

Bay of Islands on the northwest coast too foggy and the anchorage too exposed for safe operations. On his recommendation, Gillis moved to Kuluk Bay on the eastern end of Adak. She arrived at 2245 hours on the evening of 21 July.

Around 1000 hours next day her mooring party left the ship. At five knots, Gillis was slowly circling inside Kuluk Bay when three enemy Kawanishi "Mavis" flying boats came over at 10,000 feet.

GQ sounded and skipper, Lt. Cmdr. Norman Garton, ordered emergency speed from the ship's two, old boilers. The first six bombs fell 85 yards astern.

The enemy bombers circled then came in on the ship's starboard beam as Gillis sped northeastward out of the large bay's entrance. Showering her with spray, four more bombs whistled down and landed 50 yards directly ahead.

Commander Garton had his binoculars focused on the high flying bombers. He reported one of his ship's 3 inch shells had burst near a plane's port, outboard engine. This bomber dropped out of formation and sought shelter in a cloud bank.

After turning, the two remaining Kawanishis headed for Gillis again. One plane quit in the middle of the bombing run and banked away. The remaining "Mavis" dropped three bombs. Two shook hell out of the ship when they exploded ten and twenty yards off the starboard bow. These near misses cracked the mortar and dislodged some of the bricks of the ship's boiler lining. The third bomb, having landed ten feet from the starboard side, would have caved in the ship's thin plates had it not been a dud.

Lt. Cmdr. James S. Russell, skipper of VP-42 viewed this attack from the deck of the ship. He was aboard to obtain firsthand knowledge of any new location from which his PBYs would operate.

When Gillis radioed an emergency signal that she was being bombed at Kuluk Bay, four PBYs were ordered off the waters of Nazan Bay to fly to her assistance. Evidently, someone considered our dive-bombing PBYs as also being fighters. When the four "interceptors" finally arrived, after the one hour 110 mile flight, they found Gillis safe at sea and the three "Mavis" bombers long gone from the scene.

After the attack on Gillis, all four tenders were ordered back to the Dutch Harbor-Chernofski area on July 22, 1942. Enroute, Gillis placed a few emergency mooring buoys in Korovin Bay on Atka's northwestern

coast. No sooner had the four seaplane tenders returned when they were ordered westward again July 24th.

A few days later a combined bombing attack on Kiska by PBYs from Nazan Bay and Army B-17s and B-24s from Umnak was launched to coincide with our task force shelling of Kiska. Unfortunately, this was during our first attempt that had to be aborted because of the mass collision of ships in the fog.

We had a word for these combined operations that was an offshoot of the popular navy terms snafu, fubar, and tarfu, the latter meaning: things are really fouled up. This fourth expression was janfu which stood for Joint Army Navy Foul Up. Whenever word sifted down through the ranks that a joint venture was about to unfold it always brought a shudder of foreboding. We felt certain that Murphy's Law would soon go into effect. Murphy's Law, meaning: If anything can possibly go wrong, it will.

On July 26 a navy hard hat diver from Casco was sent down to bring up the bodies from Roy Green's PBY at Nazan Bay. Only one body, that of Plane Captain, AMM1c James M. Smith, was found. They sewed him up in a weighted canvas bag which was placed on a board, an American flag was draped over him, a short ceremony was conducted, and the body slid off the tilted board and back into the depths. This is the time-honored sea burial ritual deemed proper and fitting for a sailor. In this case, I wonder. What better coffin had there been for Jim Smith, (or any of us?), than the hull of the PBY he flew in?

PBYs were bombing Kiska all during this period and did so
again on July 30, 1942.

Lieutenant (jg) David Brough's Crash

Lt. (jg) David A. Brough of VP-42 crashed on landing at the entrance to Nazan Bay July 30, 1942. His crash was witnessed by those in Gillis underway for Dutch Harbor.

Brough's PBY hit the water nose first at a sharp angle. There was an explosion and the plane flipped upside down. Gillis reversed course and sped at flank speed to the sinking PBY.

Through binoculars, two men could be seen in the water near
the plane's twisted wing. They were struggling to

inflate a rubber raft. A third man joined them as the plane sank. The three paddled toward Gillis. The ship slowed, stopped, and the three survivors were taken aboard.

There were bodies and dead fish floating on the water. The fish, and probably also the two pilots, navigator, and flight deck radioman had all been killed by the explosion. One man forward, A. L. Cameron, AMM1c, the mech in the tower was still alive after the crash and explosion but he was pinned in the wreckage.

Gillis had launched a boat. One of its crew hooked a floating corpse. Another broken body and still another were snagged by a boat hook, lifted aboard and brought to the ship.

Killed with Lt.(jg) David A. Brough, USNR were copilot, Ensign Lloyd J. Mills, USNR; Navigator, Ensign Louis M. Love, USNR; Plane Captain, AMM1c Alexander L. Cameron, USN; and First Radioman, Warren Small, ARM1c, USN. The three survivors were: Roman Nicholas Gebhart, AMM2c, USN; James Horace Chesnutt, ARM3c, USN; and Milton Wilbert Schreck, AMM2c, USN.

Milt Schreck remembers how fortunate he is to have survived.
He also explains the probable cause of Brough's crash:

"We had been on patrol to the south and west of Atka Island to try and locate some Jap ships coming toward the islands. It was a long patrol (and fruitless). Returning to Nazan Bay we had to break radio silence in order to get a fix because we had been out over 17 hours and were running low on gas. We were able to find Atka okay and were coming into the bay to land. About this time Al Cameron called the tower where I was and said, "Let me take her in this time." I immediately left the tower and proceeded to the aft station and Al climbed into the tower. I put on the head phones in the port blister station and looked forward. We were on letdown heading straight for the water! I immediately said, "Pull up- pull up", but we went right into the water at the letdown angle. The whole front of the plane looked like it exploded and we went over on our back.

I remember climbing out through the blister and into the water and pulling my Mae West jacket. I don't know how we got the raft. The plane was floating on it's back and I climbed on the wing and went to the tower. Al was trapped inside. I tried my best to pull him out but it was hopeless. He kept saying, "Milt,

get me out", but the plane was sinking and finally disappeared under me. Al went with it, and I felt helpless. By that time the raft was inflated and I went over to it and hung on. The Gillis was steaming toward us and pulled us out of the water. My nose was hurting and my back was hurting, but fortunately they were minor injuries.

I don't remember any depth charges exploding but the Gillis
said that's what happened.

About the only way I can explain why the crash happened was that after a long patrol the pilots were fatigued and when we came in for a landing the almost dead calm water must have affected their depth perception. They must have thought we were still several hundred feet high and were still letting down.

I remember back many times to those days, and realize now
that God had a purpose in my life to spare me, especially on that last minute tower shift just before the crash."

Brough's plane went in within a mile of where Roy Green's PBY had hit the cliff ten days earlier. Brough's crash raised VP-42's Aleutian casualties to almost five complete crews. At the projected rate our three squadrons were losing PBYs and killing crews we'd all be dead within twelve months.

In going from flank speed to stop at the crash scene, safety valves in the already damaged boiler room of Gillis popped and boiler tubes burst. The following day enroute to Dutch Harbor the boilers went out and Gillis went dead in the water. She was in an area patrolled by enemy submarines. The boilers were worked on for four hours while crewmembers topside spent anxious hours scanning the surrounding seas for torpedo wakes. Gillis got underway again and at five knots proceeded to Dutch Harbor.

Proper repairs could not be made there and she was ordered to Bremerton. Before Gillis departed on August 4, 1942 her four 20mm. guns on the galley deck house were removed. A week later these guns were installed on Hulbert to replace her four .50 calibre machine guns.

Gillis stopped at Cold Bay to pick up VP-42 aircrews going on leave. At her reduced speed, Gillis did not reach Bremerton until August 20th. Max White, Dick Carter, Bob Calderon, and Glenn Olson went on

leave.

Casco and Destroyer U.S.S.Kane (DD235) Bombed at Nazan Bay

On August 3, 1942, Casco was operating planes from our semi-
permanent floating base at Nazan Bay, Atka. Kane, on anti-submarine patrol off the entrance to the bay, reported she was being attacked by "Mavis" bombers.

Casco got underway for open sea. The attack on Kane ended and the enemy bombers vanished. Casco, believing the alert over, turned around and headed back in only to have one Kawanishi bomber appear and drop bombs. This "Mavis" attacked in a strange manner. It would fly over and drop one bomb at a time. With field glasses, each bomb could be seen as it came tumbling down and orders were relayed to the helmsman for a sharp turn. All bombs missed.

Casco fired everything she had at the enemy flying boat as Kane had done earlier but no hits were scored. Our failure to shoot down enemy planes seemed almost uncanny.

Orders were received for Casco to temporarily clear out of Nazan Bay. A trap would be set for the Kiska based Kawanishis that were disrupting our operations.

The following day, August 4, 1942, the U.S.A.A.F sent a radar equipped B-17E piloted by 2nd Lieutenant McWilliams to patrol the vicinity of Nazan Bay and play the role of "finder". The "destroyers" were two P-38 Lightnings of the 54th Fighter Squadron piloted by Lieutenants Ambrose and Long. Sure enough, right on schedule, came three Japanese flying boats looking for more fair game. The B-17 crew observed the enemy bombers entering a cloud bank. McWilliams alerted the two poised P-38s as to when and where they could expect the Kawanishi bombers to emerge from cover. Ambrose and Long manuevered into position to pounce.

When the enemy bombers came out of the clouds the P-38s struck like their nickname--Lightning. Two bombers were shot down so quickly their crews probably never knew what had attacked them. The third "Mavis" escaped into heavy clouds.

One can only guess at the horror tale told to their comrades back at Kiska by the crew of the surviving "Mavis". The Americans, they would report, had not only surprised them by springing a trap but

had done so with a new, terrorizingly fast, heavily armed, twin-engined, twin-tailed fighter.

This was the baptismal fire for Lockheed Aircraft's famed P-38 Lightning. Our Axis enemies on all fronts would soon appropriately dub this great, high altitude, long-range, fighter, "The Forked Tail Devil".

The P-38 was in reality a fighter-bomber. It had a wing span of 52 feet. Loaded takeoff weight was 17,500 pounds. Two 1600 horsepower Allison in-line engines gave it a top speed of 380 mph and a service ceiling around 40,000 feet. The cockpit pod's nose bristled with four fixed, remotely controlled .50 calibre machine guns and a 23mm. Madsen cannon.

It was hoped that this splendid bush-whacking by U.S.A.A.F planes would keep the Japanese bombers away from U.S.Navy operations at Atka, at least for a time. Casco was ordered back to Nazan Bay.

There were incidents in a lighter vein. Ensign Rolf Hagen of VP-43 was forced to land at sea because of dense fog on August 5. A PBY and destroyer were sent to look for him. Finally, Hagen got off a radio message- "AM AT ANCHOR SOUTH OF UNIDENTIFIED ISLAND X VERY UNHAPPY X NOTHING TO DRINK BUT WATER X"

Hagen stayed there all night and the following day when the
fog lifted he took off and returned safely to Nazan Bay.

There was the case of Lieutenant Hawke, Liaison Officer at Otter Point, Umnak. He requested transportation commensurate with his position. In reply to the Navy's despatch requesting transportation for said officer, the Army answered, "Hawke has been Jeeped."

There is humor, sometimes, in exasperation. Here is a radio
conversation carried on between a PBY and Dutch Harbor:

Plane: "Am being attacked"

Dutch Harbor: "By what"

Plane: "Am being attacked by aircraft" Dutch Harbor: "State name of pilot"

Plane: "Joe Blow. Am being attacked by aircraft Latitude
51-30, Longitude 178 degrees-20 minutes"

Dutch Harbor: "East Longitude or West" Plane: No answer.

The plane got in safely.

On August 9, Lieutenant Commander Herman L. "Joey" Ray, Executive Officer of VP-43, received orders to the Williamson as her new skipper, his relieving Commander K.N. Kivette. It was on this date that Lieutenant Carl H. "Bon" Amme, Jr. was promoted from flight officer to executive officer of VP-43.

U.S.A.A.F. Flyers Rescued From Semisopochnoi Island

Early in the morning following my return to Dutch Harbor from the Indianapolis I was in a PBY winging westward toward Kiska. Another AerM had already taken off on a southwest sector patrol that day. Emmett Smith's and my arrival the previous afternoon had provided the unexpected opportunity to send a second weatherman out. The decision had been a last minute one. I had been sped by jeep to the seaplane ramp to catch the VP-43 PBY which was warmed up and about to leave.

"Bon" Amme was handling the squadron's operations from the Dutch Harbor end while VP-43's skipper, Lt.Comdr. Carroll "Doc" Jones was at Nazan Bay with the majority of VP-43's PBYs. Amme had received orders to send a PBY to rescue six survivors of a B-24 crew who had been marooned for five days on Semisopochnoi. Lt.(jg) George Smith and his crew were selected for the mission. Jokingly, Amme told this PBY crew that they'd been chosen so they could earn the Air Medals for which they had already been recommended.

Smith's experienced NAP copilot was sick that morning and at the last moment Amme had to substitute another copilot. This ensign was climbing the portable steel ladder to the opened port blister as my jeep driver braked to a stop. A few minutes later the PBY taxied down the ramp and took off.

How six survivors of a B-24 ended up on uninhabited Semisopochnoi is a gripping story. The details are provided by Master Sergeant, Roy W. Donaldson, USA, one of the six men rescued that day.

It is appropriate to give a brief resume' of Donaldson's life up to that point. This will acquaint the reader with Donaldson's extensive training, experience, and qualifications which enable him to give us an accurate account of how the drama unfolded.

Donaldson was born May 9, 1914, in Albion, Nebraska. His family ran a small farm and out of necessity, Roy became adept at maintaining and repairing machinery. He took to this phase of farming

and thoroughly enjoyed it.

During the great depression he left the farm to look for work in Salt Lake City. His search for a job led him to Los Angeles where he subsisted through part-time work.

In 1936 he enrolled in a course for diesel mechanics offered by National Schools but had to drop out of class periodically to take short term jobs. Donaldson graduated early in 1937 but could not find a job in his chosen profession. In desperation he enlisted in the army in June 1937.

His background and training were ideal for the tank corps or a truck motor pool. The U.S. Army, in its infinite wisdom and with typical military reasoning, assigned Donaldson to the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Corps. More appreciative of Roy's ability and talent, the Air Corps sent him to most of its schools during the next several years. He became a qualified bombardier, flight engineer, gunner, welder, machinist, and electrician.

In June 1941, Donaldson, by then a Staff Sergeant, was
teaching classes in gyroscopic instruments and auto-pilots. The first mass flight in history by land based planes from the mainland to Honolulu was being readied. Because of his expertise in auto-pilots and gyroscopic instruments, Donaldson was selected as assistant flight engineer on the lead plane.

This historic flight by twenty-one B-17s left Hamilton Field, San Francisco and landed in Honolulu twelve and one half hours later. The B-17s remained but the twenty-one crews returned to San Francisó by ship. Roy Donaldson received his first Air Medal for his part in this flight. Six months later most of these B-17s were caught on the ground at Hickam Field and destroyed during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Donaldson had become a master sergeant by spring 1942. When the Japanese made their attacks on Dutch Harbor in June 1942, Roy's 38th Reconnaissance Squadron was based at Hammer Field near Fresno, CA. His squadron was sent immediately to Alaska. At Fairbanks the 38th's B-24s were modified for Alaska-Aleutian operations and additional guns were installed. As planes were readied, the crews flew them to Umnak to join the veteran squadrons of Colonel William O. Eareckson's bomber command.

After a number of earlier bombing runs over Kiska, Donaldson took off on his last Aleutian mission. Captain Ira F. Wintermute was at the controls of the B-24. Roy was assigned to fly this mission because one of Wintermute's regular waist-gunners took ill at the last moment.

On the 650 mile flight to Kiska one of the four B-24s developed engine trouble and returned to Umnak. The three remaining B-24s arrived over Kiska and made their bomb run at precisely 30,000 feet. Roy states there was a small hole in the cloud cover and they bombed through this. He doubts that any damage was done for it was more a bombing run at the hole rather than at any specific targets.

About the same moment the bombs were released the plane took a direct hit in the port inboard engine and sustained a ruptured fuel tank. Roy had no way of knowing whether the damage was inflicted by heavy anti-aircraft fire or by several "Rufe" float fighters that were attacking through their own ack-ack.

Wintermute feathered the prop of the damaged engine while his gunners drove off the enemy fighters. The damaged engine was not in flames as stated in the one account of this action Donaldson has read. He maintains there is not sufficient oxygen at 30,000 feet to cause fire. For a short time the engine did emit a trail of light smoke some of which entered the rear portion of the plane. None of the crew was hit and the bomber turned homeward on three engines. Gasoline from the ruptured fuel tank streamed off the trailing edge of the port wing. An inspection revealed no visible internal or external additional damage. None of the B-24's controls was damaged. Wintermute had no trouble flying the aircraft. There was one serious problem, however. The B-24 could not maintain altitude and began to settle.

One of the other two B-24s escorted the crippled plane toward far-off Umnak. This B-24 made an outside inspection to try to determine the cause of the problem. The pilot flew around, over, and under Wintermute's plane and reported that all he could see was a large hole under the port inboard engine.

Why the B-24 could not maintain altitude on three engines remains a mystery. During WWII many B-24's and B-17's returned safely with one engine out.

In an attempt to save altitude the crew lightened ship by jettisoning everything possible. This included all ammunition and the .50 calibre waist guns which

were mounted in sockets. The plane flew smoothly with no hee-hawing or vibration but even though lightened it continued to lose altitude.

It was obvious they weren't going to make it back very far. The mothering B-24 still flew alongside. This was some comfort as was the weather. On the return flight the clouds were scattered and visibility good.

Upon leaving Kiska and discovering that altitude could not be maintained, there were few alternatives. Tiny Segula Island and Little Sitkin Island, both on the Jap's front doorstep, had slid past beneath the wing. Semisopochnoi, although it is a steep sided mountain mass which rises abruptly from the sea, was their best hope. It is a large island approximately nineteen miles long on its east-west line and fifteen miles wide. It is also on a direct route from Kiska to Umnak. Beyond Semisopochnoi heading east there is nothing except icy Bering Sea for about seventy miles until one reaches tiny volcanic Gareloi Island. It was Semisopochnoi or nothing. Fortunately, the island was visible and not completely obscured by clouds or the almost constant blanket of summer fog. The problem was not only to reach Semisopochnoi but to get there with enough altitude to safely bail out.

Wintermute's altimeter read 6,000 feet as he rapidly approached the shoreline cliffs of Semisopochnoi.

"Get ready to bail out," Wintermute ordered.

Two men, Navigator Lieutenant Paul Perkins and the flight engineer, apparently, misunderstood and bailed out of the rear hatch. They left the plane too soon. Both landed in the sea short of the island and drowned.

A few moments later, after judging the distance and timing, Wintermute ordered, "Bail Out." Wintermute and his copilot, Lieutenant Ryder, jumped from the forward hatch. Someone went out the rear hatch ahead of MSgt. Donaldson. The B-24 went into a tail-spin as Roy jumped. Three remaining men in the rear were thrown into the tail section as the plane started its spiralling death plunge. Two of the three men clawed their way to the escape hatch and bailed out safely. The last man, nose gunner Eugene Lathum, somehow fought his way to the hatch and also bailed out. Perhaps he pulled his ripcord too soon or the handle may have snagged on something. No one will ever know. Lathum's popped chute became entangled on the plane's

tail surfaces. At the far end of his shroud lines he whirled round and round and plummeted to earth with the tail-spinning B-24. Before the eyes of the rest of the crew floating earthward, the plane hit on the volcanic slope of Semisopochnoi's 4,007 foot Anvil peak, exploded, and burned.

Wintermute, Ryder, Donaldson, and the man who had jumped ahead of him landed in the same general area. Three came down in or near a small boulder strewn draw. Donaldson slammed down beyond them on a rock infested shelf of Bering Sea beach. For a time, after Roy's chute opened and he was drifting down, he didn't believe that he or the other three men would make it to the island.

These four, who had landed in more or less a group, gathered their chutes and joined forces on the sloping shelf of beach near a cascading freshwater creek. They thought they were the only survivors. They feared that the last two men to escape from the tail section safely had missed the island.

Bruised and battered because of the rough terrain they'd come down in, the four fashioned shelters from their parachutes and prepared for their first night on the rugged, isolated island. Their spirits were mixed. They were saddened by the loss of the other crew members but thanked God for their luck in getting out of the plane and descending safely to the island. Weather and winds had been in their favor.

The most encouraging aspect of their plight was the fact that the escorting B-24 had circled the scene. Its crew had observed the parachutists land safely and gather on the beach. It was reassuring to know that a rescue would be mounted.

Late the following morning two more survivors joined them. These were the last two men to parachute from the tail-spinning bomber. On their descent they had observed where the four earlier chutes landed. They, in turn, had landed a considerable distance away. Slowly, the two had struggled toward the other four survivors on the beach. Darkness had caught them halfway. They had spent a miserable night awaiting first light in order to proceed over the dangerous terrain. The six survivors were together. They waited.

All was not peaches and cream on the rocky shelf of beach. Thirsts could be quenched at the nearby creek but it had been a long time since they'd eaten. Even in the middle of summer an Aleutian rock is far from idyllic.

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There were nagging thoughts to disturb Roy and his five comrades. Their exposed position was only seventy-eight miles from Kiska. This was less than twenty-minutes "zip" time for a fast "Rufe" fighter. The Japanese on Kiska also had float equipped reconnaissance planes of several types plus "Mavis" flying boats all of which regularly patrolled eastward from Kiska to far beyond Semisopochnoi.

Japanese submarines were another concern. A periscope scan of shore might easily pick out the chutes and huddled men. A few weeks later that month of August 1942, and two-hundred-sixty five miles to the east of their beach shelf, the Japanese submarine RO-61 would torpedo one of our seaplane tenders in Nazan Bay. The B-24 survivor's fears were not imaginery. Disaster might overtake them before they could be plucked from their perch.

Donaldson and his group were in a no-man's land that stretched across scattered volcanic islands for almost 700 miles from Dutch Harbor to Kiska but they were much closer to the enemy than to friendly faces. They were in an area controlled by the Japanese. Rescue could not come too soon.

On the second day, a PBY circled and dropped a rubber raft, emergency first-aid kit, sleeping bags, and C-rations. With spirits buoyed the survivors slept warmer and with their hunger satisfied that night.

The following day a PBY came out, circled, and dropped a note stating, "Watch for rendezvousing U.S. submarine." The six men took turns keeping watch the rest of the day and through the third night but the rescue submarine did not come. They continued to maintain their vigil but saw neither submarine nor any plane throughout the fourth day, fourth night, and well into the fifth day when our PBY arrived on the scene.

The rescue itself was anti-climatic. Lieutenant Smith executed a neat, power-stall landing in the wind chop and swell offshore. He taxied in close to the beach where we rigged our sea anchor. Smith, the radioman, and our "mech" in his tower remained at their stations while the navigator and copilot came back to the blisters to help oversee and assist with the survivors.

Two of the least injured with a third survivor paddled out to the PBY in the inflated rubber raft. After these three had been helped aboard, a blister gunner climbed into the bobbing raft and paddled to

shore to rescue the remaining three. During this phase of the operation I scanned the skies for enemy planes.

Donaldson, who had wrenched a shoulder and twisted an ankle on his parachute landing and two other crewmen who'd been slightly injured were brought out to the PBY on the second trip.

My earphones crackled and Lt. Smith asked that he be informed the moment the survivors were comfortably settled and our gear retrieved and secured for takeoff. He did not wish to be a sitting duck on the water any longer than necessary.

The raft was deflated, hauled aboard and stowed as was the sea anchor and related gear. Our copilot returned to his seat and the navigator positioned the survivors forward in the bunk compartment for takeoff. Some were in bunks while others braced themselves against bulkheads. Parachute packs, sleeping bags, and our personal bags were used for cushions.

Lt. Smith was notified that everything and everybody was secured and we were manned and ready for takeoff. Sea conditions at that location were considered too dangerous for takeoff. Smith taxied along the shoreline for a considerable distance until he found more sheltered water.

Takeoff was accomplished and the PBY headed for Dutch Harbor. A PBY crewman prepared a meal of powdered, scrambled eggs, toast, and hot cocoa for the six survivors. Smith turned the controls over to his copilot and came aft to see how the rescued men were faring. The cook asked Smith if he would also like to eat at this time but Smith replied, "No. Take care of these men first." When Smith was assured that the army mens' needs were satisfied to the best of our abilities, he returned to his pilot's seat.

A short while after we were airborne I took an hourly weather observation having already missed one during the rescue. I'd left the blister and gone forward to the flight deck to complete this work. On my return to the after station I noticed that all of the army men had finished eating and some were already asleep. One man, wrapped in blankets and lying on a bunk, was wide awake. He was a rather small, wiry, older guy who was one of those that had been slightly injured.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" I asked as I stopped beside him.

"I'm dying for a cigarette if you have one and its okay to

smoke now."

I dug a pack out of my inside shirt pocket and offered it to him. He took one: his first in several days. Because his shoulder was banged up I lit the cigarette.

"Thanks", he said as a long satisfying drag expelled from his lungs. Our eyes met for a fleeting moment. I could see his gratitude. This was Master Sergeant Roy Donaldson although I did not know his name or rank at that time.

"I've got to get back to the blister. If you need anything
holler."

As the PBY droned its long way back to Dutch Harbor the six, beat up, emotionally drained survivors all dropped off into exhausted sleep, warm, fed, and safe at last.

Many vehicles carrying army and navy officers met our PBY as it taxied up the seaplane ramp at Dutch Harbor. The six survivors were taken to the base hospital for checkups. I was not present in the crowded blister when the army men left the plane. I'd gone forward to check with the navigator to catch up on my weather work. As a result, the only time I spoke with MSgt. Donaldson and the only time during the operation that I got a good look at his face was during the brief moment concerning the cigarette.

Captain Ira F. Wintermute was whisked away at Dutch Harbor and separated from the other five survivors. They never saw him again. This was the second time that Wintermute had survived to be rescued by a PBY. He had been forced to ditch another shot up B-24 in the ocean. He'd also lost his navigator in that crash.

Lieutenant Ryder, Wintermute's copilot, stayed with the four enlisted men and kept the group together. After Dutch Harbor, the five were sent to Umnak and eventually to Anchorage. After a few weeks waiting for air transportation they arrived back in the states at March Field, CA. at the end of August 1942. This story does not end here for it has a strange sequel.

Roy Donaldson's flying days were far from over. His 38th Squadron's designation was changed to the 392nd Bombardment Squadron and transferred to the command of the 32nd Bombardment Group. Roy's outfit trained in the states from the end of August 1942 until August 1943 then flew to Hawaii. After

additional
training the squadron flew to Canton Island. Throughout the remainder of the war in the Pacific, Donaldson's group bombed Japanese islands. When these islands were softened up and taken, the group operated from these new bases such as Abemama(Gilberts) and Kawajalein (Marshalls). Donaldson was flying missions from Saipan in the Marianas when Japan surrendered.

Roy had been married two years when he parachuted onto Semisopochnoi, having married Marjorie in 1940. She was a Nebraska farm girl and they were married in Lincoln, Roy's original hometown. In 1946, after nine years of steady flying, Roy began to yearn for the tranquil farm life he had enjoyed as a youth. When his enlistment was up he left the U.S. Airforce.

The Donaldson's had spent some time in the great Pacific Northwest. Liking the area, they decided to settle on a forty acre dairy farm near Orting, Washington in the Puyallup Valley. They rented and operated this farm for about five years until they could purchase a dairy farm near Enumclaw, WA.

Roy decided to go to one more school in 1952 even though he was thirty-eight years old. To take advantage of the benefits offered under the G.I. Bill, he enrolled in a government sponsored "On the Farm" training program. Classes were held three nights a week. It was only a fifteen mile drive from the farm to the shop and classroom at Puyallup High School.

I had left the navy in the spring of 1950 after nine plus years in the service. Jean and I had been married shortly after I returned to the states from the Aleutians in mid 1944. We were busy raising cattle and kids, horse logging, cutting Christmas boughs, and running a trapline at a remote "stump" ranch high up on a slope of Mt. Rainier. As the crow flies, over canyons and ridges, we did not live far from the Donaldsons. Neither of us knew of the other's existence.

I signed up for the same three year program to learn animal husbandry. There were about a dozen in the class including a chicken farmer, several berry farmers, a rhubarb farmer, several other beef ranchers, a truck gardener, and several dairy farmers. Text book classes covered all of these activities. When it came to the shop classes it was obvious to all that the wiry, older, Enumclaw dairy farmer with glasses and a little mustache was the real instructor. He seemed to know everything about machinery,

electrical circuits, engines, welding, you name it; our regular teacher learned a lot.

About the second week in shop class Roy and I caught each other occasionally staring at one another.

"I have a strange feeling I've seen you someplace," Roy said one evening.

"I've been trying to place you, too." "Were you in the airforce by any chance?" Roy asked. "Nope, navy."

We shook our heads in puzzlement and went about our work. A few nights later I asked Roy, "Where do you buy feed?" "Buckley," he replied.

"That can't be it because I get mine in Puyallup." "Where did you grow up?" asked Roy.

"New Jersey."

"Nebraska."

"Ever been around San Diego?" I wondered. "No, just L.A."

One night Roy mentioned that he'd flown some during the war. "In what?" I asked.

"B-24s".

"That must have been rough over Europe."

"Not Europe," Roy answered,"mostly South and Central Pacific and a couple months in the Aleutians."

"Hell, I flew in PBYs and PV-1 Venturas in the Aleutians." "I rode in one of those PBYs once. We got shot up over Kiska and parachuted to an island. A PBY".....Roy's voice trailed off. We were staring at each other with astonishment and recognition.

"Good Lord, Paul, you gave me a cigarette."

With moist eyes and lumps in our throats, Roy and I ended up hugging each other. The rest of the class stopped work. They thought we'd gone crazy.

Roy and I lost track of each other after 1955. We both moved several times and the years slipped by. When I started on this book in 1979 I didn't know how

to go about locating Roy or where to begin. With a bit of perseverance and a lot of Irish Luck I found him later that year. He and wife Marjorie have been out of the cow business for quite a few years but they still live on a farm. Roy has a home machine shop/welding business and does some outside work. He and Marjorie raised three children, a married daughter, Mary Beth, and two married sons, Roy,Jr., and Fred. Both sons followed Pop's footsteps and put hitches in the U.S. Airforce, Roy Jr. as a gunner and Fred in the transportation end of it. Fred lives on the adjoining property and runs his own car/truck repair shop.

Roy and I spent several long sessions reliving those long ago `Aleutian moments. His only regret is that he can no longer recall the names of all of the B-24 crew members on his last Aleutian mission. He was not a regular member of Wintermute's plane crew and had not previously flown with them.

Ex-Master Sergeant Donaldson recalls the following roster:

Pilot.....Captain Ira F. Wintermute.
Co-pilot....First Lieutenant Ryder.
Navigator...Lieutenant Paul A. Perkins. * Jumped too soon.
Nose Gunner..Eugene Lathum. * Chute caught on tail. Radioman and Top Turret Gunner.....McGraw.
Tail Gunner.....?.....
Flight Engineer.....?..... * Jumped too soon.
Waist Gunner....Harris.
Waist Gunner....Donaldson.

Roy and I are keeping in touch.

The USS Williamson Disaster

August 24, 1942 I made a sector search out of Dutch Harbor in a PBY ordered to join a detachment operating with the Williamson. Roberts and Carey were doing double duty in the ship. They were maintaining an office watch and sharing forecast responsibility since Chief Herold's transfer to the Casco a month earlier. This load left little time for flying. Mr. Tatom's verbal orders assigned me temporarily to the Williamson. I was to help in the office but my primary job was to fly the weather.

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Toward the end of our patrol that afternoon I was surprised to learn we were heading for the Bay of Waterfalls on the south- western end of Adak. The Williamson had set up shop in this un- likely place. There were advantages in finding a decent spot for a temporary seadrome closer to the enemy than Nazan Bay, Atka. The Bay of Waterfalls filled half that need being closer by 135 miles and within 215 miles of Kiska. It fell miserably short of being a decent location.

Even the messcooks were mystified by the choice of this poor site. Roberts, Carey and I could not understand why the tender was not operating in large, accomodating and far more suitable Kuluk Bay on the east side of Adak. There was a momentous reason unbeknown to the peasantry why Kuluk Bay could not be used.

For several days prior to my arrival the Williamson had fought a losing battle to operate planes from this latest hidey-hole. She'd had no better luck with the weather, exposed anchorage and surrounding terrain than the Gillis had experiened a month earlier at Adak's Bay of Islands.

By dark on the 25th all our unanswered questions became moot. Word spread we were pulling out. A decision had been made that the location was dangerously unsuitable. At daybreak boats crews retrieved mooring buoys and the tender got underway. Williamson was ordered back to Nazan Bay. There she would join the Casco which was enroute from Chernofski. Casco had made a recent trip to Dutch Harbor to take on stores and a full load of aviation gas.

By late afternoon of 26 August, Williamson had steamed to the eastern tip of Atka. Narrow but short Amlia Pass had been nego- tiated from Pacific to Bering Sea. Our rendezvous with the Casco had taken place and both ships were heading into Nazan.

VP-43's Ensign Rolf Hagen was assigned that day to fly air cover for the Casco, our prima donna tender. This was a small festering sore with those serving in Gillis, Williamson and Hulbert. On their single ship forays into hostile territory these old AVDs seldom had specific air cover. Williamson's current operation was a classic example.

We were deep into the bay when word was received that Hagen had been forced down at sea in heavy swells and forty knot winds. He reported his position as

being north of Amlia Island and thirty-five miles due east of Nazan Bay. This time Hagen knew where he was. Less than three weeks earlier his distress message stated he was anchored in fog behind an unknown island and unhappy with nothing to drink but water.

Being the junior command present the Williamson was ordered to proceed to Hagen's reported position, take the disabled PBY in tow and bring it into the sheltered waters of Nazan Bay. Both ships reversed course and sped for the scene.

Lookouts located the adrift PBY. It was swooping over crests then plunging out of sight into deep troughs. The plane's sea anchor was slowing the drift while keeping the bow headed into wind and sea. Plane and crew were experiencing a roller coaster ride. I never found out what problem forced Hagen down in such conditions or how he managed the chop-flop landing in one piece.

The Williamson manuevered so that a light line could be shot across. While our ship barely maintained steerageway for the recovery the Casco circled at a distance of several miles to provide an ASW and anti-aircraft screen.

Our tender was not at battle stations but a condition of alert was set whereby our few guns were manned by skeleton crews. Our only armament other than two deck guns were four, .50 calibre machine guns. These were in gun tubs at the corners atop the amidship galley deckhouse.

Experience with a .50 cal. earned Roberts and Carey battle stations at these guns. My name had been added to the crew of the aft gun on the starboard side. I was scheduled to relieve the man there at the change of the watch.

Evening chow was over. Carey was on watch in the weather office. Roberts and I were off duty. For an unobstructed view of the operation I climbed the ladder to the gun deck.

Although seas were rough with a strong northwesterly wind the visibility was excellent under the 3,000 ft. base of a broken cloud deck. Atka's misty, greyish-blue mountains could be seen in the distance westward. A cape on Amlia's north central coast was much closer 10 miles south.

A cluster of men and clutter of gear were on the fantail. Hagen and his crew were half in and half out of the plane. Heads and shoulders poked out of hatches. One man had scrambled onto the wing. All were

ready to receive the line. Hollered banter was going on between deck force and plane crew. Many of these exchanges were in a razzing, jocular and relaxed mood. Orders and instructions were being given by a deck chief in charge.

Several attempts were made before the line was successfully passed. A heavier towline was pulled across and made fast to the mooring post in the PBY's nose. The chief ordered the plane crew to take in their sea anchor, secure all gear and hatches and stand by to be towed.

The sea anchor was tripped and things secured as ordered. Towline slack was paid out in pace with the downwind drift of the plane. When slack ran out the towline came fiddle-string taut. In an explosion of spray the PBY's bow burst through a breaking crest. When the plane dropped off this church steeple into the trough the line parted. Downwind sailed the PBY. Her crew broke out and rigged the sea anchor again. Plane crew and ship's crew each retreived their sections of broken towline. With careful manuevering, Williamson backed close to the plane. The line light was shot across but slipped into the sea. My interest dimmed at this point.

"I'm gonna' hit the sack for a few winks before I relieve you," I said to the gunner. "See you in a few hours." I climbed down and went to the stern.

A master-at-arms had found a bunk for me in the ginny pullman. This is probably spelled guinea, or should be, for it was a foul roost because of its undesirable location under the fantail. About two dozen berthed in this narrow compartment. My bottom bunk on the starboard side was the furthest aft in the ship. A few feet to the rear was the last bulkhead. A small oval hatch in this gave access to the rudder/steering mechanism.

Underway, the sleeping compartment was noted for a bone-rattling vibration and pounding throb of screws. Even at anchor there was excessive noise while servicing planes. In spite of these drawbacks I considered myself fortunate. From experience I knew that any bunk was better than a sleeping bag on a steel deck.

A WWI vintage three-inch open deck gun was mounted on top a small deckhouse above the compartment. Entrance to the bunks was through a watertight door on the starboard forward portion of the deckhouse. Directly above this hatch was the

ammo. ready box for the gun.

There were two men in the compartment when I went below. One kid in a top bunk of an athwartship centerline tier forward was wide-awake. With arms under his head he was staring at the steel overhead eighteen inches above his face. The second man, a very heavyset guy, was snoring loudly in the bunk above mine.

With jacket and shoes off I crawled in on top of my sleeping bag. The din above was extreme. It sounded as though a wrecking crew was dismantling the ship. Steel shackles and wrenches were being dropped. There were loud scraping noises as equipment was being dragged back and forth. A herd of iron elephants shuffling chained feet could not have made more racket. Thudding footsteps reverberated. Every sound was magnified. I was inside a steel drum that was being beaten on by pranksters wielding heavy hammers.

I tossed and turned seeking sleep. The man awake got up. The
one above me snored away blissfully.

"How can this guy sleep through all this noise?" I asked the
man as he tied a shoestring.

"Beats hell out of me," he replied. "Nothing seems to bother
him."

Perhaps it was the motion of the ship. Although rough it had rhythm. Possibly it was because I never seemed to get enough sleep. For whatever reason I dozed off. A loud noise awakened me. An hour and a half had melted into the past.

There was less commotion on the fantail. The man above had stopped snoring. He was still in the sack. His bulk caused springs to sag so much it halved the close space between bunks. In what would shortly prove to be the luckiest move I'd ever made I got up and went on deck.

Hagen's PBY was 30 yards off our stern. Her crew had hauled over another line. 50 yards off our starboard quarter a motor whaleboat was plunging about in the 8 to 10 ft. swells and 2 to 3 ft. wind chop. Sheets of spray were drenching her crew as the cox'n angled his boat toward the ship. A deck force was standing by to hoist the boat.

Because of the wind, the chief on the fantail was having a shouting conversation with a PBY mech who seemed to be enjoying a bucking bronco ride atop the

wing. The mech's legs were spread-eagled with one braced against a gas tank vent. One hand clutched a handle for dear life. He was one of the massively blocky identical twins named McCarthy or McCardle. They were members of Hagen's regular crew and I'd flown with them a number of times.

"How much av gas have got aboard?" hollered the chief. "About 650 gallons," answered the twin. "and about 1200 gallons of seawater."

I threaded my way forward and climbed to the gun. "You're early. You don't relieve me for twenty minutes." "I know," I said. "Too much noise. Tough sleeping."

He filled me in on what I'd missed. A second towline broke. A steel cable was tried but it had ripped loose the mooring post. They were going to abandon the plane and sink it with the deck gun. For over half an hour the boat tried to take the crew off. Even in our lee the sea was too rough. Minutes ago we had backed down and passed another line. Somehow, Hagen and his crew would have to jump to the ship. Again, weather was throwing a wrench into the gears and dictating tough terms.

As we spoke I was standing to the sailor's right. With fore- arms resting on the curved gun shield we were facing aft. Winds had decreased but were still blowing about 25 kts. Dusk crept closer. With it came a note of urgency.

Within minutes Hagen's PBY looked like a giant fly caught by its head in a spider web. A network of lines had quickly snubbed the bow to the starboard screw guard. Those in the PBY would have to choose the safest second to jump from the rising falling bow to the small platform portion of the screw guard. Men were positioned on either side of the platform to help while others hung over the ship's railing. Outstretched hands of these men would catch and steady each jumper.

Hagen and another officer made the perilous leap. One carried briefcases with secret codes and confidential matter, the other clutched the new and top secret Norden bombsight.

A third man jumped safely. Several times during these transfers the nose caught momentarily under the screw guard until the next wave wrenched it free with a ripping of PBY metal.

A fourth man was poised to jump. Many eyes were

riveted on the scene. With a crunching of metal and jarring impact the nose of the plane surged far under the screw guard. It remained stuck for several seconds before wave action wrenched it free with more shredding of nose metal. A second later two 500 pound depth bombs under the starboard wing dropped off the racks and plopped into the sea. The tableau was frozen for a few seconds.

"Were those regular bombs or depth charges?" asked the man at
my side.

I had no idea nor time to reply that it didn't matter because
they'd be set on safe.

A stunning explosion was followed by giant hammers of concussion. Probably set to detonate at 50 feet or less, both charges went off simultaneously.

We were both thrown back violently. He went flying halfway around the curved gun tub. I was hurled only a few feet before I hit the gun as the ship's stern was blown skyward by the erupt- sea. A 50 foot column of water shot into the air with the PBY near the apex. The plane's wing was folded in the middle with each half bent up at 45 degrees. At the very top of the geyser, his arms and legs thrashing wildly, was the twin who'd been on the wing.

Man, folded winged PBY and column of water hung suspended for a few seconds then all came down with a seemingly slow-motion cushioning effect. Tons of seawater crashed down on the fantail.

Several men from the ship had been blown off the stern into the sea. One PBY crewman landed on the fantail. I'm sure he was the twin who came down with the column of water. He was badly injured with many broken limbs, bones and internal injuries. I'd descended to the main deck to help when he was being carried forward to sick-bay. He was still conscious, very much so, for he was pleading, "Save my brother.....save my brother."

Recently, I've had the opportunity to discuss the Williamson calamity with Roberts and Carey. To the best of our recollections the following incidents happened although events may not be in precise sequence.

Many were hollering or screaming for help. These cries were from men at the stern and in the water. Many injured were being helped forward. We cannot recall seeing anyone in the water on the starboard

side although there was a lot of debris. I remember wooden planking from a ship's boat floating past and two of our large, grey, life-rafts drifting by one bumping against the side.

Carey says the planking was from the boat being hoisted at the time of explosion. It had been smashed to pieces and the crew saved themselves by hanging onto the launching tackle. Carey had helped pull these men back aboard.

All our life-rings had been thrown to men in the heaving sea. Two secured boats were damaged beyond use. A boat crew started to lower away our only undamaged boat for a rescue attempt. Planking and ribs of this motor launch were stove in when seas smashed it against the ship's side. When this last boat was wrecked all the remaining large rafts were cut loose to slide from their mounts in hopes they would drift within reach of men in the water.

Feeling helpless and worthless I more or less milled around in a small area. Several times I was asked to assist helping injured toward the messdeck. Our tiny sick-bay was full.

A deck crew was wrestling with the ammo box for the 3" gun.
This had been ripped loose and had crashed to the main deck. On end it was blocking the hatch to the rapidly flooding compart- ment where I'd been sleeping minutes earlier.

Word spread that we were sinking.

Carey joined me about that time and asked If I'd seen Porky (Roberts). I hadn't. A seven-man rubber raft was broken out of storage. As the small knot of men working with the raft inflated it, Roberts came hurrying up. Carey and I stared at him. He was soaking wet. We didn't have a chance to ask about this or why he was wearing only skivvies, T-shirt and shoes without socks.

"I want three volunteers to man this raft," said a chief.

"We three will go," chirped Roberts indicating Carey and me.

"The hell with that noise," I almost shouted unheroically. Not me, not in that thing, in that sea.

"Don't worry," said the chief. "I'll have a stout line secured to the raft. Drift and paddle around and see if you can find anybody."

No one else volunteered.

"Come on. Let's go," urged the fearless Roberts.

I glared at him with disbelief and resentment.

"Make up your Goddamned minds,"snapped the chief. "Some of those men may still be alive."

Against all my instincts and with a feeling of momentary insanity I found myself saying, "Okay, count me in."

"Me, too," said Carey with a total lack of enthusiasm and voice dripping with despair.

It had grown dark. Somebody handed me a life jacket. The raft had been carried to the railing for launching. Men were rushing by in both directions and the raft was an obstacle. A loud hissing noise was heard. Something had punctured the raft and it deflated. Someone swore. I gave a sigh of relief.

The Williamson's skipper, Lt.Cmdr. Herman Ray, had a large searchlight on the bridge turned on. Its probing finger swept back and forth in an attempt to locate possible survivors. This happened about the time the raft was punctured.

Out of the blackness by the deflated raft the chief said, "You men spread out from here aft. Hang onto the railing so you don't fall overboard. Peer down. Maybe we can recover a body."

Body is right. I hadn't heard any cries for help for some time. Even if men in the water had been uninjured they could not long survive the numbing cold.

Hanging over the railing I had no trouble seeing the ocean or touching it. Frequently, seas came sloshing aboard at calf height. A line of us was engaged in this grim search when word spread that we were going to abandon ship. We had no boats or rafts left. Luckily no one was foolish enough or panic stricken to the point of jumping over the side.

Within seconds, this rumor was squelched by authoritative voices that shouted out of the darkness, "Knock off that crap," and "Belay that. Belay that. We're going to save the ship."

We were adrift in heavy seas lumped up by high winds. All power was out aft. Seawater was pouring into the hull through her caved in stern. Our rudder and controls to it were damaged and out of commission. One screw and shaft were reported to be damaged.

Men in the water were dead. All efforts turned to saving the

ship and the living.

The ammo box, which must have weighed a ton, had been manhandled away from the hatch. This hatch, which had been closed and dogged, was found to be damaged and jammed shut. Men worked to pry it open. The ammo box had been pushed overboard. This eliminated any possibility it might turn into a runaway steel rhinoceros. If the box had broken loose from temporary lashing on the unlit deck it would have maimed or killed anyone in its path.

When the hatch was freed, a damage control party found the compartment water level chest high. Nothing could be done until this was lowered. Several portable pumps were placed near the hatch with their suction hoses trailing down the steel ladder. These pumps lowered the water level to about thigh height when one after the other clogged.

When the pumps plugged and bucket brigade was formed in an attempt to save the ship. Someone shined a flashlight in my face and ordered, "You, come with me." The flashlight wielder went down the line along the railing selecting men for the bucket brigade.

Flashlights and battle lanterns shining every which way around the stern were making us a fine target for a submarine but they weren't casting enough light to work by. A heavy power cord was run to the stern to provide emergency lighting.

I lost track of Carey and Roberts at this point. Carey went back to the weather office. Roberts put some clothes on and also went to the office. Roberts was senior AerM and Captain Ray wanted him to keep a close eye on the weather, particularly the barometer and wind. He didn't wish to be surprised by a sudden storm.

Meanwhile, our bucket detail took up positions in the flooded compartment, on the steps and out on deck. The emergency lighting and battle lanterns cast wierd, frightening shadows that reflect- ed off the sloshing water. It was scary to step off into chill- ingly cold water which surged about until we were soaked to the top of our heads. Diligently we passed buckets endlessly. Urgings of a chief were unnecessary. At first it seemed hopeless and I fought a touch of claustrophobia. I feared being trapped if the ship sank. Then I realized this would be a quick merciful death compared to the 15 minute struggle for those topside.

Pumps were unclogged only to plug again.

Clothing, some mine, stuffing from ripped mattresses and pillows, soggy cardboard, paper, and footstuffs were being sucked to or into the hoses. Apparently, an area beneath the deck plates had been used for food storage. Ruptured deck and hull plates allowed seawater to enter this space. Grains or cereals were said to be the main culprits. Mesh of the standard screens let this finer material pass freely to the pumps.

Every so often, on command, bucket men changed places. This way each shared the most difficult positions on the steps and easiest two on deck. On the ladder, one hand held on while the other lifted heavy buckets.

Fine mesh screens were rigged for all hoses. This enabled
pumps to run longer before cleaning. Through the combined efforts of damage control, pumps and buckets flooding was held in check. It was not a precise check but more like a yo-yo. Each time more than one pump had to be shutdown water rose. We were never able to reduce the water level much below calf height. What remained had the consistency of sludge.

The first time water level was reduced to knee height I saw a sobering sight. My bunk had disappeared. Compartment deck plates and side hull plates in that area were raised and bulged in four feet. That section looked like a junk yard of twisted metal bunk frames and lockers. I'd lost everything except my life and the clothes on my back. One should never ask for more than this.

The man who'd been asleep above me had been blown up and inward by the explosion. He'd been cut into pieces by the two metal rods that fastened and supported each bunk to the one above. I was lifting buckets from the mid position on the ladder when part of this sailor bumped up against the leg of a bucket man. He had pulled it up partially out of the water with, "What's this?" before he realized what he was lifting. He dropped it with revulsion, groaned then threw up. I gagged.

My guess is we were adrift for several hours before a repair party could begin work to jury-rig rudder controls. Carey believes this work was completed about midnight. Gingerly, we got underway for Nazan Bay.

Like a wounded animal the Williamson crawled into the bay about dawn and manuevered alongside the

anchored Casco. Doubled up heavy lines soon had us lashed securely to the Casco to keep us from sinking. Flooding had increased once the ship had gotten underway and the bucket brigade was still in action as we tied up to the Casco.

She sent over portable pumps to assist in keeping the water level under control so that leaks might be found and temporarily plugged. She also sent over many work parties to help. There was a flow of traffic between ships. Many of the injured were being transferred to the Casco. Our major leaks had not been sealed and I learned for the first time there was flooding in other compartments. This included one in which Roberts was sleeping when the explosion occurred.

In the dim light I saw that our main deck plates were buckled in an 18 inch high ridge that ran from starboard to port just aft of the galley. Word was our keel was broken under this amidships point.

Welders with torches cut slots in the ridges. These cuts were spaced about five feet apart and extended down to deck level. Others were cutting steel beams from our boat skids. As these were cut to length they were inserted fore and aft in the slots then welded to the deck. Hopefully, this bracing would stop the ship from flexing in the middle like a caterpillar.

CAerM Herold came over to the Williamson and found me sitting in my soggy clothes on a hatch cover. Someone had thrown a blanket over my shoulders. In an exhausted stupor I was staring at my mumified hands and fingers. The skin was wrinkled, shriveled, snow-white and almost to the point of peeling off.

"Are you okay, Paul?" Herold asked with concern.

"I'm okay, Chuck. My back hurts under my left shoulder and there's a tangerine sized lump on the back of my head. Other than that and being pooped I'm fine and it's great to be alive."

"Let's get you over to the Casco and have you checked," he
said after taking a peek at the lump on my head.

I refused saying it was nothing. When he insisted I followed him over to a very busy sick-bay. In addition to one dead and one missing from the ship and three missing from the PBY, there were more than two dozen injured from the Williamson plus those from the plane. Most of these men were being taken care of in Casco.

Chapter XIX

A corpsman finally found a moment to check me. He swabbed the lump area with peroxide then painted it with Merthiolate saying as he did so that area didn't need a dressing. Then he asked a few questions.

Nothing hit me. I hit a machine gun. No. I did not have double vision. No. My equilibrium was okay. No. It did not hurt when I breathed.

"The doubled thickness of your watch cap," he said, "probably saved your noggin from a nasty knock."

Satisfied with his quick exam and my answers, the corpsman turned to Herold.

"His bumps and bruises are minor. He's suffering from exhaustion and a mild case of exposure. Get his wet clothes off and have him take a hot shower. Pour steaming coffee in him and see that he gets some rest. He'll be good as new by tonight."

I took the shower while Herold gathered donated clothes from Casco's crew. This bounty included woolen long-johns, woolen army shirt, work shoes and a foul weather jacket. Most of the clothes fit and most came from George Martin, AerM1c, ship's company. I dressed in everything but the long-johns and woolen shirt.

There was no hurry to return to the Williamson. She was expected to be tied to the Casco several days undergoing emergency repairs. Besides, my bunk was gone.

Again, it was Martin who was generous. He offered his bunk to sack out in. Again, I followed Herold. This time below to Martin's top bunk. There, Herold gave me two long pulls from a pint. Fortified with whiskey I wearily climbed up into Martin's top bunk. Except for jacket and shoes I was fully clothed. In spite of this, the hot shower and snorts I felt chilled and pulled a blanket over me.

Herold told me that Hagen and his co-pilot, Nelson, were saved along with two others. But, Million, Hagen's AP and two others were missing including a twin. I told him how Hagen and two others had jumped to the Williamson momemts before the explosion and how I believed it was the twin on the wing who ended up on the ship. I knew that several from the ship or on the screw guard had been blown or washed overboard. It was a miracle that only one was missing.

"Where the hell was the Casco?" I asked. "She

should have
been standing by in case we went down."

"After the plane recovery began we understood there were a few problems because of wind and sea but things were progressing. We headed for Nazan because there were planes to service before dark. We were almost here when we received an emergency message of an explosion and fire.(Williamson's message stated, "No Fire" but was received partially garbled.) We made a 180 and headed for your position. In answer to our request for clarification and more details we received a reply there was "NO FIRE X REPEAT X NO FIRE" and the situation was under control. We turned around and came back here."

Herold asked me how come the charges went off when the switches should have been on safe? I had no idea how they came to be armed. The explosion had stunned me in more ways than one. Two charges under the port wing had not gone off.

A warm glow started through my body. The characteristic hum of a 'healthy' ship's innards filtered to my drowsy brain. I felt safe and secure after a night brushed by terror. Herold tells me I rudely fell asleep while he was speaking.

Williamson and Casco Get Chased Out of Nazan Bay

I had been asleep about two hours. What I thought was a troubled dream crossed the threshhold into realality. GQ's urgent, piercing warning pounded over Casco's speakers. This dreaded alarm always had a, 'Wake up you bastards. It's time to die.' quality about it.

My first mistake was to forget where I was. I tried to sit up in Martin's top bunk. In so doing I clunked my head into the assortment of pipes secured to the overhead. Next, in my haste, I more or less fell out and was knocked sprawling by men hurrying by on their way to stations. I jammed feet into shoes but didn't take time to tie laces and slipped into my coat while wondering desperately where I'd mislaid my life jacket.

Half out of breath I arrived outside the weather office and found Herold, Emmett Smith, Martin and Maurer peering intently to catch a better glimpse of a plane. At an altitude of about 2000 ft. it was flying in and out of cloud cover over the deserted village a mile away.

"It looks like we have air-cover," said an ensign who was out in the wing of the bridge a half deck above and just forward of us.

The words were barely out of his mouth when the plane emerged from the clouds, banked sharply to port and dove straight at the ships. Viewed head-on it was clearly a single wing, single engined, twin-float aircraft. Herold reacted violently.

"Air-cover my ass," he shouted. "We don't have any twin-floats." He sprinted aft past a 20mm. mount and toward the 40mm. Bofors guns on the boat deck. What began as a bellow became high pitched as he hollered, "Open fire on that sonavabitch. It's a Jap."

This time discipline caused hesitation. Orders to fire were received by gun captains through their headphones not from Herold no matter how wildly he was waving his arms and shouting. Soon, however, Casco's two forward turret guns opened fire and all other guns that would bear were blasting away.

"Here we go again," Emmett Smith said to me. "We've had our
share of excitement these past three weeks."

At the hail of lead, the enemy plane aborted the attack. It had gained speed from its dive. With a stream of tracers chasing him, the pilot pulled up in a banking climb to the west and zoomed into cloud cover.

There was a difference of opinion on the type of plane. The majority believed it to be a new type not previously encountered. I thought it was a "Jake", the familiar twin-float, three-place Aichi E13A1. Others thought it was half-again larger than a "Jake" and with an overly-long greenhouse. Some estimated the plane's size to be two-thirds that of a C-47 but I believe that any plane boring in to attack has a tendency to loom.

Whatever type, it disrupted our activities and led directly
to the torpedoing of the Casco three days later at that spot.

Our tenders were lashed together sitting ducks when the enemy plane dove. All mooring lines were slipped quickly. In the clamor and excitement I was not aware of this until the ships had drawn apart. The Williamson got turned around and started out of the bay while the Casco was busy hauling in her anchor. Watching my ship leave was like seeing a dream evaporate. The tender would head for a Seattle

shipyard. There would be long leaves for her crew. Roberts and Carey had lucked out. My catnap had cost me dearly.

The Williamson had drawn abreast of the small but largest island on the southwest side of the bay when she went dead slow in the water. She started sending nervous blinker signals. She was taking water so rapidly her pumps could not keep up. She requested all the portable pumps Casco could spare.

"Bon" Amme had taken off after midnight from Dutch Harbor with extra pumps for the Williamson. He had arrived, topped off his gas tanks, unloaded and moored offshore from the village while I was asleep. He was taking a shower in Casco when GQ busted. Three of these emergency pumps would be transferred to the Williamson.

Loud speakers announced the news that a boat was shoving off in five minutes. Personnel from the Williamson, including those who'd received medical attention and were ambulatory, were ordered to catch the boat. Those not ambulatory or too seriously injured to be moved at present would be airlifted to Dutch Harbor soon as possible.

"Okay, you Black Irishman," said Herold, "here's your chance
to get back to the 'Willy'."

With thanks and goodbyes over I went to catch the boat. By the time we shoved off there were about two dozen from the
Williamson. Half a dozen of us were able-bodied. the rest limped, wore bandages or had an arm in a sling. A few minutes later the coxswain had his whaleboat alongside the Williamson. Pumps were the first priority and we waited while these were hoisted aboard.

Roberts and Carey greeted me when I reached the deck. "My, my, my," said Roberts, "where will you pop up from
next?"

"Why did you come back?" asked Carey. "Even rats leave a
sinking ship."

"Did you two clowns think you would ride this bucket to the
states without me?" I replied smugly.

What ensued after the last of us reached deck was like an exchange of prisoners. There were well over two dozen from the Casco waiting to board the boat.

Among them a welder complete with the tools of his trade.

We got underway. On this trip the Williamson had daylight air-cover. It was the first time in Robert's memory and he'd been with the ship since leaving Seattle in Novermber 1941.

The Williamson arrived safely in Dutch Harbor thirty hours later after two enemy submarine alerts and constant pumping to stay afloat.

Mr. Tatom was waiting on the dock as we tied up. We were a bit uneasy but thought it was a gesture of compassion to check on the welfare his three AerMs. However, when he came aboard he went straight to Captain Ray. When Tatom stepped into the weather office a few moments later he barely acknowledged our greetings. Instead of asking how we were faring he got right to the point.

"Carrigan," he said, "I've got an important job for you and there is some urgency. Get your gear. I want you to come with me now."

"I'm wearing all I own, Commander," I said. "I Lost everything else."

"Okay, then. Let's go." he said as he turned and walked out. In a state of shock, Carey, Roberts and I said goodbye. There is room for four in a jeep. Rather than tempt fate they remained out of sight in the office.

As Tatom and I drove off he asked for a rundown on what happened out west. I made it brief. He said he'd have a requisition made out in the next few days to replace my lost gear. He feared, however, it might some time before I was in a place where I could draw a full seabag.

"The clothes you're wearing will be adequate for the time being," he said. "I'll get you a flight suit, rain gear, a sleeping bag and water-proof shoes right away as you'll be leaving tonight."

"Where am I going?"

"Never mind that for now. I'll explain everything later. Make early chow and for God's sake get some sleep. You look like the devil."

He drove to the weather shack atop the hill. Once again I popped unexpectedly in CAerM T.J.Bliss's office. This time his greeting was friendlier. Mr. Tatom told him to fix me up with a bunk then he left without further explanation. T.J. told me there were spare bunks in both huts and to take any one I wanted.

There were spare mattress covers, pillow slips and blankets in the office storeroom.

Bliss asked about the Williamson accident. He'd heard there had been and explosion and fire. Wild rumors had the Casco also badly damaged.

"There's not much to tell," I said. "We almost got our ass end blown off by two of our own depth charges. Casco was miles away when it happened."

I went to early chow with the oncoming watch then to the hut. None of the AerMs knew what Mr. Tatom had in mind for me. They guessed it had something to do with the imminent, large scale, U.S. advance westward to the Andreanofs. I felt bitter resentment at being pulled off the stateside-bound Williamson. I was also so

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Adak Island
August 29, 1942 To December 31, 1942

"Wake up, Paul. I'm sending you to Fireplace."

After being unceremoniously removed from the Williamson at Dutch Harbor the afternoon of August 28, 1942 I had dropped into an exhausted sleep in a weather barracks hut. Nearing midnight I was roused by someone shaking my shoulder and shining a flashlight in my eyes.

"Wake up, Paul," Tatom said in a low but firm voice. "I'm sending you to Fireplace."

"Where the hell is Fireplace?" was my drowsy response. "Get dressed and come to the office. When you're wide-awake
I'll give you all the dope."

Ten minutes later Tatom filled me in on some of the details. Fireplace was the top secret code name for Adak. This large island centrally located in the Andreanof Group was going to be occupied in force by U.S. troops to establish a permanent base and airfield. This offensive thrust would be a quantom leap of 450 miles to the west of Dutch Harbor. An air base on Adak would
enable U.S.A.A.F. bombers to carry less fuel, a greater bomb
load, and attack the Japanese on Kiska more frequently. Of equal importance, it would provide the first opportunity for our fighter planes to attack Kiska both in company with the bombers and on their own.

Spearhead of the assault waves would be 4500 combat infantrymen of General Buckner's 4th Division. These tough, Alaska hardened veterans would be commanded by Brigadier General Eugene M. Landrum. Rear Admiral John W. Reeves would be in command of the occupation fleet. The amphibious landings were

scheduled to take place August 30, 1942. H-hour was less than thirty-six hours hence for it was now past midnight early on the morning of August 29th. By PBY, a PatWing 4 aviation radioman and I would presently be flown to Adak and put ashore by rubber raft on the main proposed landing beach at Kuluk Bay on the island's northeast coast.

My verbal orders were to take weather observations on the hour every three hours around the clock, encode the reports in a specially modified numerical weather code and assist the radioman to encipher them a final time for radio transmission. An accurate assessment of surf height at the landing beach, the period (seconds between wave crests), and direction of these waves was to be included in each report. Tatom would know the angle that the waves were striking the beach. All of this information would be important to the coxswains of the landing craft.

Red Cochrane, AVRM3c, with his portable radio and other gear, was standing by at the plane. Tatom and I went into the weather office storeroom where he checked out and I signed a requisition form for the following gear: One portable aneroid barometer with leather case and shoulder strap; one hand-held three cup anemometer; a sling psychrometer and extra thermometer tubes; a small compass; canteen; BAR, (Browning Automatic Rifle), and two belts of ammunition.

"Why the elephant gun?" I wanted to know.

"You'd best be armed, just in case," Tatom answered. "The radioman checked out a Thompson submachine gun earlier today."

"But there aren't any Nips on Adak..are there?" "We don't believe there are at this moment but we have evidence they have visited the island several times. Colonels Castner and Verbeck with three dozen of their Alaska Scouts went ashore tonight from two submarines. They are combing the island to make certain."

I'd seen Colonel Lawrence V. Castner, Lieutenant Colonel William J. Verbeck, and a few of their deadly efficient looking native Alaska commandos at the Dutch Harbor weather office several times during the past spring and summer. They had a reputation of slitting throats first, hence their nickname: Castner's Cutthroats. The thought of their sneaking around silently in the night and stumbling upon me sent a chill up my spine. I wanted to ensure there would be

no case of mistaken identity in the coming operation.

"Does Colonel Castner know that the radioman and I will to be
on the island?"

"Not at present," Tatom admitted, "but I'll have the PBY pilot try and locate Castner and let him know." My skepticism must have showed because Tatom was quick to add, "You'll be there alone only one night if everything goes as planned. There's nothing to worry about. Just get those weather reports back to me. Your food rations, sleeping bag, rain gear, camouflaged tent and other supplies are already aboard the PBY. I've got a set of used flight clothing for you and a pair of rubber shoe-pacs. I'm sure they'll fit. They're by that desk over there. Put them on and we'll load this gear in my jeep and get you down to the plane. I want you ashore out there by daylight."

Fifteen minutes later our PBY taxied down the seaplane ramp. Our engines roared to full power. With a sound like gravel thrown against glass, spray crashed against the blisters until our rapid acceleration got us up on the step. The hiss of water racing past our thin-skinned aluminum hull ended abruptly with takeoff. I thought it odd, yet somehow fitting, that I was soaring into a night as black as the back of a fireplace--my destination.

My body was exhausted--my brain numb. I had been asleep an hour ago. I had difficulty comprehending how my fortunes could change direction so drastically without warning. It had been less than ten hours since I'd come slowly into Dutch Harbor on the crippled Williamson from the war zone to the west. I had no more control over my destiny than does an unpredictably bouncing pinball. My misfortune was bumping into Tatom again which propelled me rapidly back westward. This was no accidental meeting. Given that, my caroming direction was predictable.

Four and a half hours later our pilot made a daylight landing on Kukuk Bay. Red, the radioman, short, stockily built, blue-eyed and with a broad, freckled face as typically Irish as Paddy's Pig, peeked out a port.

"Well," he announced, "this must be the place although all
these islands and bays look the same to me."

"It's Kuluk Bay, alright," I answered. Having been in and out of there several times I recognized

two prominent sugarloaf hills which stood like sentinels at either end of a mile long, straight stretch of beach backed by low, grass covered dunes. This sloping shingle of beach ran roughly north-south at the western head of the bay.

The pilot taxied to within seventy-five yards of shore and anchored off the southernmost knobby hill. Crewmen broke out and inflated the seven-man rubber raft. Along with a crewman, Red and I climbed down into it. Our gear and supplies were handed down to us. A long, light line secured to the raft was slowly paid out as Red and the crewman paddled for shore. A light southwesterly breeze had stirred up a small wind chop but waves lapping the east-facing beach were less than two feet high. I leaped ashore with the painter and pulled it taut while Red and the aircrewman stepped over the bows to the beach. We congratulated ourselves on not getting our feet wet. It was short work to pull the front half of the raft high and dry.

Five minutes later our gear was unloaded and stacked on the beach. The plane crewman bid us goodbye and wished us luck as we launched his raft. In so doing, Red and I got soaked to our thighs and our boots filled with icy water. A crewmen aboard the PBY helped speed the raft recovery by pulling on the line. Preceded by a whine, each engine coughed into life and the anchor was retrieved. With throttles advanced, the PBY taxied far out into the bay before slewing around to face us and the breeze for takeoff. Under a low overcast the PBY climbed, banked to starboard and winging north-northwesterly disappeared from view.

Red and I looked around at our new home. Kuluk Bay opened to the east. A mile to our south, across open water, the steep cliffs of Adak's southern mountains rose abruptly from the sea and disappeared into the 2500 foot cloud base. This precipitous shore continued eastward for ten miles or so where it blended in the distance with the north coasts of neighboring Kagalaska, Little Tanaga, and Umak Islands. At the northern end of the landing beach the shoreline turned eastward for several miles to Zeto Point at the northern entrance to Kuluk Bay. The lower third of Great Sitkin Island was visible some twenty miles to the northeast. Its upper portion was hidden in clouds but one could bet next month's pay that the active volcanic cone was emitting smoke. Because of the beach slope nothing could be seen of

Adak's interior to our west.

"Let's find a camp site and get this mountain of crap off the beach, sorted out, and stowed," suggested Red. "We're scheduled for the first weather transmission on the hour in about fifty minutes."

Alongside the mouth of a small draw close to the base of the nearby hill and well back from the beach we found a spot for our camp. Two sailors wrestled awhile with the unfamiliar, two-man, camouflaged, army tent but erected it and placed the folding canvas cots inside. Many trips were necessary to laboriously carry the surprising amount of gear from beach to tent.

I took and encoded the first weather report. This was transposed into Red's radio cipher and we made our first transmission. I say "we", because it took two men. While I turned bicycle type pedals of the portable transmitter to generate power Red tapped out the message with his Morse key.

Because we had no radio receiver, Red had been instructed to repeat each weather report three times to insure that it was copied. By the time he'd finished, my arms were getting tired from cranking.

"I'm glad we don't have a receiver," Red said. "Nobody can ask me, 'Left Foot, IMI?'."

To my question of what this radio jargon meant he explained that every Morse code sender's hand was referred to as his "fist". Although fists vary the same as fingerprints they also possess certain characteristics which, in time, make the sender clearly identifiable to other radiomen. The standard put-down by a radioman copying a sloppy fist was to pointedly ask the sender if he were tapping out the message with his left foot. Red's remark indicated that the key of his portable transmitter was sticky and not the smoothest he'd operated.

This was the least of my concerns. Upon departing Kuluk Bay our PBY had made a beeline northwestward to continue on a sector patrol rather than circle low as the pilot would have done had he been trying to locate scout parties. We'd neither seen nor heard any other aircraft. Red soon shared my doubt that Colonel Castner had received word from Tatom about our presence. Half an hour's mounting uneasiness over the whereabouts of the Alaska Scouts prodded us into action. With unaccustomed exertion we climbed partway up the steep northwest side of our

hill to take a good look inland. It was a mild surprise to discover we were near midpoint on a small peninsula which jutted southward. A narrow tide flat lagoon which extended northward about a mile from a cove to our southwest separated us from the mainland in that direction. The head of this lagoon could be skirted four hundred yards inland and slightly to our right. Beyond this to the west there was a mile wide belt of green tundra running north-south. Although this rolling but reasonably flat area had a substantial look tundra is fragile vegetation and the ground beneath it spongy. Like the taloned paws of some giant, hidden cat the steep-sided finger ridges and deep draws of the interior mountains thrust out of the cloud base to clamp down on this green carpet and pin it forever next to the sea.

Except for the faint sound of small waves washing the beach far below and behind us there was only profound silence. Most of the seabirds that nested ashore were long-gone hunting breakfast at sea. Half a dozen ravens were skittering around above a foothill a mile inland. The only other signs of life and motion were two bald eagles riding the air currents while making lazy circles high above the cove to our southwest. Search as we might with our naked eyes we could see no sign of the Alaska Scouts. Hopefully, the nearest Nip was 240 miles to the west on Kiska because our closest base was on Umnak some 400 miles to our east. Deposited in such hushed remoteness it is not difficult to envision one's self as the last human on earth.

Upon reaching our vantage point and regaining breath our small talk had flowed freely. With each passing minute the somberness of the place became a heavy weight that seemed to press inward upon us. Our talk was reduced to the drip of a leaky faucet then stopped altogether. In an eerily subdued mood we retraced our steps to camp.

With the exception of weather reports and self-preservation we had no other duties. Alternate three hour watches were set. Every fifteen minutes the man on watch took a long look outside. His view was restricted to the open water eastward and to the small stretch of beach unless he climbed the hill. When no activity was observed during the first two watches these checks became less frequent but included at least one climb up the hill. By mid afternoon we held little hope of making contact with the scouts

before night set in.

My aneroid barometer started a nose-dive that afternoon. Between observations our wind backed to southeast and increased steadily. Visibility decreased along with a lowering cloud base which became ragged with scud. All were clear indications that a storm system was swiftly bearing down on us from the west. By midnight of August 29 we were in the grip of a gale. With loud reports which sounded startlingly like rifle shots violent gusts began to rattle and snap the tent fabric. Driving rain transformed our site into what some might consider a vacation paradise: a tent with a small stream running through the middle of it.

With dismay we realized our site had been ill-chosen. With alarm we watched the torrent grow in volume. Without a doubt we'd have to turn-to immediately in the dark, wind, and rain or get flushed out of the tent. Slipping and sliding around on hands and knees we set to work. With driftwood sticks we dug and scraped out a crude but deep trench around the three uphill sides of the tent. This diverted most of the water. In the process we became drenched by the cold rain. Red had thoughtfully brought along a change of clothing. My only spares were a donated pair of dungaree trousers and a mismatched pair of woolen socks that I'd already changed into.

From an opened case of field rations we ate our third cold meal of the day. Our craving for a hot cup of coffee was intense. A small, portable, sterno stove would have been treasured. Weather observations/transmissions alternated with huddling in our sleeping bags. The wind continued to mount in fury and howl forlornly. On one observation I recorded a southeasterly wind speed of 52 knots. It was a miserable night without sleep but fortunately our tent didn't blow down. Red and I Greet the U.S. Occupation Forces of Adak

Instead of breaking, dawn of August 30, 1942 was more a greying of black. We stepped outside into horizontally slashing rain. Kuluk Bay's waters were whipped into a white froth. At six second intervals, swells that I estimated to be seven feet high were crashing with a roar onto the landing beach. I took an observation and we transmitted. Afterward, we relaxed, certain that the occupation of Adak would be postponed because of surf and weather conditions.

Chapter XX

When Red went out a few hours later to relieve himself, he shouted back above the moaning wind, "I'll be damned. They're here."

"Who's here?" I asked jumping from my cot.

"It must be our guys," reported Red. "There are ships coming into the bay."

"Are you sure they're ours?" I asked as I grabbed my loaded BAR and ducked out through the tent flap.

"Jeeeeez. Can't really tell in this weather," said Red as he went into the tent to fetch his Thompson submachine gun.

"They're a funny looking flock of ships and boats for a U.S. Navy occupation fleet," I said as he rejoined me. "Let's get the hell away from the tent until we make certain."

We ran inside and grabbed our ammunition belts. For better concealment and the vantage point of a little height we went up the draw behind the tent. First one ship then another let go their anchors. Whoever it was had come to stay.

One of the few warships looked to me to be either the USS Charleston or USS Erie, each of which had been in and out of Dutch Harbor many times. There were also several ocean going tugs, at least three motorized barges, a number of fishing boats, and one vessel that was surely a yacht. A large attack transport (AKA) lowered away landing craft from a stacked deck load. Troops began inching their way down nets into waiting landing craft.

"They're Americans," I said, "Those are U.S. landing barges with the high, flat bow doors. Jap landing craft have slightly curved bows more like a boat."

"Balls," said Red, "they'd have to be crazy to try and come in through that surf."

With weapons in hand we came out of the draw and started up the beach. Red had his Thompson ammunition belt of cans around his waist. Like a Mexican bandido I had my two heavy belts of 20 round clips criss-crossed over my shoulders.

A landing craft of the first wave was plunging through the high surf and nearing shore about 300 yards up the beach from us. This craft grounded and soldiers jumped out into chest high water as the boat

coxswain fought for control to keep from broaching. Beyond, other craft of the first assault wave began to hit the beach at scattered points.

We were about one hundred yards away when the first boatload of troops floundered ashore. In the excitement of the moment, Red and I were running. A figure gave arm signals and a group of soldiers hit the sand in a prone position. Their rifles were pointed in our direction. The signalman held one arm high above his head. Red and I stopped dead in our tracks.

"Don't shoot," Red shouted, "we're Americans!"

The officer lowered his arm and the soldiers got to their feet. Two kept their rifles on us as we approached. The others turned to help those struggling to reach shore under the weight of hundred pound combat packs.

"Where is Colonel Castner? asked the army captain as Red and
I drew near.

"We were told that he's on the island with some of his
scouts," I answered, "but we haven't seen a soul."

"Who the devil are you two then? he asked.

"I'm a navy weatherman and he's a radioman. We were put ashore early yesterday from a PBY."

"For Christ's sake you're lucky you didn't get shot. You shouldn't have come running at us waving your damned cannons."

It brought little solace and added bitterness to be told that Red and I were like lucky ducks in a shooting gallery. Obviously, Colonel Castner was not the only one Tatom had failed to notify about our presence on the island.

Having uttered his sobering remarks the captain had turned on his heel and busied himself with the landing operation. Because of the high surf and wind conditions this was predicably and rapidly turning into a disaster. Even if the monstrous surf line had been parallel to shore the situation would have been dangerously difficult for landing craft coxswains to maintain control throughout the three steps of beaching, unloading, and backing off. With these breakers crashing onto the beach at a forty-five degree angle it was virtually impossible for coxswains to complete all three phases without mishap.

Landing craft were broaching one after another. Some were swamping in the high surf and drifting

ashore only to be rammed by others that did not have time to stop or back off. One barge that had disgorged its load of men and backed off safely was hit by a fully loaded landing craft on the way in. This empty craft sank. Red and I saw several others sink as well. One landing craft grounded fifty yards farther offshore than the others when it ran upon a submerged object. When I looked in that direction later this craft was no longer there. That afternoon a soldier told Red that this landing craft also sank. Its boatload of soldiers was forced to jump from the doomed craft into water far over their heads. Some of these men were rescued by landing craft but many others went under with their hundred pound combat packs and drowned. Amphibious landing troops cannot wear a standard life jacket or inflatable rubber vest because of the sheer bulk of their combat packs. Instead, they wear a small life belt. The ones in use during WWII provided some buoyancy in chest high water. Apparently, the floatation device could not keep a man and one-hundred pounds of equipment afloat very long especially if he was injured or weakened rapidly from his struggles.

Wrecked landing craft washed ashore broadside in the crashing surf. Landing barges carrying supplies and equipment started coming in and this added to the confusion as many got into trouble and either wrecked or sank.

Red and I helped two soldiers ashore. Both were crawling weakly on hands and knees in the battering surf. Beyond, I could see several soldiers lying face down on the beach. I could not tell if they were in a state of exhaustion or had drowned. Other soldiers were being given artificial respiration. Through the mass of humanity jammed on the narrow shore it appeared that these scenes were repeated at intervals along the entire beach.

I have no idea what the total casualty figure was on the unopposed landing at Kuluk Bay, Adak on August 30, 1942 but it must have been considerable. In materiel alone the cost was high. At the time, I heard that twenty-three of the first twenty-five landing craft broached and either wrecked or sank. Although I didn't count the smashed, swamped hulks littering the shore I had no reason to doubt this figure. This avoidable tragedy was never made public. That is hardly surprising because even on Adak the official stance seemed to be that it never happened.

Whether a candid report exists in some dusty file would be conjecture. Volcanic peaks were not the only things shrouded in Aleutian fogs and mists.

What was the point in having me send accurate weather reports if they were to be totally ignored? Why wasn't the landing delayed until the surf subsided? What was the great hurry? It had all been so senseless and costly. The more I thought about these nagging questions the sadder I felt and the madder I got at Tatom. I made a resolve to get some straight answers from him at the first opportune moment.

Commander Carl E. "Squeaky" Anderson's First Beachmaster Job

By the war's end Squeaky Anderson would be known as the legendary Beach Master of the Pacific. On that sloping Adak beach I was privileged to watch Squeaky work his first magic. Additional casualties would likely have occurred had it not been for Anderson.

By the second morning of the Adak landings Squeaky had things organized and running as smoothly as possible under adverse conditions. He'd had a tug push one end of a large barge up on the beach. Anchors secured the offshore end. This barge was being used as a floating dock to unload smaller supply, equipment, and personnel barges and boats. Crawler tractors and bulldozers had been unloaded and these, pulling equipment ashore from other landing barges, were working along the surf. Anderson, in constant motion stomping up and down the beach, was shouting orders in his high-pitched voice. He not only kept an orderly flow of supplies coming in but of equal importantance kept this increasing mountain of materiel sorted, stacked, and moving smoothly inland off the beach.

The last time I'd seen Anderson was in the weather office aboard USS Indianapolis after the shelling of Kiska. When a lull occurred I walked up and said hello. He asked me what I needed. I wondered if he'd seen Cmdr. Tatom. He hadn't. As far as Anderson knew Tatom was still at Dutch Harbor. I mentioned that my orders from Tatom had covered the period up to the landings but not beyond.

"How the hell am I supposed to know what you're to do," said Anderson. "You'll have to wait 'til Tatom gets here. In the meantime don't just stand around. Make yourself useful anywhere you can."

Red and I, helping haul and stack supplies,

worked on the
beach the rest of that day.

We slept in the following morning. With aching muscles we trudged down to work on the beach again for there was nothing else to do. I had wondered if we should still be transmitting weather reports but Red assured me no one would be listening. He had been told that our weather frequency would not be monitored after the landings.

Near midday Squeaky's voice roared at me, "Carrigan, come
here and get your g_____ _____g crate off my beach."

I hurried to him and he indicated a 3 x 3 x 4 foot wooden box with stenciled numbers and lettering. A parcel number followed by U.S.NAVY AERO. UNIT NO. 4 identified it as one of many crates
from an aerological expeditionary unit.

"Are there others," I asked.

"No, just this, so far. Get it the hell off the beach."

"I don't know what to do with it and have no place to put it," I replied. "I'm living in a tiny tent not much larger than this box over near the base of that hill."

"Jesus jumped up Christ," Squeaky bellowed in exasperation,"
I don't give a good ____ how big your tent is or where the ____
you live. I'll give you thirty seconds to get this _____ crate out of my sight." As he turned and stomped off in disgust I caught a helpful mumbled suggestion that was also bracketed by expletives deleted.

I imitated Squeaky and hollered for Red's quick assistance. We lifted the crate, which proved to be more bulky than heavy, and staggered uphill off the beach with it.

"Where we goin' with this?" Red wanted to know.

"North and inland a short way to some kind of navy tent camp," I answered. "Mainly, I have to get it out of sight before Squeaky kills me."

We flagged down an army corporal in a jeep. A few bouncy-jouncy moments later the corporal deposited us and the crate at the navy tent city. This encampment was named Nashville in honor of Commander A.R."Daddy" Nash, USN, PatWing 4 Operations Officer and senior U.S.Naval officer ashore. Nashville wasn't much at that stage. Perhaps three dozen tents of

various sizes were already up and others were being erected. In less than forty-eight hours the tundra covered area had been transformed into a quagmire calf deep with oozing mud.

"I'm going to look around and see what I can find out," offered Red. "There must be a radio tent by now. Want to come along?"

"Hell, no!" I spat. "What a miserable frigging country and war this is. I'm just going to sit on my crate until somebody orders me to do something constructive."

I was feeling sorry for myself on this afternoon of September 1, 1942. I could not believe that the Williamson disaster had happened only a few days ago. The badly damaged seaplane tender was probably, at that very moment, enroute to the states. I felt that I deserved to be aboard. Instead, without having had a chance to catch by breath, I was wet, cold, and miserable stuck in the mud, rain, and wind of Adak over a hundred miles closer to the Japanese than I'd been at Nazan Bay. To hell with everything and everybody.

Little did I know how fortunate I was. A series of disasters had overtaken our patrol wing in the past six days.

Tragedy By The Numbers

On the day prior to the Williamson calamity, the PBY mail plane between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor was lost with all hands including six passengers who were pilots going on leave. The PBY's pilot was VP-43's Ensign Stan Raithel who had taken over the mailplane duties from VP-41's LT(jg) Jack Litsey shortly after the Dutch Harbor attacks.

Raithel was last heard from at 1110 hours on August 25 after taking off from Cold Bay. Raithel was affectionately called "Cactus" by his fellow officers. He enjoyed his job and tackled it with a Pony Express rider's enthusiasm, dedication, and determination to "get the mail through".

On the day of the Williamson tragedy, a VP-41 PBY loaded with flight crews going home on leave disappeared.

The following day, August 27, Lieutenant Davies and Lieutenant (jg) Belew of VP-43 were bombed in Nazan Bay, Atka while aboard their anchored PBYs.

At the time, Casco was safely at sea. She and Williamson had been chased out of Nazan Bay that very morning by the twin-float plane. Until things quieted down it was deemed wise for the tender to stay at sea during daylight hours to eliminate the risk of being attacked while at anchor.

It is hardly remarkable that during the attack on Davies and Belew's anchored PBYs all of the bombs missed or that the attack followed so closely on the heels of the one by the twin-float plane because Japanese retaliatory efforts seemed to be concentrated on making Nazan Bay a hot spot for us. What is remarkable is that the attack was reportedly carried out by four, twin-engined, land based Betty medium bombers.

This fact has never been officially verified by either the
U.S. Navy or Japanese authorities. At the higher U.S. echelon levels it was assumed that Davies and Belew made a mistake in enemy aircraft recognition and the attack had been carried out by Kawanishi four-engined flying boats. False as this assumption turned out to be the reasoning behind it is clear. The Japanese had no completed airfields in the Aleutians. Their nearest were on the Kurile Island of Paramushiro 650 miles southwest of Attu and therefore a distance of roughly 1200 air miles from Nazan Bay, Atka. Because the B-17 and B-24, our two finest long-range bombers, were incapable of making a 2400 mile round trip bombing attack this distance was considered to be equally far beyond the capability of any contemporary land-based enemy bomber. One must remember that this was early in the war and although the performance of the Zero fighter had been an ego deflating eye-opener for us we still had much to learn about other secretive strides made by the Japanese in aircraft technology and design.

It was not until after the war that the performance figures of Mitsubishi's "Betty" G4M1 Model 11 became known. This was the first production model, the one most in use at the time, and indeed, throughout the war. This aircraft was equipped with two 1530 horsepower Mitsubishi engines. Maximum service ceiling was
23,780 feet, top speed 266 miles per hour, cruising speed 196 mph. Armament included one 7.7 mm. type 92 machine gun each in the nose and dorsal blister; two 7.7 mm. type 92's in the beam blisters, and one 20mm.

type 99 model 1 cannon in the tail. It also possessed the astounding range of 3,748 miles.

Many months later in the South Pacific after U.S. Forces captured Guadalcanal our reconnaissance planes began to run across the far-ranging "Betty". Some of these encounters were in unexpected places a thousand and more miles out in the middle of seemingly no place. The presence of these "Bettys" was attributed to undiscovered enemy airfields rather than extremely long range.

Unfortunately, neither interrogations of surviving Japanese officers after the war nor incomplete enemy records indicated that any such long range bombing raid on Davies and Belew's anchored PBYs took place. In spite of this I refuse to believe that two experienced combat pilots such as Davies and Belew could possibly mistake sleek twin-engined land-based medium bombers for four-engined flying boats. In my opinion Davies and Belew witnessed the mid part of one of the most remarkable long-range bombing missions of WWII, ie, Paramushiro or Shimushu to Nazan Bay and return.

USS Casco Bay (AVP-12) Torpedoed At Nazan Bay, Atka

On August 30, the same day Red and I watched the U.S. Occupation Forces come ashore at Adak, the Casco was back at her anchorage in Nazan Bay. She had abandoned her recently instituted policy of seeking cover at sea during daylight for several reasons. There had been no enemy activity at Nazan Bay since August 27; the large scale assault on Adak was expected to keep the enemy occupied in that area, PBYs would most likely require servicing, and destroyer USS Reid had arrived to maintain constant anti-submarine patrol at the entrance to Nazan Bay.

Casco had slipped back into Nazan Bay on the afternoon of
August 29 to service her PBYs and to anchor for the night.

Japanese submarine RO-61 was waiting in ambush.

Little did anyone realize that RO-61 had, undetected, crept into Nazan Bay that day while Casco was at sea and before the arrival of USS Reid. RO-61's orders were to torpedo the American seaplane tender when she came back into the harbor to anchor for the night. Submerged, RO-61 had entered a deserted harbor, found a hiding place alongside the small

island near the southwestern shore of the bay, and waited patiently all that day for her quarry.

The USS Reid had unexpectedly come over the horizon to take up station. Her arrival corked the submarine's escape route but RO-61's presence and "capture" were, unfortunately, not known.

Commander Tokutomi, IJN, skipper of RO-61 must have been in a bit of a quandary. He had only two torpedoes remaining aboard his old boat, not enough with which to attack both an American destroyer and a seaplane tender with any assurance of success. Tokutomi decided to wait and see what developed.

Fate's Fickle Finger (FFF) can be detected at work here once again with Aleutian weather as her accomplice. VP-43's Lieutenant Carl Bagge flew Wing Commander, Commodore Leslie E. Gehres from Dutch Harbor to Adak early the following morning of August 30. With Gehres were Colonel Benjamin B. Talley of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and his top assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Leon B. DeLong. The purpose of the flight was to put Colonels Talley and DeLong ashore so they could select an airstrip site and begin construction when the necessary heavy equipment was brought ashore.

The wind-lashed waters of Kuluk Bay that were raising so much hell with the occupation landing craft that first day were deemed far too dangerous to attempt a landing in the PBY. Gehres ordered Bagge to fly the party to Nazan Bay, Atka where Talley and DeLong could be transferred to destroyer USS Reid for transporatation to Adak.

The full force of the storm had not reached Atka. Although Nazan Bay was churned up Bagge was able to make a safe rough-water landing. Conditions were too rough to attempt a transfer from anchored PBY to ship's boat so rubber rafts were used to reach Casco. Gehres remained aboard the seaplane tender while Talley and DeLong were later transferred to the Reid.

This change in plans caused by the weather at Adak and the decision by Gehres to use the Reid as a passenger ferry was unfortunate. It must have been a great relief to Tokutomi when the Reid left for Adak with Colonels Talley and DeLong. This allowed the enemy submarine to exit.

Until that moment,Commander Tokutomi had been in a desperate situation. He had been submerged so long his batteries were almost exhausted as well as his supply of oxygen. His choices had been reduced to

two: either one a grim decision. He would soon be forced to either fire his torpedoes and surface to fight it out or surface and surrender.

Tokutomi waited to make certain the American destroyer did not return and until the PBYs were serviced and at their mooring buoys off the native village. Casco was settled in for the night with two anchors down because of increasingly strong winds and a high chop. She was broadside to the small island. Through RO-61's persicope Casco must have presented a luscious target.

At 2030 hours, just as dark descended, a bridge lookout's strident voice reported a torpedo streaking for Casco's starboard bow. An instant later, the ship's GQ alarm honked its chilling warning. A high pitched voice on the squawk box shouted, "General Quarters!--General Quarters!"

By a cat's whisker, the first torpedo missed as it passed between the bows and the two anchor chains. Rough waters caused this torpedo to porpoise. It went leaping across the bay and ran ashore on the west side where it failed to explode.

RO-61's second and last torpedo slammed into Casco dead center three or four seconds after GQ sounded. A tremendous explosion lifted the small seaplane tender bodily out of the water. The torpedo penetrated Casco's hull below the waterline and 600 pounds of nitroglycerine in the warhead blew a huge hole amidships destroying the forward engine room and crew's mess. Luckily, it hit 20 feet aft of aviation gasoline fuel tanks and where 110 tons of bombs, depth charges, and other ordnance was stored. A hit almost anyplace else would have resulted in the ship's blowing up with a gigantic explosion and loss of life. It is no wonder that seaplane tender duty was considered extra hazardous during wartime because of the volatile cargo which made this type vessel a combination aviation fuel tanker/munitions ship.

Everyone aboard Casco had been afforded a few seconds warning so they were all on the run for battle stations. Most were knocked flat when the torpedo struck.

CAerM C.C.Herold arrived at his Fire-Control Station atop the ship's bridge. One forward 5.38 calibre turret gun began firing toward the submarine's position as noted from the torpedo wakes. Shell fuses for this gun as well as the others had to be set by hand as were the bearing and range settings because

Herold's fire control unit had been knocked out of its bracket by the explosion. This gunfire, nonetheless, kept RO-61 submerged and may have prevented Tokutomi from firing additional tin-fish into Casco had he possessed more. It certainly discouraged RO-61 from surfacing immediately and using her deck guns to finish off Casco.

Casco's radar antennae had also been ripped loose and had come crashing down into the fire-control station and the weather decks below. A continual rain of gear kept falling from the mast. Chief Herold told the ship's new skipper, Commander Cleaves, of this dangerous situation. Fire Control was out of commission so Cleaves ordered the station secured before additional casualties occurred from this shower of death.

Two heroes emerged that saved the ship and most likely
several hundred lives on this dark stormy night.

One man was Aviation Ordnanceman Third Class, Samuel Cobean. The explosion had ruptured fuel lines. Surrounding waters were covered with oil and aviation gasoline. A floating magnesium flare had been tripped and hurled overboard by the explosion.

"Put out that flare!" ordered Captain Cleaves

Cobean took it personally. He was shoeless because he had been about to take a shower when GQ sounded. He had not had time to get a life jacket. Without hesitating, Cobean jumped into the black, icy-cold water and swam through oil covered waves to the flare. He tried to extinquish it by pushing it underwater but it was designed to float. Next, he held it aloft so its flame was away from the fuel but his clothing started to drag him down. The cold and his exertions were sapping his strength, his eyes were smarting from gas and fuel oil, he was choking from oil and salt water. In desperation, Cobean grabbed the flame with his bare hands suffering severe burns in the process. With a super-human effort he forced the flare under and extinguished the flame. With his last ounce of strength he struggled back to the ship.

Samuel Cobean was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism. The other heroic man was Lieutenant Johnson Casco's Engineering Officer. He went down into the flooding aft engine room and succeeded in getting this engine running even though the cooling water system could not be repaired.

Both anchor chains had become jammed in their

lockers. When the anchors were finally slipped, the ship slowly got underway. Because the steering had also been knocked out and the rudder was jammed in a hard-over position, the ship could only circle. The engine ran for ten minutes before it seized tight from lack of cooling water. It had been time enough for the ship to make two circles each one bringing Casco closer to shore.

Seawater had been pouring into the engine room through a badly leaking shaft bearing. The engine room had to be abandoned just as the engine quit. With all power out, the ship drifted before wind and waves from a favorable direction until it grounded on the only stretch of sandy beach in Nazan Bay. This was about a mile west of the native village. Had she not gotten underway she would have sunk at her deep water anchorage with great loss of life.

Casco's radio had been knocked out by the explosion. News of the disaster was transmitted from a PBY at anchor. Dutch Harbor received: "CASCO TORPEDOED".... before the weak signal faded. Listeners fearfully presumed this meant SUNK until further details were radioed the following morning, August 31.

Two-hundred-fifty men were put ashore in the storm leaving a skeleton crew aboard ship. Everyone got soaking wet during the dangerous operations of getting ashore from the oil covered decks of the listing, beached ship. In addition it was raining hard. This number sent ashore included ship's company, flight crews, about four dozen wounded by the torpedoing and a half dozen or more wounded from the Williamson explosion. This latter group included the twin brother from Ensign Rolf Hagen's PBY crew who survived the Williamson disaster then four days later the Casco torpedoing. He had remained in Casco's sickbay because his injuries were considered too severe to transfer him to a hospital.

Ashore, the men picked their way to the houses of the native village for shelter and protection from the elements and the Japanese. There was every reason to expect the submarine to surface and fight and/or put a landing party ashore.

It has long been accepted as fact that the native houses were burned to the ground two and a half months previous to this date when Gillis and Hulbert evacuated Nazan Bay on the night of June 13, 1942 but this is not true.

CAerM Herold chose a furnished story-and-a-half house in which to billet his charges. Included among this group were eleven ambulatory wounded placed in his care by the ship's doctor. The remainder of the 250 survivors found shelter in other houses throughout the deserted village.

Herold and his men occupied a house that had a large kitchen
with a good, heavily constructed, oil-fired cook stove, and a fresh water pump in the sink. There were two bedrooms and a combination living-dining room.

Herold got the stove going to get some warmth in the place for all were extremely chilled. There were only four blankets so Herold had the eleven wounded sleep huddled together on the living room deck. He kept the fire going all night.

Casco's survivors had come ashore with few weapons. Herold had a .45 calibre service pistol and there was one rifle among his group. He set two hour watches to patrol around the house. Fred "Killer" Maurer, AerM3c, was one of Herold's sentries.

On the morning of August 31, auxillary power was restored to the beached Casco. Fuel lines were extended from the ship over a sandy bluff and 100,000 gallons of aviation gasoline were pumped into a swale to lighten ship. The smoking lamp was out in that area all day because gas fumes permeated the air and it was feared an explosion might occur.

Casco was hard aground on a shelf of beach that sloped about forty-five degrees. An inspection revealed that 45 feet of her keel was missing. Only deck plates and beams held her together.

One of those large, twin-float enemy planes scouted Nazan Bay on September 1. It was chased away by gunfire from the beached ship. That night, Tokyo Rose reported on her radio broadcast that Imperial Japanese Forces had torpedoed an American light cruiser in Nazan Bay, Atka in the Aleutian Islands. The mistake in identification was caused by Casco's configuration. Her three gun turrets gave her the general appearance of one older class U.S. light cruiser.

Some food stores were off-loaded from the ship and distributed among the men living in the native houses a mile away. Chief Herold supplemented this with canned reindeer meat and other food with which the shelves in the house were well stocked.

On the second day Herold received one pork chop

per man. Casco's cold storage units were damaged and all fresh meats were spoiling rapidly. On this day, a crewman also lugged a five gallon can of wood alcohol from supplies on the beach. Herold reports, "The damn fools were going to drink it. I confiscated the can and periodically added its contents to the stove's oil supply."

During the last five days of their ten day stay in the native houses, the men supplemented their diet with freshly caught humpback salmon. A small creek runs just west of the village and when the run began it was full of salmon. All species of salmon deteriorate rapdily after they enter fresh water. After eating some soggy specimens, Herold had the fishermen go to the creek mouth for bright, better quality fish.

Salvage operations on the Casco were soon in progress. Her boat skids were used to strengthen the ship. A number of these large steel "H" beams were welded to ribs on each side of the ship forward and aft of the gaping hole to lend longitudinal support. Leaks were plugged and the ship pumped out. An army tug and navy destroyer made several attempts to pull Casco off the beach but these sally attempts failed because the tender had settled deeply into the sand.

On about September 4, a U.S. Navy team of hard-hat divers arrived to help refloat Casco. They brought with them large Chrysler pumps for blowing sand away from the ship's keel.

Manning the hose nozzels of these powerful pumps, in stirred up waters under Casco's keel was extremely dangerous work. After four, hazard-filled days the divers successfully completed the job. A sallying tug freed Casco from the gripping suction of sand and she was refloated.

While this work was in progress a U.S. Navy demolition team arrived and disarmed the live Japanese torpedo that had missed Casco's bows and porpoised ashore. This torpedo was placed aboard seaplane tender Hulbert for transportation to Dutch Harbor and further study. Hulbert had come to Nazan Bay to take over Casco's duties after the torpedoing. By September 5, Hulbert had to return to Dutch Harbor for aviation fuel and other supplies.

This was the first Japanese torpedo recovered intact during WWII. It was a major surprise to discover its warhead contained six hundred pounds of poured nitro. The U.S. Military did not think the

Japanese were capable of this.

Sadly, as the war progressed, we slowly began to realize that Japanese torpedoes were far superior to our own. Theirs usually ran true and exploded whereas our early model, both sea and air, often either exploded prematurely, failed to explode, ran erratic courses, often failed to run at the set depth, and generally malfunctioned because of design flaws.

Although the Casco was afloat, nothing could be done to patch
the gaping hole through the ship. Her watertight compartment doors, fore and aft, were sealed and the seawater freely surged in one side and out the other.

Her ship's crew returned aboard on September 9. A tug took Casco in tow and with a single destroyer escort the small flotilla proceeded at six knots for Dutch Harbor. They arrived safely on September 16 but the trip was not uneventful.

First, there was constant fear the ship would break in two. We had experienced this same sensation of being in a broken-backed ship aboard the Williamson, a ship that plunged over the swells with a noticeably, limber, flexing, "caterpillar" motion.

Secondly, the week-long trip was punctuated by frequent torpedo alerts caused by enemy submarines stalking the crippled ship. Like the good shepherd, the destroyer escort charged back and forth preventing Japanese submarines from reaching an attack position on the slow moving tug and tender.

On September 15, the ships were hit by 100 knot Williwaws near Chernofski Bay. These fierce winds shrieked past with their characteristic, pulsating Whoosh!--Whoosh!--Whooshing sound, as they leveled wave crests and flattened the sea into a frothing white foam.

The tug struggled with her tow into the relative safety of Chernofski Bay. Here the two ships spent the night while the destroyer maintained a ceaseless patrol vigil off the bay's narrow entrance.

Casco arrived at Dutch Harbor the next day. This area had been experiencing several days of light to moderate winds. The people there knew nothing about 100 knot winds off Chernofski less than fifty miles to the southwest. Such are the peculiarities of Aleutian weather.

Chief Herold had himself, Smith, and Maurer transferred off Casco at Dutch Harbor in spite of the fact that Maurer was ship's company. Martin, ship's

company AerM1c, USN, stayed aboard for the trip back to a stateside repair yard.

The disastrous seven day period from August 25 to September 1, 1942, was an epic one for Patrol Wing Four. We not only lost several complete aircrews, extra crews, passengers, and PBYs but suffered the loss of two of our four seaplane tenders. Casco's dead numbered only five men.

August 1942 was also a bad month for the U.S. Navy, U.S. Forces and Allies in other areas of the Pacific. August 7, the same day the USS Indianapolis led task force shelled Kiska, 4th Division U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal and Tulagi on Florida Island nineteen miles north of Guadalcanal across Savo Sound. The issue would remain in doubt for many bloody months.

On August 11 the Battle of Savo Sound was fought. This was a night engagement in which U.S. and Allied Forces lost heavy cruisers Astoria, Vincennes, Quincy and Canberra. In addition, heavy cruiser Chicago was torpedoed in the bow, destroyers Ralph Talbot and Patterson were damaged. It was estimated that 1000 Allied sailors died and 700 were wounded. There was no damage to the enemy force of five heavy and two light cruisers. This was the worst defeat in U.S. Naval History. The high command blame was so diffuse it was not pinpointed and no one was court-martialed.

In the Battle of Eastern Solomons on August 24, Dutch Harbor attack flagship carrier Ryujo was sunk by planes from USS Saratoga and USS Enterprise. Bombs dropped by planes from enemy carriers Shokaku and Zuikaku heavily damaged Enterprise resulting in 74 dead and many wounded. Enterprise limped back to Pearl Harbor for repairs.

On August 31, Saratoga was hit by a torpedo fired from a submarine off San Cristobal Island in the Eastern Solomons. She, too, was forced to head for Pearl Harbor and repairs.

RO-61 Sunk

A small measure of retribution for all this attrition was extracted from the enemy on that final day of August 1942. Our forces sank RO-61.

At some point during the storm and darkness after he'd torpedoed Casco, Commander Tokutomi escaped undetected from Nazan Bay. With unfamiliar rocks and reefs around he did not get very far.

On the morning of August 31, veteran VP-42 Aleutian pilot, Lieutenant Samuel E."Sammy" Coleman flying PBY number 17V210, was patrolling the foggy northeast coast of Atka a short distance from Nazan Bay. He was searching specifically for the submarine that had torpedoed Casco the previous evening. At 0915 hours, almost thirteen hours after the torpedoing, Coleman flew into a bubble of clearer weather five miles north of Cape Shaw and surprised the partially surfaced RO-61.

Tokutomi had run aground on a reef 200 yards offshore and only 18 miles from the beached Casco. Coleman sent a contact position report and dove to attack. His first salvo of bombs overshot. He circled and attacked again. His last bombs were near misses that lifted the bows of RO-61.

VP-43's Executive Officer, Lieutenant Carl H. "Bon" Amme, in PBY 28V3 arrived on the scene at that moment. Amme had taken off from Dutch Harbor at 0530 on a flight to Nazan Bay with a navy doctor and chief pharmacist's mate aboard to help with Casco's wounded. Amme had arrived at Nazan to find it socked in so solid he could not land. He'd been circling while waiting for the fog to lift when his radioman copied Sammy Coleman's enemy contact report. Always gung ho, Amme had sped to the nearby location and attacked.

He and his crew had developed a technique that called for flying over a submarine at 500 feet, pulling back on the throttles and allowing the plane to nose over momentarily to direct the aim of the bombs, then releasing them manually. The PBY lost only 200 feet of altitude during this maneuver. Amme had practiced this technique until he was sure that hits could be scored if given the opportunity.

Of the six depth charges Amme dropped while RO-61 was backing off the reef, one was a direct hit on the conning tower. It rolled off and exploded. Another landed close alongside the hull and exploded.

His depth charge load expended, Amme circled away. Coleman dove in and raked the submerging conning tower with .50 calibre fire from his blister guns until RO-61 made it all the way under. RO-61 headed offshore leaving behind a large, spreading oil slick.

VP-43's Lieutenant Ted Sorenson, in PBY 29V3, joined the attack. With Coleman and Amme, he dropped smoke bombs in advance of the developing oil slick to mark the path of the crippled but still moving enemy

submarine.

Although RO-61 was invisible from the air, the oil oozing out of her ruptured hull left a telltale trail. It led to oblivion for Tokutomi and all but five of his ninety man crew.

After putting Colonel Talley and Colonel DeLong ashore at Adak, destroyer Reid (DD396) returned from her overnight trip at this time. The Reid followed the trail of oil and smoke flares and dropped a depth charge pattern at 1145 hours. Two minutes after this attack, Coleman, Amme, and Sorenson, circling above, all observed a large air bubble rise to the surface and erupt.

Sorenson continued trailing a circular oil slick until it disappeared about an hour and fifteen minutes later. The Reid was still in the vicinity but she didn't drop any more depth charges because she had no sonar contact with the submarine.

Meanwhile, Amme landed the doctor and pharmacist's mate at Nazan Bay then returned to the scene of the action. At 1700 hours, Amme observed a large spreading oil slick within this five mile area where all the attacks on RO-61 had taken place. He dropped smoke bombs to mark the location then flew to the Reid to lead her to the kill.

The Reid must not have been too excited about this latest "Zoomie" report of a new oil slick. When Amme arrived back at the location and dropped two of his last three smoke bombs he discovered that the Reid had not followed him.

Upset, as only the volatile "Bon" Amme of those days could get, he flew back to the Reid and blinked the following message with his Aldis lamp: "THIS IS MY LAST SMOKE BOMB X DROP DEPTH
CHARGES WHERE INDICATED X ACKNOWLEDGE X "

This time Reid's pattern of depth charges brought the doomed RO-61 to the surface. Bow first, at a sharp angle, the dripping, dark hull came boiling up out of the depths.

This must have been a surprise to the Reid for she had moved off to one side and was securing from battle stations when the sub surfaced. RO-61 crew members poured out of the bridge hatch and ran to man the deck gun. Fortunately, there was an alert sailor still manning a 20mm. gun on Reid's stern. He cut loose either killing or wounding all those who attempted to get RO-61's deck gun in action. Soon, all of Reid's guns that would bear, including her 5.38

turret guns, were firing. As RO-61 went down for her final plunge, many Japanese crewmen made it out of the bridge hatch and threw themselves into the sea.

Reid lowered away a boat to pick up survivors. The Japanese in the water did not wish to be rescued or captured. They tried to swim away from the whaleboat. This suited the chief boatswain's mate in charge of the boat crew just fine. He had an intense hatred for the Japanese because his younger brother had been killed at Pearl Harbor.

The chief ordered the boat steered back and forth through the swimmers which cut and chopped them up with the screw. When the numbers had dwindled sharply, he reluctantly rescued the last five. Although these five were exhausted and numb with cold they still struggled fiercely against being pulled into the boat and captured.

Many congratulatory dispatches were received as a result of this successful action against the submarine that torpedoed the Casco. Perhaps the one that sums it up best is the following message sent by Admiral Nimitz:

FROM: RADIO HONOLULU
TO: COMTASKFORCE EIGHT

INFO: RADIO WASHINGTON, D.C.

CONVEY TO REID AND PLANES WHICH PARTICIPATED KK CINCPAC KK
COMPLETE APPROBATION CONDUCT OF ENGAGEMENT WITH JAPANESE
SUBMARINE AND RESULTS OBTAINED X THIS AFFAIR DEMONSTRATES
CORRECT PROCEDURE BASED ON SOUND FUNDAMENTALS X PLANE
SIGHTED SUBMARINE ATTACKED INFLICTED LESS THAN REPEAT FATAL
DAMAGE BUT MAINTAINED CONTACT AND BY SMOKE FLOATS DIRECTED
REID IN FOR THE KILL X REID BY WELL PLACED DEPTH CHARGE
BARRAGES BROUGHT SUBMARINE TO SURFACE AND COMPLETED
DESTRUCTION BY GUNFIRE X CAPTURE OF PRISONERS CLIMAX OF
PERFECT JOB X SUBMIT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS X FROM CINCPAC

COMINCH ALSO INFO X

This following small item appeared in a leading northwest newspaper. The dateline was October 6, 1942.

"FIVE JAP PRISONERS, INCLUDING OFFICER, BROUGHT TO U.S.

A PACIFIC NORTHWEST PORT, OCT. 6 (AP)---Taken in naval action in the Aleutians, five Japanese were landed recently at a Pacific northwest port and whisked away under guard to a previously prepared detention spot, it became known today.

An official source confirmed that the prisoners were handed over to the army by the navy after their capture in the northern war zone. They were the first Japanese prisoners of war to arrive in the Pacific northwest and were believed to be the first in the continental United States.

Behind their capture and arrival in the states there lies a dramatic story of an engagement not yet officially released. One of the five men was an officer, believed at one time to have been a Seattle resident."

This was but one of the many <u>firsts</u> the Aleutian Campaign provided and one of the few for which the theatre received credit.

The tight censorship peculiar to the Aleutian Campaign should also be noted. Even good news was often withheld. When such news was released there was always a long delay. In this case five weeks elapsed before the public received fragmentary news that hinted at a successful action in the Aleutians. This, in spite of the fact that victories of any dimension had been few and morale on the home front was at low ebb. It is small wonder that residents of the Pacific northwest knew little or nothing about the war being fought in their backyard.

LT. Sammy Coleman and LT. Carl "Bon" Amme were each awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their participation in sinking <u>RO-61</u>.

Coleman is credited with a most interesting remark in regard to his DFC. "I deserve this medal not for helping to sink the submarine but for surviving routine patrol duty in the Aleutians."

Coleman's candid statement was a truth shared by all pilots who flew in the Aleutians. VP-43's Lieutenant Emil B. Hanson, who also earned a DFC during the Aleutian Campaign, reflected later, "None

of us was good enough to fly up there. We got by through a series of miracles."

Scratch One More PBY

The week ending on September 1, 1942 culminated with the loss of yet another PBY. Lieutenant (jg) William "Bill" Decker of VP-43 was forced by dense fog to set his plane down on the open sea late in the evening of August 31. Rather than risk flying into the mountains of Atka he made a safe, rough-water landing in the Bering Sea, "somewhere west of Korovin Bay."

Seas battered the plane. While the crew bailed to stay afloat Decker taxied all night in an attempt to reach Korovin Bay. By daylight he had reached the shoreline off the bay's southwest headland. Because of wind direction and seas Decker was afforded little protection inside the bay.

By this time the plane was a pummeled, slowly sinking wreck and the crew was exhausted. Decker had no choice but to beach the plane and it was soon destroyed in the rocky surf. Decker estimated his position as being about 20 miles from Nazan Bay which was on the opposite side of mountainous Atka. Because of the island's irregular shape only a few rugged miles separate the heads of Korovin and Nazan Bay. The torpedoed Casco was on the beach at Nazan Bay and Hulbert had come in to take over Casco's duties.

One of Decker's crew had been a forester. With two other men he volunteered to lead a rescue party to Nazan Bay for help. Decker and the other crewmembers would remain at Korovin Bay near the wreckage of the PBY.

The three man party that went for help became hopelessly lost in Atka's mountains. A searching PBY found Decker and the men on the beach and rescued them. The other three, lost for almost a week, were finally found half starved and suffering from exposure. They were flown to the hospital at Dutch Harbor.

Decker and Hanson

Lieutenants Bill Decker and Emil Hanson were buddies. They were known as the "Gold Dust Twins" and I'd flown with them a number of times. They were well liked by all, good pilots, luckier than most, and

characters. Things seemed to happen to them.

There was the occasion when Casco made an over-night run from Chernofski Bay to Dutch Harbor for aviation fuel and supplies. A group of pilots, including Decker and Hanson, went ashore for a few relaxing drinks in town. They got tangled up with some 151 proof Hudson Bay rum. Later, feeling no pain, they all returned to the ship. Happy and boisterous, they made their way below to quarters. Decker was missing. Fearful that he might have tumbled overboard or fallen and hurt himself, the men went about the ship looking for him. Decker was found standing at the railing on Casco's fantail. He was staring at the water and evidently thought he was on the Coronado ferry. When asked if he were all right, Decker replied, "Sure but I'm never going to make another liberty in San Diego as long as I live."

Decker and Hanson were involved in one particularly rugged bombing mission over Kiska on August 8, 1942 that ended with a strange radio exchange. They had accompanied VP-43's skipper, LCDR "Doc" Jones, who was in the lead plane piloted, as usual, by Lieutenant James H. Davies. Hanson was in the second position and Decker brought up the rear as the three PBYs went in for an attack on two Japanese ships in the South Pass of Kiska Harbor. They scored two direct hits and six near misses. They believed they sank one 4,000 ton cargo vessel but it could not be verified so it was not claimed. While in the midst of their bombing runs and receiving AA flak from the two ships, the PBYs were simultaneously jumped by three "Rufe" float fighters.

An explosive 20mm cannon shell from a "Rufe" blew a hole the size of a man's head in Davies's plane, shot one of AVRM3c Tommy Thompson's ears off, and embedded itself in a parachute. Davies's port blister gunner emptied a full can of .50 calibre slugs at the enemy fighter and it flipped over on its back and dove into a cloud bank.

As Hanson scored a direct hit with a 1000 pound bomb on the stern of a cargo ship, a float fighter got on his tail. The enemy pilot weaved back and forth trying to kill the two blister gunners first, thereby eliminating the PBY's main weapons. Hanson's starboard gunner, AVMM2c M.J. Battuello, faked being hit, pointed the barrel of his machine gun skyward and slumped over the gun. The Jap pilot fell for the ruse and came in for the kill on that side. Battuello

jumped up and emptied the remainder of his .50 calibres at the enemy fighter at close range. This "Rufe" also rolled over and dove into clouds.

After this furious bombing and firing activity ended, Jones attempted to check and rendezvous with his two wingmen, Hanson and Decker.

"Hanson and Decker answer," Jones called out on the voice radio.

One voice responded loud and clear, "Hanson, Aye, Aye." There was only silence from Decker's PBY.

"Hanson and Decker--Answer!", commanded Jones more sharply this time.

"Hanson, Aye, Aye," came back one voice.

From Decker's plane there again was no response. As Decker flew along, still so badly shaken from his experience that he didn't recognize his own name, he thought to himself, "The poor bastard doesn't answer. He must have been shot down."

These incidents had happened earlier but the Gold Dust Twins' adventures had continued and their luck held out. Although Decker's latest PBY had been destroyed by the surf in Korovin Bay the day after Casco was torpedoed he and his crew were rescued. This brings us back to my sitting disgruntedly on a packing crate in the wind, rain, and mud of Adak on September 1, 1942.

Out Of The Mud Of Adak Springs A New Base

Red, the radioman, was gone only a short time but he returned with considerable information. He had found a naval officer who told him where we could set up shop. We carried my packing crate to a clustered row of pyramidal tents. I was assigned half a tent for my weather office. The other half was being set up as an Air Combat Intelligence (ACI) office. ACI's sole member was a navy lieutenant whom I would not see until that night. This dual office was flanked on one side by the tent of Navy Operations and on the other by Red's radio shack.

Red had also brought me the shocking news that Casco had been torpedoed two days earlier. Though details were sketchy it was known that she was beached and not sunk. The number of dead was not known but casualties were believed light. I could only hope

that the four weathermen had been among the lucky. I was thankful I'd had the opportunity to leave Casco by hopping in with the boatload of pumps for the Williamson.

Red had not only found an "official" home for us but also for my wooden crate, the contents of which were still a mystery. This was placed down in the mud and tundra clumps on my unoccupied side of the weather/ACI tent. The remainder of the afternoon was spent moving our camouflaged tent and assorted gear from the beach at "Squeakyville."

By the time the move was completed it was getting dark. We were soaked and needed shelter for the night so our cots were set up in the weather office where a stove was radiating heat. We were snug and warm for the first time in several days. Luxurious.

The stove enabled us to heat several cans of field rations and we enjoyed our first hot meal since evening chow at Dutch Harbor on August 28. After eating and hanging up our clothes to dry we crawled into our sleeping bags. Tomorrow would be soon enough to search out the mess tent.

The ACI lieutenant walked in at that moment and looked around
with a scowl.

"What the hell's going on here? What makes you men think you can convert my intelligence shack into a goddamned Chinese laundry?"

It was hastily explained that darkness had caught up with us before we could pitch our camouflaged tent and the present arrangement would only be for the night. The lieutenant had been joking. After he'd introduced himself he said that every tent with a stove had been converted into an emergency clothes drying plant.

He was a pleasant young man, tall, blond, and on the trim, lean side. I regret that I can no longer recall or learn this officer's name. Although we shared the tent and were together for only a few months, I liked him. We spent many enjoyable hours discussing Air Combat Intelligence techniques and Aleutian weather.

The lieutenant was in the process of setting up his ACI office. When he walked in, he'd been lugging a small, metal filing cabinet. I told him I needed at least one of those and asked him where he'd gotten it.

"That's a military secret," he replied. "You'll have to steal

your own."

His side of the tent already contained a large map table, a desk, several chairs, and a high legged stool that I'd been coveting. This modest start put him far ahead of me and my weather shack. With the exception of the portable weather instruments with which I'd come ashore, the sum total of my equipment was the mystery crate. I decided to open it when the lieutenant told me there was a hammer and wrecking bar next door in the operations tent.

With these I pried the lid off the crate, folded back the heavy, brown, waterproof paper lining, and stared down at new, leather, fleece-lined winter flight pants. A quick search to the very bottom of the crate failed to turn up any precious flight jackets.

I suggested that Red and the lieutenant each select a pair that fit. They happily accepted the offer. The lieutenant did not have winter flight clothes. Red's pants were worn and threadbare from use and ripped in two places. Mine, that Tatom had scrounged, were in a similar state and a size too small for complete freedom of movement, and comfort while seated.

I promised that as soon as I could locate the crates of matching flight jackets and boots, somewhere along Squeaky's beach, we would all three be in style for winter flights. The anticipation of opening additional crates was like Christmas. I couldn't wait for tomorrow. My thoughts were of warm clothing. The idea of opening a box containing weather instruments or related supplies didn't enter my mind that night.

Red and I had almost completed putting up our little tent the following morning, having squeezed it between two larger nearby tents when we were ordered by an officer to take the little misfit down. He assigned us to a pyramidal living quarters tent directly across from the weather and radio tents. This newly erected tent did not have a stove but Red and I "acquired" one and installed it the following day.

Two TBW type radio transmitters had been uncrated and set up. Power for transmitters and receivers, all housed in the same tent, was supplied by a 7KW gas engine generator. Antennae were up and the radio equipment next door was being checked out. Adak's first U.S. Naval Radio Station was about to go on the air. Accordingly, I began taking hourly and synoptic

weather observations in preparation for regular weather transmissions from Adak. I had no standard forms but I logged this weather data on typing paper borrowed from the ACI office.

It was also time to construct an adequate office with materials available including any necessary items I might have to acquire through "midnight requisition". I tacked down the lid of the large packing crate that contained the remaining flight pants. For added height I placed this atop two smaller, empty wooden boxes spaced two feet apart. In broad daylight I found an unguarded sheet of 3/4 inch plywood that some kind soul had sawed in two. When one half was placed on my flight pants crate it made a smooth top for my weather map desk.

Other discarded empty crates and boxes, with simple shelving made from the same material, were transformed into file cabinets and storage lockers. Two large boxes and the other half sheet of plywood became my desk. A temporarily unoccupied tent provided both a chair for my desk and a long-legged stool for the high map desk to complete the furnishings of Adak's first navy weather office.

My sling psychrometer, portable aneroid barometer, compass, and three-cup, hand-held anemometer were sufficient instruments for me to make adequate synoptic weather reports. Even though I had no barograph from which I could get an exact barometric tendency trace for the past three hours, my hourly weather log and frequent glances at the aneroid barometer provided an accurate enough asseessment of even this synoptic weather report requirement.

The communications officer had Red and his other radiomen begin copying weather schedules. My hourly and synoptic reports were encoded and transmitted. After three days of such activity my half of the tent had taken on some semblance of a functioning weather office with its assortment of clipboards holding a backlog of received and transmitted weather reports.

I was logging an hourly observation the afternoon my boss walked in. Tatom, all decked out in his hooded, fur-trimmed, Eskimo parka, greeted me in a most friendly manner.

"Hello, Carrigan. I see you have things well organized. This
is fine," he said with a big grin.

He carried a roll of blank syoptic charts under one arm. He'd also brought an aerographer's manual, a

standard ledger for logging weather observations, two special pen's for entering maps, and a supply of pencils and erasers.

To my question, he told me that Herold, Smith, Martin, and
Maurer had not been injured on the Casco.

Tatom had just arrived in seaplane tender USS Thornton. She was another old AVD that had evidently been sent to the Aleutians as a replacement for the Williamson. Tatom would temporarily live aboard the anchored Thornton while I operated on the beach. Tatom would analyze the early morning weather map, put out the area and flight forecasts, brief the pilots, then send me several copies of his forecast and a traced copy of the latest analyzed map.

This daily delivery would be by ship's boat to the beach where the data would be picked up by army messenger and brought to me by jeep. For the time being, I would enter signals on the afternoon map. Tatom would try to come ashore daily to analyze it. If he didn't show up by a certain hour I was to go ahead and analyze the map, using his morning map as a guide.

I was to keep one copy of the forecast in the weather tent, deliver one next door to operations, one each to the commanding officer and executive officer, one to the squadron commander, and also see that Squeaky Anderson received a copy at his beach headquarters tent. Tatom was certain the request list for forecast distribution would grow rapidly but he would try to keep it within reason.

I thought of spending my hours every morning plodding doggedly through Adak's mud, wind, and rain while delivering forecasts around an ever mushrooming navy town. I knew from personal experience that many department heads who insisted they be included on the forecast delivery list because weather was so vital to their operations, often gave the forecast a cursory glance then surreptitiously threw it away. Such people were also the first to raise hell when their forecasts were inadvertently not delivered or arrived late.

Because the navy tent camp was small in area, I suggested that, perhaps, he could just send over a stack of mimeographed daily forecasts. Anyone who needed a copy could drop by my tent and pick it up. This didn't set too well with Mr. Tatom.

"You shouldn't be too busy in the morning unless you're going to fly that day. You know that it is a long-standing courtesy for us to deliver the

forecast."

In this case, "us" was singular.

Tatom was still in such a good mood after he'd admonished me thusly that I thought there might never be a more opportune moment to ask him about the Adak landings. Although the decision to proceed on schedule with the occupation of Adak had not been his to make I thought he might shed some light because of our direct involvement with what happened. I'd had a week to think about it and knew I would have to tread lightly. Any explanation would place Tatom in the intolerable position of making an excuse. I'd been able to think of but one question which might tactfully lead into this touchy subject.

"Did you receive all of my weather reports prior to the
landings?"

"Yes."

After several pregnantly heavy moments of silence I realized this was his complete answer. Instinctively, I knew I was a fool but I plunged ahead.

"Were any of my reports garbled?" "No."

Tatom had perceived instantly where I was heading. His "No" was coupled with an equally brief but penetrating look. This was pure eloquence in one way. Unequivocably, he had conveyed to me that the subject of the weather during the Adak landings was not open to discussion. His "Yes" and "No" were the only answers I would ever get from him.

One More Mystery Crate

The following morning I delivered the first of Tatom's forecasts to Squeaky Anderson. This was my first opportunity to ask him if any additional aerological unit crates had come ashore.

"If there are any," said Squeaky, "they'd be in that pile of
miscellaneous gear down there."

I spent an hour rumaging around the mountain of boxes he'd indicated before I unearthed one stamped "AERO.". The weight of the 2 x 2 x 3 foot box was rupture inspiring. Because of its size and weight there could be no hope it contained the much needed flight jackets and boots.

Upon prying the lid off, a pleasant surprise greeted me, books and magazines. With this sudden

library, reading material always being in great demand, along with the remainder of the flight pants, I had fine trading stock for other items that I needed or desired.

Periodic checks at Squeaky's beach failed to find additional aerological unit crates for almost two and a half months. At that time, a complete unit arrived which contained weather instruments, related gear and supplies. The elusive boxes of flight jackets and boots must have been put ashore at some other island where they were a pleasant surprise to persons unknown.

A Lagoon Becomes An Airfield

The change that took place at Adak almost overnight was shocking. SeaBees of the 8th Naval Construction Battalion (NCB), in a whirlwind of activity, began building roads, power lines, dock facilities, ammunition dumps, plane revetements, roads, warehouses, smaller buildings, larger tents, and Quonsets of various sizes.

Two days of searching by Colonels Talley and DeLong had failed to find a suitable airstrip site. The only flat areas between the beach and foothills were tundra bogs that would not provide sufficient support for a Mardsden steel-mat runway and heavy bomber operations.

One of Castner's Aleut scouts is credited with the suggestion that the best place for the airfield was the long, shallow lagoon in Sweeper Cove. This lagoon separated the inland area from the landing beach peninsula. The scout thought it would be ideal if the seawater that came flooding in on each high tide could be blocked out and the area pumped dry.

Colonel Talley, who had earlier constructed the secret airfields at Cold Bay and Umnak, did not consider the scout's idea a foolish brainstorm when told of it by Colonel DeLong. Together, they discussed the possibility with their engineer boss, Colonel Carlin Whitesell. All three considered the unique idea feasible and set to work immediately on the project.

Using bulldozers, scrapers, and materials on hand, dikes were raised along the sides of the lagoon. A dam and gate were constructed at the open sea entrance on Kuluk Bay. When the tide went out the flood gate was closed and the area pumped dry.

The barge carrying the Marsden mat, steel plank

runway sections had been one of the many that had sunk during the stormy landing operations. Until a replacement runway could be transported to Adak, sand would have to do for the runway surface. This was rolled and packed until it became firm enough for operational use.

Remarkably, after only ten days work, the first aircraft landed on Adak's sand strip on September 10, 1942. This was an army C-47 (DC-3) piloted by Colonel Eareckson. The 11th USAAF would soon follow.

"Washing-Machine Charley's" Nightly Visits

It was late afternoon on the fifth or sixth day of the Adak occupation that a Japanese plane discovered our new base. It was reported to be a "Rufe" float fighter. Before the drained lagoon runway was completed, we had only daytime fighter cover by long range P-38 "Lightnings" based at Umnak.

That night we were paid the first visit by "Washing-Machine Charley" dubbed this because of the rickety-rackety sound of his plane's single engine. It was always dark when he flew over but one could tell that the enemy pilot was flying a slow reconnaissance aircraft.

When the air raid alert sounded the first night, I slipped into boots and jacket, grabbed my BAR and sprinted through the tent flap out into blackness. I promptly tripped over a tent guy line and fell sprawling face first into the mud. The bomb landed a half mile away on the other side of the partially completed runway. No other bombs came raining down. Soon, "Washing-Machine Charley" could be heard threshing his lonely but noisy way back to Kiska.

When the air raid alert wailed the next night, Red and I
dressed and almost casually stepped outside to listen. It was "Washing-Machine Charley" again. Again, it sounded like he was coming over the base at an altitude of 5-6000 feet and flying south to north. It appeared he was inland from our position. We waited. Shortly, one bomb exploded about a mile away and "Charley" clattered homeward.

On the third nightly visit, most of us didn't even bother to get out of our sleeping bags. It was impossible to tell exactly when or where "Charley" would drop his single bomb. It was much safer to lie flat in our bags rather than run around aimlessly in

the dark.

His nightly nuisance raids continued for about a week. Each time he dropped one bomb, estimated at 250 pounds. No one was killed or wounded and none of the bombs hit vital installations or equipment.

After the fifth or sixth raid "Charley" did not return. Perhaps on the dangerous night flight from Kiska he was lost or crashed enroute; perhaps he was killed in one of our bombing attacks on Kiska or his noisy plane was damaged or destroyed.

Necessity IS The Mother Of Invention

On September 13, VP-42's skipper LCDR James S. Russell along with executive officer, LT. Charles E. "Cy" Perkins and staff, moved his squadron headquarters to Adak.

Planes of this veteran Aleutian squadron had been operating from Adak since shortly after the occupation. Russell's PBYs had been using the waters of Sweeper Cove and the facilities of USS Thornton. PBYs had also been operating off the waters of Clam Lagoon and Andrew's Lake. These bodies of water were located a few miles north of the airfield under construction. Seabees were about to begin building seaplane facilities at both places.

Russell had been the first to land his PBY on Andrew's Lake which, at the time, was believed to be a saltwater lagoon. Herein lies an interesting footnote to naval aviation history. Earlier in the Aleutian Campaign, one of Russell's PBY pilots had landed on the waters of a previously untested and unsounded lagoon. The plane had skimmed along then settled lower and lower in the water as speed decreased. Before the PBY came to a stop it had grounded on an unseen, submerged sand bar. The pilot was stranded. He had to wait for high tide before the PBY floated free and he was able to takeoff. This incident caused embarrassment but could have proved disastrous.

A PBY requires at least six feet of water for safe landing and takeoff. There was no way to determine the depth of a body of water from the air so Russell invented one.

His ingenious method incorporated rocks, chips of wood, and string, three items readily available most everywhere. He cut a dozen small wood chips to a standard size then selected a like number of small

rocks of uniform weight that would not be supported by a floating wood chip. One end of cord was tied to each rock and the other end to a wood chip leaving six feet of cord between.

Russell then flew low, on a straight course along any
proposed landing area that was suspected of possibly being too shallow for air operations. As he did so, a blister-gunner threw a rock and chip out every two-hundred yards. The PBY then circled and flew back along the line. If all chips had been pulled under it indicated the water was six feet or deeper. If a chip still floated in meant the rock was resting on bottom and the water was less than six feet deep. His squadron lost quite a number of replaceable "depth sounder" kits but no crews or PBYs from landing in shallow water. Russell used his airborne depth sounder before his first landing on Andrew's "Lagoon" which proved to be a deep fresh water lake.

The 11th USAAF Strikes Quickly

Shortly after Colonel Eareckson made his C-47 test landing on Adak's completed airstrip the 11th USAAF moved operations in force to the new base. A squadron of B-17s and a squadron of B-24s arrived. They were accompanied by two fighter squadrons; one comprised of P-38s, the other by Bell Aircraft Corporation's new P-39 "Airacobra." As it had for Lockheed's P-38, the Aleutians would also witness the baptismal combat of Bell's P-39 Airacobra.

These two fighter squadrons were soon joined by a Canadian squadron of Curtiss P-40D "Kittyhawks" and a U.S. squadron of P-40 "Warhawks". Many of the Canadian pilots had gained combat experience against German fighters and bombers over the English Channel during the Battle of Britian.

The U.S. P-40s were under the command of Major John S. Chennault, son of renowned General Claire L. Chennault whose Flying Tigers had gained fame against the enemy in the skies over China-Burma. The snouts of Flying Tiger P-40s had been painted to represent the gleaming eyes and white-toothed gaping jaws of the tiger shark dreaded by the seafaring Japanese. Gleaming eyes and gaping jaws had also been painted on the snouts of Major Chennault's Aleutian P-40s but the design represented the face of a Bengal tiger complete with black blotches.

The 11th USAAF wasted no time in taking advantage of being based only 240 miles from Kiska as opposed to the 1300 mile round trip from Umnak. On September 14, the first massive combined air strike,(by Aleutian standards), was lauched against Kiska. Twelve B-24s led by Colonel Eareckson, as usual, accompanied by fourteen P-38s and fourteen P-39s hit Kiska in a deck-level attack. This was yet another first that took place in the Aleutian Campaign for it was the first time that bombers and fighters went in low. P-39s provided high cover for the B-24s and P-38s.

Two enemy ships were sunk, three set afire, three midget submarines were destroyed, along with several gun emplacements and buildings. Other buildings were observed burning. P-38s, strafing ships and the harbor area, destroyed a Kawanishi "Mavis" flying boat on the water and heavily damaged a half dozen "Rufe" float fighters moored to their anchor buoys.

Five airborne enemy float fighters were engaged by the P-39 cover. Outnumbered in the milling dogfights, all five "Rufes" were shot down in flames. Ironically, after their strafing attacks, two P-38 Lightnings were both chasing the same "Rufe" when they collided over Kiska Harbor. Both P-38s crashed into the sea. Although many of the bombers and fighters returned to Adak with flak and bullet holes, the only aircraft lost during this raid were the two P-38s that collided.

Five Days In A Sea Lion Cave On Amchitka

I'd been on Adak about three weeks when Tatom threw another curve at me. Colonels Castner and Verbeck with some of their Alaska Scouts had been in and out of our weather/ACI tent frequently. It was about September 21, 1942, after an hour long discussion between Colonel Verbeck, Tatom, and the ACI lieutenant that Tatom called me over to the group.

He told me that he'd decided to send Red and me with our portable weather/radio gear to Amchitka Island for a few days. I momentarily thought Tatom was not serious but sickeningly realized he seldom joked.

On a large scale intelligence map of Amchitka he indicated the Aleut Point/Bird Cape area on the northwesternmost tip of the island as the place we would be staying. This was forty miles from the estimated six thousand Japs on Kiska. As had been done at Adak, Red and I would be put ashore by rubber raft

from a PBY. This time, however, there would be no U.S. occupation of Amchitka. When our mission was accomplished we would be plucked off the same way we were put ashore.

Colonel Verbeck suggested it would be best not to use a tent
this time because it might be too easily spotted by enemy planes. "Instead," said Tatom, "you will live in a sea lion cave."

"A SEA LION CAVE?" I echoed in almost a shout.

"Yes", said Verbeck. "I've just returned from there and sea lion caves abound at the point. Many are large and deep. Quite a number are well above high water and therefore dry. Let me assure you that such a cave can be a delightfully cozy, snug place to live."

Certainly, no one could say a cave wouldn't have "atmosphere." I had the feeling that I was being used as a bit player in a movie thriller directed by Tatom but this was not make believe.

Tatom needed daylight, three-hourly, on the spot weather reports over or near the target area of Kiska for some kind of large, scheduled operation.

All the necessary gear was assembled that afternoon. Tatom told me not to bother taking the portable, three-cup anemometer. Wind velocity could be determined accurately during daytime by observing the surface of the sea. This would eliminate one piece of equipment that was cumbersome yet delicate.

Although PBY-5A amphibians were operating from the new airstrip, Red and I would be flown to Amchitka by a PBY-5 seaplane. Tatom would return to the anchored Thornton where he would make the necessary arrangements. Red and I, with our gear, were to be at the boat landing in the predawn darkness the following day. A ship's boat would pick us up and ferry us out to the moored PBY.

As I was checking over my assembled gear that night the ACI lieutenant wished me luck. He cautioned me to stay alert for Red and I would be trespassing in the enemy's front yard. While reconnoitering Amchitka the Alaska Scouts had discovered fresh signs of Japanese activity. Verbeck had reported finding the location of a recently struck enemy tent camp. There were also numberous probe holes and survey stakes which indicated the Japanese were planning to construct an airfield on Amchitka. Although no Japanese were presently on the island they might

return at any moment. I appreciated the lieutenant's concern and the warning but it made sleep difficult that night and, indeed, for the next six.

Just after daylight on September 22, our PBY reached the southeast tip of Amchitka. The pilot almost skimmed the water as he flew up the Bering Sea side of the long, narrow,
northwest/southeast oriented island. The weather was totally dull and grey with a low overcast of stratus and visibility about eight miles. Winds were almost calm, the sea a smooth carpet of undulating greenish-grey.

The pilot set the big "Catalina" down and taxied a short distance along shore to the rocky, cave area of Bird Cape. He selected a place where outlying rocks and kelp beds thinned out then maneuvered close to the beach. While crewmen rigged the sea anchor, Red and I broke out the seven-man rubber raft and inflated it.

Both pilots remained at the controls and the bow and blister guns were manned while one crewman helped load our instruments, weapons, ammunition, cases of rations, and sleeping bags into the raft. This was done quickly and quietly. No one had to voice the thought we were in an extremely vulnerable position if a scouting enemy float fighter should happen upon our clandestine operation. The plane crew was anxious to get airborne where they would at least have protective cloud cover. By the same token, Red and I were eager to get ashore to the relative safety of rocks and caves rather than be caught in the open in a rubber raft and strafed.

The same procedure was followed getting ashore here as had been used at Kuluk Bay earlier. An aircrewman got into the raft with us and a light line was paid out as we paddled for the rocky shelf of beach. Again, the weather was in our favor. The raft glided in over the smooth, gentle swells.

"Are you sure this is the right place?" I wondered aloud to the PBY crewman. It certainly didn't look nearly as inviting as the picture painted by Tatom and Verbeck.

"Right or wrong," Red said to the crewman, "make damn sure
you can find it again."

Our raft grounded in a small cove surrounded by almost vertical cliffs several hundred feet high. Various kinds of seabirds, in astronomical numbers, used the cliffs as nesting grounds. The cliff faces of

Bird Cape were white with bird droppings.

Immediately upon unloading our gear we launched the raft. I think the aircrewman felt compassion for us and may have been slightly embarrassed or stricken with conscience pangs about abandoning us only forty miles from thousands of Japanese. As people often do in situations such as this, he strove for levity.

"Some guys have all the luck. You two have a nice vacation at
the beach."

"Where the ___k do you think this is," shot back Red in no
mood to banter, "the goddamned French Riviera?"

With this parting exchange, raft and crewman were hastily pulled back to the impatiently waiting PBY. With her raft and anchor retrieved and secured, the plane prepared to takeoff. A figure from the blister waved a last goodbye and so did the pilot from his open hatch. We watched silently as hatches were secured and the plane's engines roared to takeoff power. Soon the PBY was airborne flying westward to continue on a sector patrol. Our link with safety became a fading speck.

Red and I went in opposite directions seeking the most suitable cave. Several that I checked out did not extend in deeply enough. One small-entranced cave may have extended in a long way but it was unmistakably the home of blue foxes, their dens have a characteristic pungent odor.

Red began hollering but screeching, wheeling, seabirds, which had been frightened into flight when the pilot gunned his engines, prevented me from hearing his words. He had found a suitable cave. The entrance was high and narrow. Water from a small spring dripped off the rocks making the opening wet but farther in, the cave widened as it sloped upward and became dry. It was well above normal high water, although at the very back of the cave, in a widened sandy area, we found some small driftwood and crinkly dry kelp that evidently had been driven in by high water during winter storms.

When our eyes grew accustomed to the cave's meager light, we could see quite well. Satisfied with the location we carried our supplies from the exposed beach and moved in. Sand was scooped and scraped around until we had comfortable places to spread our sleeping bags. The remainder of our gear was stowed. Our weapons were loaded, cocked, and with safties on

placed atop our cases of field rations.

While I took the first weather observation Red busied himself with his transmitter. When the observation had been completed and encoded, we transmitted from the cave's entrance. As before, I turned the crank mechanism while Red tapped out the morse code message, repeating it three times.

It was hoped that a radioman on Adak copied it and passed the information to Tatom. It was impossible for me to see how the data was important enough to justify the risk.

We did not venture far from the cave that day, and with one exception, even less on succeeding days. As it started to grow dark that first evening, I took two extra 20 round magazine clips for my BAR and placed them next to the heavy gun.

This weapon, in effect, is a light 30.06 calibre machine gun. One round at a time may be fired as fast as one can pull the trigger: On full automatic, the 20 round clip may be emptied in seconds by simply holding the trigger down. Light, folding metal legs hinged at the barrel end of the stock may be extended downward to provide a steady rest.

Red and I began anew our Adak discussion about the relative merits of our weapons. Under the circumstance, it was quite natural for two slightly belligerent, sometimes rebellious Irishmen to discuss their arsenal. Red preferred his Thompson submachine gun. It was short barreled, handy, and poured out a torrent of heavy .45 calibre slugs from a circular magazine. The weapons drawback, I continued to point out, was its lack of range and accuracy. Firing a Thompson is like squirting a garden hose: considerable water but it is impossible to reach the other side of the lawn.

Red countered with the observation that if trouble came, it would probably be during the night and at close range. I argued that I still had plenty of firepower for short-range work. Moreover, I felt secure with a gun that could also reach out accurately 500 yards or more and cut down Japanese before they got close enough for Red to use his Thompson.

Instead of having an adverse effect our discussion about our two dissimilar weapons brought reassurance. It was easy to convince ourselves that we possessed the best possible two-gun combination for our kind of mission.

I wondered what would happen if the Japanese put

another survey party ashore. Even if they were unaware of our presence it would be difficult to get us off under such circumstances. Most likely, no rescue would even be attempted unless the enemy happened to be working on the other end of the island.

"Don't fret about such good things that might happen," Red said. "start sweating a bad thing that's gonna happen and in a hurry."

"Like what?"

"A Jap radio monitor on Kiska, slowly turning the dial on his receiver, has probably picked up our transmission signals. How the hell could he miss? He's already had four cracks at us today. They may already have a fix on this cave area. If they do they'll sure as hell come over to investigate."

At a council of war we decided the safest place was in the cave. Japanese troops would first have to determine which cave we were in then dig us out. Our greatest immediate danger in that event would be from hand grenades thrown into the cave. In fading light we placed heavy driftwood chunks and rocks a short distance back from the entrance to the cave. This formed a low barricade that would either stop a grenade or absorb most of its force and shrapnel. With this precaution taken we settled in for the night. Red kicked himself for not requesting a supply of grenades but had doubts these would have been issued to us.

We were not required to take and transmit night observations so we set four hour sentry watches. Shifts passed slowly. Later, we both admitted having trouble staying awake. Yet, when our turns came to sack out, we had trouble sleeping soundly even though the day had been exhausting.

It was foggy in the morning. A southeast wind had picked up. My barometer dropped and in the forenoon a cold rain came slanting down. A weak front passed during the night. By morning the temperature had dropped ten degrees and the wind had shifted into the west-northwest. Visibility had also increased. Between post frontal showers of rain, hail, and sleet we caught glimpses of the mountain on Rat Island fourteen miles to our northwest toward Kiska.

That morning a series of muffled explosions was heard in the direction of Kiska. These sounds continued for about an hour. Although we saw no aircraft it was assumed our planes from Adak were carrying out bombing and strafing attacks.

Late in the afternoon Red thought he heard the

unmistakable drone of an aircraft engine. At first, I could not distinguish the sound above the noise of waves washing the beach. Was it the PBY coming to take us home? Red reached the cave entrance first, took one quick look and slammed into me as he dove back inside hollering, "It's a Jap!"

The single float monoplane flashed past a few seconds later. The "Rufe" fighter was a fading speck when we peeked out a few moments later. At an altitude of 500 feet the enemy plane continued southeastward along the northern coast of Amchitka.

This shook us up. Red was so certain our transmissions were being monitored that he believed the enemy plane was searching for signs of us. My reasoning that the Japs would use a slow scout plane for such work fell on deaf ears. At the speed the "Rufe" was traveling it would have required pure dumb luck for the pilot to have seen Red. The pilot would also have returned to strafe the area. Still, we could not be certain of anything.

Our last three-hourly weather observation for that day had already been transmitted. By mutual agreement it was decided not to encode a special transmission about the enemy plane. Red would encode a cryptic message giving date, time of sighting, type of aircraft, course and speed which would be tacked on to the end of our first weather report the following morning.

Shortly before midnight we heard the throbbing sound of a powerful diesel engine offshore. This vessel, whatever it was, cruised slowly past in the darkness until the sound either faded or stopped. We couldn't determine which. Red and I envisioned a Japanese landing party being put ashore somewhere in our vicinity. We spent the remainder of the night straining our ears for any unusual sound that might provide a clue. Imaginations pumped sky-high by adrenalin heard numerous sounds not previously noticed. Nothing happened. With great relief we greeted first light.

Another council of war was held. It was decided that we had to know what we were facing. We abandoned our original plan, which seemed so sound when agreed upon, of remaining hidden in the cave. Waiting for the unknown--, the now seemingly real possibility we might be trapped in our hidey-hole--, was too nerve-racking. We had to determine whether or not an enemy patrol had been put ashore during the night.

With guns at the ready we emerged from the cave. No vessels were in sight and no aircraft engines could be heard. It would have been foolishly dangerous to attempt scaling the vertical cliffs. Carefully, we worked our way along the shelf of beach in search of an easy access to the land above. As we moved along I kept a sharp eye ahead and behind while Red scanned every inch of cliff edge above us.

After climbing over a small ridge-point of slippery rocks we found ourselves in another cove with unscalable cliffs. Similar conditions were found in the opposite direction. Not wanting to take a chance of getting caught in the open on the exposed beach we gave up our scouting expedition and returned to the cave. Our reconnoitering patrol was a dismal failure. Like it or not, we were trapped on our particular section of rugged coastline.

I've never learned whether the diesel engine we heard was a Japanese patrol vessel or possibly an American submarine running on the surface while charging batteries.

Between weather observations that third day we remained tensely alert just inside the cave entrance. A great number of explosions emanated from the direction of Kiska throughout the day. For several hours, we could distinguish a faint land mass beyond Rat Island that must have been Kiska. Two aircraft were observed in the distance near midday. One was traveling east and one west but they were too far away to identify.

Late that afternoon, at roughly the same time as the day before, the Japanese float fighter scouted Amchitka again. This time we watched until it disappeared from view around a point east-southeast of us. Then about twenty minutes later we observed what appeared to be the same aircraft, flying in a northerly direction far to seaward in Oglaga Pass to our westward. The plane had apparently circled Amchitka and was heading in the general direction of Little Sitkin Island.

Red and I decided this was simply a routine, late afternoon patrol carried out by the Japanese to scout the Rat Islands east of their Kiska stronghold.

It turned much colder that night with scattered snow showers. The following morning dawned almost clear with only a few scattered cumulus clouds, excellent visibility, and gusty northwest winds of twenty-five knots. Explosions continued on Kiska this

day also but even though the island mass was visible we could not see any smoke or aircraft.

A plane approaching from the west was heard in mid-afternoon but we stayed well back from our cave entrance. Too late, I distinguished the sound as the steady, sweet drone of a "Cat's" Pratt-Whitney "Twin-Wasp" engines. As the PBY roared past, flying very low and close to shore, someone in the starboard blister was signaling with an Aldis lamp. All Red caught through the narrow cave entrance was the alphabet letter which stood for
"interrogatory" in radio parlance. Apparently they had asked us a question?

We hurried out of the cave and waved our arms while needlessly shouting. The PBY flew on and we were bitterly disappointed for a few seconds. Then, the pilot banked to seaward, made a circle and returned. This time Red gave an affirmative to the questioning blinker light when it asked if we were okay. Then he copied: SEAS TOO ROUGH TODAY WILL TRY AGAIN
TOMORROW . Red blinked a "Roger" with his flashlight and we watched the plane fly eastward toward Adak.

No sooner had the PBY flown out of sight than Red and I both remembered the daily late afternoon visit by the Japanese float fighter. It was too late to notify the PBY but on the end of our next weather transmission Red encoded and sent a repeat of the information about the enemy plane.

Even though the weather was excellent that evening, the "Rufe" inexplicably did not scout Amchitka. Red and I spent another anxious, restless night. By morning the weather had clouded over and the wind had backed into the southeast as another frontal cloud shield approached. We continued to take and transmit weather observations, adding the information about the enemy float fighter.

Big, gorgeous, and lovable the PBY returned that afternoon about 1400 hours and landed offshore. We gathered up essential gear and hurried to the water's edge. The same crewman came ashore in the rubber raft. We were all smiles and I was never so glad to see anyone in my life.

"Okay you clowns," cracked the aircrewman with a huge grin,
Your vacation is over. Time you got back to work.

Why didn't you cut our vacation short yesterday?" I asked.
The sea wasn't that damned rough.ENDRECORD

"Rough enough," he replied, as we threw our gear in the raft. "We didn't want to end up on the French Riviera with you and cramp your style. Is this it? he added, looking at our gear."

"Hell, yes!" said Red, "Let's get the hell out of here while
the gettin's good."

We left the food rations in the cave, an extra pair of Red's wet long-johns that refused to dry, and an extra pair of my woolen socks. All of these were gladly expendable. It wasn't until we'd taken off that Red realized he'd left behind a nice pair of expensive, fur-lined leather gloves.

On the return flight to Adak Red and I went forward and thanked the pilot and flight deck crew for picking us up. They had been detailed to retrieve us as they were the only aircrew who knew precisely where we were. They had been told about the enemy plane's late afternoon reconnaissance visits.

Pilots and crew of this PBY were not familiar to me and were attached to either VP-61 or VP-62. Both of these squadrons were recent arrivals to the Aleutians.

When we landed at Adak, even the mud looked good. I swore I'd never complain again about any present circumstances I found myself in. Whenever I did, my lot always worsened.

Red and I both agreed that Amchitka's caves might be for sea lions and blue foxes but where we were concerned they were also for the birds.

In my absence, LCDR Tatom had been doing double-duty. He'd come to the beach from USS Thornton every afternoon, entered signals and analyzed a map, taken hourly weather observations, and kept up my logs.

"I'm glad you're back," he said with a smile.

"Not near as glad as I am, Commander," I replied. In a joyous mood over a safe return from a hairy mission, I added, "Well, I see you don't need me around here. How about thirty days leave?"

Tatom actually laughed out loud. "Here," he said, handing me the pen, "finish entering these map signals and get those silly notions out of your head. We probably won't get leave until the war ends."

I took Tatom's "We" to mean "me and thee" because White, Carter, Calderon, and Olson were in Seattle with the Gillis along with Carey and Roberts in the Williamson.

Hiding For Forty-Nine Days On Kiska

> One starving navy weatherman
> Forty-nine days from moment one Could not survive eating tundra grass And then it was done.

Aerograper's Mate First Class, William Charles House's Kiska ordeal finally ended while I was in a sea lion cave forty miles across the way on Amchitka. On about September 22, 1942, House was put aboard the 10,000 ton Nagata Maru, anchored in Kiska Harbor, for the long voyage to POW camp in Japan.

House's dramatic story was not learned until after the war when he and the other POWs of our navy's Kiska weather/radio unit were repatriated.

Incredibly, House held out for forty-nine days before starvation forced him to surrender or die on July 26, 1942. Shown a measure of both courtesy and respect by the Japanese for his remarkable holdout, House was nursed back to some semblance of health then put to work on Kiska.

Our constant bombing raids had drastically reduced the number of supply ships arriving and departing Kiska. For almost two months there were no available vessels in which to send House to Japan. During his holdout followed by almost two months of forced labor House survived numerous U.S. bombing and strafing attacks and also the intense shelling by the Indianapolis led task force on August 7, 1942.

House had last been seen alive by the men of his unit on the foggy morning of June 7, 1942 as they scattered into various ravines while Japanese machine gun bullets and tracers sought them out. The ten man weather/radio team knew from listening to their short-wave radio receiver that the enemy had bombed Dutch Harbor on June 3 and 4. Here, in his own words, is House's story.

".....We certainly didn't want to get caught, so we carefully estimated and plotted the Japanese position using a 10 knot speed. At night we slept in our clothes with our guns at the ready.

By June 6, 1942 we figured the Japanese were well past Kiska on their return to Japan and we relaxed and undressed for bed. Just after 0200 hours on 7 June, 1942, Winfrey, AerM2c, sleeping in the bunk above me shouted, "ATTACK ATTACK." I told him to go back to sleep, it is not time to get up, and that he was

having a bad dream. Wimpy then turned on the lights and showed me a bullet hole in his leg.

About this time I observed window glass in our bunk room being broken by bullets. Our outside lookout had chosen this time to come in and make a cup of coffee. We dressed hurriedly and Turner, AerM2c turned the heating stove up full, and I stuffed all the communication ciphers into the hot stove. During this time, I observed the glass cases covering the selsyn wind recording instruments breaking from Japanese bullets. As I ran from the building, the first light permitted the observation of many Japanese landing craft moving up the inner harbor with machine guns blasting away from their bows.

Turner, who had been outside for a couple of minutes and adjusted to the light suggested that we spread out and move up the hill toward the low clouds for cover. As we spread and moved, the Japanese would shoot at us. We would drop down and they would train on another moving target. In this early morning light the tracer bullets looked like baseballs curving toward us. Luckily for us we could dodge the tracers and because of the distance the tracers had traveled they were lighter and consequently higher than the regular bullets, which I could see hitting the dirt short of their mark. In about 300 yards we reached the cover of fog and were not visible to the gunners. I scrambled madly up the hill until overcome by exhaustion and lay on the ground for a rest.

The sound of footsteps seemed to be closing in. I pressed my ear to the ground and listened to the rythmic beat and realized it was my heartbeat. Reason took over and I analyzed my situation. I was alone, not warmly dressed but had grabbed a couple of gray blankets as I ran outside. The Japanese were landing in force and I would assume that they would knock out our facilities and leave, so I must evade them until they left Kiska.

For that day I moved next to some gray rocks and covered with gray blankets and did not make a move until darkness. During the day there was some shooting in different places and a few planes flying around by afternoon. A summer day in Alaska is very long especially when one is alone, in danger and your whole world just pulled out from under you. The goal for the first night was to locate some of the food, a gun and some ammunition that was stashed in a ravine a couple of miles southeast of my present position.

As soon as darkness arrived I set off in haste trying to get to the food cache. I became overheated and would gulp water from the small streams and grab up mouthfuls of snow from drifts. This made me nauseated and I threw up what food I had left in my stomach.

After crisscrossing the area several times, I was unable to locate the cache and the sky was lighting in the east. I then decided to go to the southeast coast of the island. Just as daylight arrived I was crossing a stream and fell in. I was soaked to my neck. As the sun warmed, I decided to dry my clothes by spreading them on the grass to dry. Just at that time a Japanese patrol boat anchored just offshore and remained there all day. That pinned me down. I rolled up in my blankets and stayed in the creek ravine. That was no place for me, so decided to move inland up the hill. During the night I passed a creek bank that looked like it would make a good cave. My only tools for digging was a handful of 30.06 shells and it turned out to be slow digging so I gave up that idea.

As dawn was breaking, I settled on a small meadow by a stream, that gave me a full view of the harbor but it also put me in plain view. I tried to sleep most of the day curled up in my gray blankets by some gray rocks. It proved to be an interesting place as I watched the ships come and go, and the patrol boat was methodically taking soundings of the outer harbor with a lead line. A couple of days had passed since I had last eaten, my thought turned to food. The only thing available for food was limited vegetation; tundra grass, wild celery, and lupine bulbs. An old fur trapper that I had met at Dutch Harbor had told me, "There is nothing poisonous growing in the Aleutian Islands", so I decided to start eating the vegetation. The wild celery was bitter, so I eliminated that, and concentrated on filling up with tundra. The tundra didn't seem to agree with me, as I became very sick and nauseated, then an urge for a bowel movement. The stool was mostly undigested tundra mixed with clotted blood.

All this happened during mid-day and I was in plain view of several ships in the outer harbor. I began thinking that this was a poor place to stay but in a day or so a PBY made a bombing approach over my area toward the main harbor. Flack from the AA guns was falling all around me. That made up my mind and I would move out with the coming night to a cove on the

north central coastline.

It turned out to be a bad night for traveling as a steady rain set in. Upon approaching the north coast I saw a cave in a steep bank just above a small creek. That looked like a good home, so I crawled in to sleep. The rain was dripping from the cave roof and got my blankets wet. The wind shifted to the northwest and there was colder temperature and a few snow flurries to add to my discomfort.

By experimenting with my environment I was able to subsist at that location for another forty days. There was a plentiful supply of new tundra for food. By this time I discovered that I could eat the inside, tender part of the stem. It was tasty, something like fresh corn. I was able to eat enough tundra for a daily bowel movement. Angle worms from the nearby stream provided some protein even though they were a little bitter. The dry tundra from last year made a very good shelter, by placing a two foot layer on the ground and folding my blankets over that. The blankets were covered with another eighteen inches of tundra. I simply crawled in between the blankets for a nice, dry, warm and soft bed. It was easy to change my sleeping routine back to nights by gathering my tundra, and filling a canvas hood, doubling as a water bucket, in the early morning hours. The day was spent eating the tundra.

I was careless in sorting out the coarse parts of the tundra and throwing the new fresh grass over my haystack. The rain followed the green grass right through and I got wet in a rainstorm. After that I was careful to keep the grass separated and the dry grass would absorb the rain a few inches on top, leaving it dry and warm below.

I had a pencil but nothing to write on, so I kept track of time by making a mark on the pencil every day, and every seventh day a larger mark. What does one do with all that time? Think--think of how I might get out of this situation. There didn't seem to be any desirable alternatives. The only hope was that there might be an invasion but that seemed improbable at the time.....think of my wife and young daughter that I had left behind, wondering if I might ever see them again.....thinking with some satisfaction that I had taken out the maximum amount of government life insurance.....thinking and sometimes dreaming of American style food.

If I were looking for seclusion, I had found it.

There were no human beings in sight, however, one day a dog came running up, stopped and stared at me, then ran off. Another time a Jap fighter plane came down the ravine with his machine guns blazing away. For a minute I thought he was after me but he continued seaward, spraying bullets into the water. On another occasion I was awakened by a very sharp explosion from the other side of the island and could feel the ground tremor.

B-17 and B-24 raids were becoming quite frequent. One day a B-17 put on a good show. The plane was producing a very good condensation trail and with this he drew a large circle over the island, then double-crossed the circle indicating a target and dropped his bomb load through it.

On the forty-eight day I was on my way to the creek for some water when I fainted. This called for some soul searching; if I remained there I would surely die. I then carefully wrote my name on an old canvas hunting jacket that I was wearing so that my remains would be identifiable, if found. If I surrendered to the Japanese they might kill me but it was my only lease left for life. Surrender with its chance of execution, surrender with its shame and humiliation, and surrender with its uncertainties was the only option. Early the next morning I started the slow climb over the mountains to surrender. By going in a straight line, I thought some time might be saved, however, one incline proved too steep and I slid back down. Then I had to take the long way back.

As I neared the summit by midmorning, a Japanese AA gun emplacement came into view. There was patchy fog moving past and I would simply drop into the tall tundra when it cleared and walk toward the gun emplacement during the fog. I got right close to the gun and was then faced with the surrender act, as it was humiliating and scary. Traditionally a white flag is used, so I ripped off a piece from my undershorts and waved it as I marched in.

Some of the Japanese marines ran toward me and assisted me as I was pretty lean and gaunt at that time. They would indicate which persons I should salute. They poured some tea and gave me some biscuits. A flight of B-17s were approaching the island, so two marines took me a short distance from the sand-bagged gun revetment and stayed with me while their AA gun shot at the planes. The B-17s made their bombing run and left.

The officer in charge of the gun seemed to be in a nasty mood. He barked orders to a couple of soldiers and they jammed their bayonets into place with the cold click of steel. Then he motioned for me to follow him. I was apprehensive and the thought passed through my mind that he might just take me down the path and have the bayonets stuck into me.

After a short while the camp headquarters came into view and I had the feeling of being spared again. The change that the Japanese had made was phenomenal; they had completed over twenty-four buildings in the short space of forty-nine days that I was hiding out.

Arriving back of the headquarters, they had me sit on a grass sack. A large ring of Japanese formed a large circle around me and just stared. I had the feeling of a monkey in a zoo. They served me some tea, and dinner, then later some tea and biscuits. The ring remained constant for several hours with some dropping out and others taking their place. Late in the afternoon, I was put into our old power station, given some grass sacks and blankets for a bed.

The Japanese curiosity did not stop as a long line formed at the window and they would have a minute or so to look at me then move off. Darkness put an end to the staring and for the first night for a long time I had the protection of a building. A rather steady rain beat on the shingle roof. It sure felt cozy to have shelter again. That night a guard checked me about every thirty minutes by shining a bright flashlight into my eyes, and woke me to see if I was alright.

The next morning a doctor arrived and checked me over. He told me McCandless, S1c, the cook and Gaffey, S1c were captured on the first morning. They were running through the fog and ran right into a battalion of Jap soldiers that had landed up the coast and were marching into our camp from the rear. The doctor also informed me that he had taken the bullet out of Winfrey's leg and that by the end of eleven days nine of the men had been accounted for with one survivor out, and presumed dead.

The Japanese laid down some rules of my confinement. I was to stay in the powerhouse, and was allowed to go to the toilet, go to the pond between the headquarters and the bay for my morning washup and for washing my dishes and clothes. They continued to give me all I could eat and my health came back fast. The line dwindled at the windows, only when a ship

arrived would there be a new line at the window.

Japanese reporters and photographers came by frequently for pictures and stories. Several of the Japanese would come in for a friendly visit. One I remember well, I called him BF, for Best Friend, for his homely wit reminded me of Benjamin Franklin. He was a reporter for a Tokyo newspaper before the war and was drafted, being used as a servant in the officer's quarters next door. He was dissatisfied about the war disrupting his life and landing him in a place like Kiska. He also had a liking for alcohol, which he pinched from the officer's mess and stored in the attic of the powerhouse. He would enter through a window with a bag full of liquor bottles and deposit them in the attic. He would always put his finger on his lip and say, "No speak."

He usually brought me some goodies. On one occasion he was bringing me some raw eggs, and when he crawled through the window, the eggs broke in his pocket. He stuck his hand in the pocket and withdrew it--dripping with egg and shell, extending the hand toward me he said, " For you!" It took a bit of doing to show appreciation without laughing. On another occasion he decided that we should get drunk. I participated very sparingly but he managed to hand on quite a load, and spent several hours telling me about his life. Shortly after that he disappeared from the scene.

Another frequent caller was an enlisted pilot who flew one of the Zeros on floats. He was also a very good artist and made portraits of me on several occasions. He was intent on teaching me Japanese and would write the alphabets for me to practice. One evening he came in and sketched some destroyers, and said, "Your country's warships right out there." He was correct for the next day we had a firing run and their range was just right as the path of shell explosions ran right through the middle of the camp. I was watching out the window and a Jap soldier was jumping into the shell holes for protection but he kept diving from one hole to the next and it looked humorous to me and I laughed. He saw me, and the next day he made a point of pushing me off the walkway on my way back from the washing pond. The Executive Officer of the station saw him push me, and he really chewed him out!

The Jap officer with a strong German accent decided he must interrogate me. He asked many

questions, and finally finished up with, "Who do you think will win the war?" My reply was, "I hope someone does soon." For some reason he did not send the report forward but it was left in his quarters when the Japs departed hurriedly from Kiska the following year. The interrogation was sent to Washington, D.C.. It was shown to my brother who was on duty with the Navy Photographic Lab there during the war.

One day when he had the command post duty, there were overcast skies but lots of air activity. A bomb made a direct hit on the headquarters building on the kitchen stove. It came right through the side of the building. My meals usually came from that stove. I noticed that lunch had been sent to the Japs but nothing had arrived for me. I asked the OD where my lunch was and he replied, "Keep vaiting." After a short wait I tried again, and got another, "Keep vaiting." Shortly I tried again and he sent me up the hill to a mess hall to get my own rice. On the way back another bomb run was made. I dove for the ground and covered my rice dish with my body. A bomb landed very close and splashed mud all over me. The soil under the tundra was a heavy clay type and bombs would penetrate three or four feet and the clay would hold most of the shrapnel with the force of the explosion mostly upward.

Shortly the Japanese decided my health was good and that I must now start working. Each morning I would go to the beach at the head of the bay and fill sandbags all day. Most of the Japs working on these details were civilian laborers and we had a good time together as we worked and talked. During air raids the Executive Officer told me always to return to my bunk at the powerhouse but on one occasion there was large flight of P-38s and P-39s that came over very quickly and I went into a tunnel near the bay with the Jap workers. It was a good raid, as it knocked out ten buildings and there was a lot of Japs killed by strafing. The ground rocked during the bombing.

Just as soon as things settled down, I went back to the powerhouse and the Executive Officer was standing on the walkway in front of a leveled powerhouse. His battle station was a command post dugout just across the walkway from the powerhouse. He looked at me and said, "You are a very lucky man."

That night things looked critical for me. It was 7:00 p.m. and I had no place to spend the night but the Executive Officer came by and asked me where I was

staying. I told him that I didn't know but in just a few minutes a Japanese sailor took me to the Japanese bathhouse. A quick inspection showed that the bathhouse was riddled with bullet holes. I curled up in a big wooden tub but couldn't get completely comfortable.

The next day they had mass funerals. The Japanese seem to have more respect for the dead than the living. We stood at attention most of the day as the coffins were carried by. There were some killed by the strafing on the ships and they were brought ashore by launch and the processions filed past. Just where the burial grounds were, I am not sure but they went out of sight to the northeast.

I continued working on the sand detail until the 19th of September 1942, when the Executive Officer informed me that I was going to Japan tomorrow. The next morning he told me to shave and I informed him that I did not have a razor. He came back shortly with one.

As I left to board the ship my workmates at the beach gave me
a rousing send off.

I think I can explain my conduct as a prisoner as I adopted the old saying, "Never bite the hand that feeds you", and "God helps those who help themselves."

Sincerely,
Charles House"

A P.S. attached to this letter from House lists the locations of his confinement and activities in Japan thusly: My trip to Japan in the Nagata Maru; Solitary confinement at O'Funa; Work camp at Yokohama; Tokyo Military Hospital; Camp Hospital: Shinagawa POW Hospital; Back to work at the Shipyards; The Steel Mills of Kamishi; The Invasion: and The War is over.

House closes his letter with, "When you talk of exploits of navy weathermen I would like to relate the action of one who never came back. This tale was relayed to me in POW camp by Commander Meir, USN the senior survivor from USS Houston. He last saw Walter Glenn Lee, AerM1c, USN on the deck by #2 turret with his theodolite giving relative bearings and elevation angles to the bridge, after all fire control gear had been knocked out by bombs. Walter Glenn Lee perished with the ship."

The Japanese Executive Officer of Kiska that House mentioned was Commander Nifumi Mukai, IJN. Commander Mukai was one of the surviving officers interrogated after the war by Captain James S. Russell, USN.

Commander Mukai's version of how the ten men of our navy weather/radio unit on Kiska were captured differs in places from known facts. It must be remembered that he was speaking from memory about something which was far down the list of his priorities at the time of occurrence.

Mukai recalled that the men of the small U.S. Navy Weather Station were made Prisoner of War, although one man held out for a long time until forced by hunger and cold to surrender. Three Prisoners of War were taken a short distance inshore from the weather station. These were believed to be a pharmacist's mate, a cook, and a weather observer. No one else was met but it was learned that four more men from the weather station had gone into the hills to the south.

Remembering the four Americans who were reported to be in the hills to the south, cruiser Kiso sent a boat with an armed party aboard around to the south side of the island. This was not done immediately, however, and was unsuccessful. After the search was discontinued, and on about 22 June 1942, three (Commander Mukai said this number could possibly have been four) gave themselves up. These were thought to be civilians- one weatherman and two lookouts.

To the best of Mukai's recollection, the first weatherman was questioned and sent to Yokosuka with the pharmacist's mate and cook on the Asaka maru, which left on 15 June. The other three (or four) were rushed out to the Kiso which left for Ominato.

On about 30 June, the last man was found behind the main camp. He was kept for some time because no ships were sailing for Japan. This prisoner was quartered in the building which housed the U.S. diesel generator. The prisoner was tall, slender, had brown hair and blue eyes. He had a pleasant disposition and was well liked by the Japanese. He was finally placed aboard a destroyer sailing for Yokosuka in October 1942.

One of the correspondents who visited House shortly after he surrendered wrote a most interesting piece about the meeting. Whether or not the correspondent filed the story with his newspaper is

not clear but his words, alternately chilling, sad, stark, and insightful are preserved.

RESTRICTED
Advance CP,Hq, Alaska Defense Command Office
of the Assistant Chief of Staff
For Military Intelligence, G2, I and I Detachment
C/O PM, Seattle, Wash.

G-2 Item #35- believed picked up on Attu or Kiska
Partial Translation- from the Japanese

Record (An account) of "Invasion Upon Aleutians"
Written about 25-27 July 1942 at Kiska

By Army War Correspondent MIKIZO FUKAZAWA

Page 163
5. Guerrilla Warfare In The Air- Kiska Isle

(TN-probably brand of cigarettes), and we left the unit commander
and commander_____who guided us, and with the guidance of
Captain Kanzaki we were taken to our barracks.

"Yesterday, after 50 days, an American soldier on Kiska had surrendered. Would you like to see him tomorrow? He's weak and weary."

Upon entering the room with Captain Kanzaki, the man beneath the blankets flung the blankets aside and sat up and together with a personality smile, he executed a doubtful salute to the visitors.

He who had goggling eyes and sunken cheeks, whose arms and legs were so thin that the expression thin 'as string' fitted him perfectly, with a long brown beard, was "the man who was hiding for 50 days."

At the time of the unit's attack on Kiska, there were 10 American soldiers on duty with the weather station and communications. Nine of them were taken but the whereabouts of the remaining one was not known. Since the Japanese unit thought he had died of starvation or frozen to death while wandering in the fog. When precautions against the remaining one were forgotten, he came stumbling down the hill on the south side of
the bay on the ____th day, 50 days since his escape.

He waved a handkerchief tied to a stick. "There was the man," said Captain Kanzaki.

A spry medical officer came here from _____ and asked,"Care for a smoke?" Upon offering him one, he emphatically waved his hand and said, "I don't smoke." "Because he hadn't eaten anything resembling food but survived on grasses which grew on the beach and when we gave him rice mush, he got a stomachache." He showed us by pressing his stomach which stuck to his back like a board as if he understood Captain Kanzaki's explanation.

"Is it 50 odd days? I kept track of the days at first, but in the end I forgot. I wandered here and there around the shore of this island, and at times I slept at the foot of the mountain; covering myself with dry weeds, and at times slept in the caves near the shore. During the night, the winds and the snow blew away the dry grass which I used to cover myself and I thought that I would die of cold. Because I didn't have any food and though I existed by eating grasses (TN-called "Buski" which the natives eat), which grew along the shore, I couldn't bear it any longer, so I surrendered. Please look at these skinny legs." The thigh which he grabbed was no larger than a child's arm.

"Do you know anything about the naval battle at Hawaii? Do you know that the Japanese fleet annihilated the American fleet at Pearl Harbor?"

"I know."

"Do you know that in the Coral Sea battle, the American carrier Saratoga was sunk?"

"I didn't know."

"At present, the Japanese forces had advanced into the Aleutians. Do you think that America is going to win the war?"

"_____." (TN left this blank)

Between the American soldier and the Chief of Medical Officers, the conversation was carried on in this manner.

"About the middle of May, he was assigned to Kiska via Unalaska, and before 20 days had passed it was taken by the Imperial Army. He stated that he didn't know

what was what.

And according to the story of his personal life, he stated that his name was William Charhaus, (TN- Phonetic from the Japanese- William Charles House, Aerographer's Mate First Class, U.S.Navy), age 29 and in his home in California a pretty wife and a girl are awaiting his return.

When we mentioned that we were correspondents of Tokyo newspaper and that we are planning to return soon, he stared at us with a serious look and asked, "Which newspaper?" and when we said, "DOMEI," he said, "If it's DOMEI," I know. "If you return, I want you to send a wire to my family that I am well and in the care of the Japanese forces and they are not to worry."

He repeated word for word his wife's and child's names and
address in California.

I felt sorry for him, but from my heart came another thought. Suppose he were Japanese? I cannot think that with a healthy body they would be taken captive. If he were Japanese, he would never show his personality nor even in a dream ask to have his family notified of his well being.

While listening to his words, I clearly understood the
difference between the Japanese and American."

War correspondent Fukazawa's description of House's skin and bones physical state paints a clearer picture than House's own version of his health condition at the time. The full effects of his forty-nine days of starvation were far reaching. Note the number of hospitals in Japan at which he was a patient.

House's account of his long holdout and months as a working POW on Kiska is told with understatement and touches of humor. Much can be read between the lines.

I would like to add a few items. House is about six feet one inch tall. When the Japanese stormed ashore at Kiska he weighed 185 pounds. Forty-nine days later he weighed 85 pounds. He
neglected to mention that he fainted many times on his journey over the mountains to surrender. He didn't think he was going to make it. It was only his strong will to survive that forced his emaciated body to continue toward the enemy camp.

House also neglected to mention how close he came

to being captured or shot the day he hid in tall grass while a dog stared and sniffed at him. This Irish setter was accompanied by a Japanese officer 30 feet away who was hunting birds and small game with a shotgun.

The friendly "Rufe" pilot who was an artist and gave House Japanese language lessons was also a candid and practical individual.

"What do you do," House asked him one evening, "when you run into a P-38?"

"I hide in the clouds."

House suspects that some of the float fighter pilots took off during air raid alerts and flew above the thick overcast where they feigned dogfights until the bombing raid ended to make their comrades on the ground believe they were fighting to the death. This was during a period when many of their planes and pilots had been shot down in flames and before replacements arrived.

There was one Japanese "Rufe" pilot who was considered a hero because he was credited with shooting down two American bombers.

Charley House has an explanation why he was so persistent about asking for his "Mishi" (rice) the day the cook stove was blown through the side of the headquarters building.

"I'd decided that the Japs were either going to have to feed me or shoot me but I'd be damned if I'd miss one more meal in my life!"

Until recently, House was unaware of how lucky he'd been not to have accidently eaten his last meal on Kiska during his holdout. Before settling on eating tundra he'd sampled a variety of plants and roots. The old fur trapper at Dutch Harbor who'd told him there were no poisonous plants in the Aleutians was deadly wrong. It was fortunate House did not chomp up roots of the Monkshood (Aconitum) plant, a plant common in the Aleutians. It was from the roots of the Monkshood that early Aleuts extracted a deadly poison that was smeared on the stone tips of their lances used in hunting whale.

Sandbags and Sod

During quiet night hours at Adak, the ACI

lieutenant taught me the rudiments of analyzing aerial photographs. We had watched buildings under construction, saw the marine railway and pens for midget submarines take shape, be partially destroyed by bombs then rebuilt. Almost daily, bomb craters exchanged places with buildings and gun emplacements as Kiska's pockmarked landscape continually put on a different mask.

Each new series of photographs of the Japanese airstrip project near Salmon Lagoon received close scrutiny. Progrees on the airfield was exceedingly slow because the Japanese had little mechanized equipment and most of the work was being done manually. During one three week period the Japanese had not extended the runway at all. Instead, they had been kept busy filling the latest bomb craters. This airstrip was always a prime target for our planes for its completion would have put land-based Zero fighters in the air over Kiska and likely over Adak, too.

In adddition to his work detail filling sandbags at the beach, House had peeled sod and camouflaged emplacements. Many Japanese workers were engaged in this extensive camouflage operation. I had an opportunity to study one clearcut example of this handiwork.

One evening, after I'd caught up on my work, I joined the ACI
lieutenant in his.

"What do you make of this, Paul?" he asked handing me a
magnifying glass and indicating a spot on a photograph.

"Another gun emplacement for sure," I replied as I brought a
newly excavated circular hole into focus.

"Hardly," he replied. "You'll notice it's much smaller than the one for the anti-aircraft gun alongside it. They almost join. That trench which separates them is only about five feet in length."

"Why couldn't it be a machine gun pit to protect the larger
gun?"

"No. They would not place a protective gun so close." "Okay, I give up."

"Don't be so impatient. Now look at this shot taken this
morning. Where did out little excavation go?"

"It has disappeared like a lot of other stuff."

"Exactly right. They cover things over and camouflage them with fresh sod. It wasn't a gun emplacement but probably a combination magazine and shelter for the AA gun crew."

With few exceptions these aerial photographs were taken by 11th USAAF planes attacking Kiska. Our PBYs often had carried a photographer's mate on earlier runs over Kiska but the slow, ponderous planes were hardly suited for this kind of work over a heavily fortified enemy base.

Upon completion of the airstrip on Adak, the army planes conducted bombing and strafing missions on Japanese installations at Kiska and Attu while our PBYs concentrated on their primary role of long-range search and patrol.

Many of the low altitude photographs over Kiska were taken by remotely controlled cameras mounted on P-38 fighters. One particular photograph is imprinted in my mind. The camera had been activated at rooftop skimming altitude during a strafing attack. In the left foreground five Japanese were running for cover. The white, frightened face of one fleeing individual was looking back over a shoulder at the oncoming P-38. In the background, black Japanese characters stenciled on the side of a large packing crate were plainly visible.

Throughout September 1942, the grim Allied situation in the South Pacific did not improve. The Battle of Guadalcanal was still in doubt. Between September 15 and 28 carrier USS Wasp, battleship USS North Carolina, and destroyer USS O'Brien were all hit by torpedoes while escorting marine reinforcements to Guadalcanal from Espititu Santo. Wasp was scuttled and sunk, O'Brien broke up and sank, North Carolina, with a 32 foot underwater slash, headed for Pearl Harbor. As of September 20, 1942, USS Hornet was the only U.S. carrier operational in the Pacific.

The month of September 1942 was also one of meetings, travel, and inspections by area commanders. Admiral Nimitz attended a conference in San Francisco at which Admiral King of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others were present. The dissension between Admiral Theobald, General Buckner, and 11th USAAF Commander, General William O. Butler in Alaska was discussed. It was decided that unless army-navy relations in the Aleutians improved between Alaska Defense Command (Buckner) and Commander North Pacific (Theobald), over who had command one or more transfers would be needed.

The latest squabble was over who had command of 1200 U.S. troops in the Pribilof Islands of the Bering Sea.

Forecasting For Army Pilots

During the months of September and October 1942, and before
Tatom moved to the beach from USS Thornton, I was kept busy by army pilots. These flyers were piloting C-47s of the Air Transport Command. Their shuttle service brought in a steady stream of supplies from the 11th USAAF base at Elmendorf Field, Anchorage.

These lieutenants, captains, and several majors were a happy-go-lucky, eager bunch that reminded me of old-time barnstormers. One ATC pilot, in fact, was Robert C. Reeve the noted Alaskan bush-pilot. To my knowledge, Reeve was the only civilian pilot employed by the army on this Aleutian supply run. The army ATC pilots were on a flight hours quota: The more hours they flew, the quicker they were rotated back to the states.

USAAF meteorologists provided forecasts for bomber and fighter missions but army weather operations were on the other side of the runway. ATC planes were parked on the Nashville side of the runway where the pilots messed and berthed while at Adak. Because it was convenient the ATC pilots would start dropping into my weather tent shortly after 0500 hours for weather clearance back to Umnak, Cold Bay, and Anchorage. Tatom's latest map and forecast were never delivered to me until 0800 hours at the earliest. This put me in a bind. I was not authorized to give weather clearances to anyone. All attempts to explain my position to the devil-may-care, non-regulation ATC pilots failed.

"Hell's bells, you're a weatherman, aren't you?" one
laughingly asked.

"Well....yes," I replied.

"Okay, then what's the latest back at Cold Bay?"

"Light snow shower, ceiling 1500, small breaks, visibility 5 miles, wind NW 18 with gusts to 26."

"'Bout the same between here and there?" "More or less."

"That's good enough for me, Carrigan. See you sometime
tomorrow."

"Wait," I hollered as he hurried out the tent, "I

didn't give
you a damned weather clearance!"

This typical early exchange set a precedent. None of the ATC pilots had a standard flight form. I never wrote down the weather data or signed anything. My neck was out a mile and it worried me. I kept quiet about these goings on for several weeks then told Tatom.

"Have any of the planes been lost?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I've heard that a number have either crashed or are missing but none, yet, on return flights between here and Cold Bay."

"If the pilots want to drop in and check the hourly weather along their route and you can give them a general indication of what they'll run into, I see no harm in the situation. It helps them and the decision and responsibility of whether to fly or not rests entirely with them."

One army major gave me a bottle of scotch when he returned from Anchorage. I'd told him he would encounter intermittant, heavy snow showers around Cold Bay that could last up to an hour. He'd circled Cold Bay for two and a half hours waiting for one to pass. He'd landed with a thimbleful of gasoline. The gift of booze, he said, was not for my forecasting job but because he was in a good mood and glad to be alive.

During this September to mid-October 1942 period of our occupation of Adak I had a slight respite from steady flying. When it was required for pin-pointing the approach of an intense low pressure system, Tatom and I alternated flying the weather.

Tatom gave me the examination for AerM2c in mid October. The test he'd obtained aboard USS Thornton was both lengthy and tough. It took me most of one day to answer all questions of the written part.

"Congratulations," Tatom said the following day, "you passed with a 3.85 grade point average. As of this date you are a second class aerographer's mate. I'll notify personnel headquarters at Kodiak."

Castner's Cutthroats

The Alaska Scouts were a unique outfit that played an important role throughout the Aleutian Campaign of WWII. General Simon B. Buckner, with typical foresight, had formed the Alaska Scouts prior to Pearl Harbor. Recruited from among the military, Alaskan caucasians, native Eskimos, Indians, and

Aleuts, they were under command of Colonel Lawrence V. Castner, USA. Colonel William J. Verbeck, USA was second in command. Tough, experienced U.S. army sergeants formed the next echelon of command. Master Sergeant, Joe Kelly, was the one non-com with whom I became acquainted.

Colonel Castner and Verbeck were both intelligence officers familiar with the rugged methods used for training commandos and rangers. With care, they hand-picked their civilian scouts from among Alaska's trappers, miners, fishermen and others with special skills. All were crack shots. All had proven capabilities of being able to survive alone in the wilderness. These special inherent skills, learned techniques, and intimate knowledge of Alaska was further honed by intensive training in commando tactics. The end product was a silent, deadly group that quickly earned the nickname, "Castner's Cutthroats."

The Scouts maintained a close association with the U.S. Navy at Adak as had been so at Dutch Harbor. They spent a good deal of time around our navy weather/ACI tent. While this exchange of intelligence and weather data was paramount, the navy also furnished PBYs or submarines to transport the Alaska Scouts to and from their dangerous missions.

I was not aware of Colonel Castner's presence on Adak after about two weeks following the occupation. I think he became ill about that time and was sent to a hospital. Colonel Verbeck, though, was much in evidence as were Sergeant Kelly and about a dozen scouts.

Colonel Verbeck and his right-hand man, Sergeant Kelly, along with the ACI lieutenant, began spending many hours in our tent as they studied the latest aerial photographs of Kiska. Something was in the wind.

When I learned of the proposed mission, I was stunned! Colonel Verbeck, Sergeant Kelly, and four native scouts were going to reconnoiter Japanese installations on Kiska. A submarine would take them to a location off the north coast of Kiska. The six would paddle ashore in handmade fold boats. They would spend thirty-six hours on Kiska, mapping, observing, and pin-pointing concealed targets of merit. When this work was completed they would rendezvous offshore with the submarine.

The six included Simeon Pletnikof, an Aleut whom

I believe was originally from Nazan Bay, Atka. The other three natives appeared to me to be Eskimo rather than Aleut. Although I think the Eskimos could speak some English they were a quiet threesome and seldom conversed even among themselves. One of the Eskimos designed the fold boats to be used. Three boats were constructed from materials on hand. They were ingenious craft, simple, sturdy, and made solely of canvas and wood sticks. When assembled, somewhat in the fashion of an army cot, the notched sticks acted as stiffening ribs and thwarts. Folded, each boat formed a light package about the size of a small suitcase. Each boat could carry two men.

Colonel Verbeck and his five men began assembling their equipment, including the fold boats, in a stockpile outside the tent. Their departure was postponed that night. I offered a corner of the weather tent space for a storage area until departure, so the gear was moved inside.

Several days of sitting and waiting followed during which time the scouts silently honed knives. Colonel Verbeck was putting an edge on a large, strange, sheath knife that already looked razor keen.

"That's the most unusual knife I've ever seen, Colonel," I remarked.

"A friend of mine, a surgeon, designed the blade," Verbeck replied with pride. "You will notice that the side hollows extend all the way to the point. This is for easier penetration and withdrawal. I made it myself, including the grip."

This grip was similar to that of a pirate's cutlass but it incorporated a set of sharp, spiked, brass knuckles and a three-sided, brass spike extended two inches beyond the butt of the handle.

It was easy to imagine the many uses to which such an awesome knife could be put in the colonel's line of work. In Verbeck's hand, one could rest assured the weapon would accomplish its silently efficient purpose.

Unlike the boyish faced, quiet Colonel Castner, Verbeck was an imposing figure. He packed 190 pounds of well distributed, spring-steel muscle on his six foot, three inch frame. I would guess his age to have been in the mid to late thirties. His lantern jawed, weather-seasoned face showed great determination. He radiated power and confidence. He looked tough, in a deadly, 'don't tread on me,' way. Far from quiet, Verbeck had an enthusiastic, 'Let's get the job done'

manner about him. I knew that if I had to go ashore in the night on Kiska, I would want his leadership.

The thought of six men pussy-footing around for a night, a day, and part of another night on a small island crawling with 6,000 Japs was beyond belief to me and sent chills up my spine. To me it seemed like a suicide mission.

"What will you do," I asked Verbeck, "if you run into any
Japs?"

"We may take a few prisoners."

This startling reply was delivered in all seriousness. It affords a unique glimpse into the inner Colonel Verbeck. He foresaw no problem in any chance encounter with the enemy on Kiska.

The Alaska Scouts Kiska reconnoiter mission was cancelled because of weather. On the fourth day they removed their gear from the weather/ACI tent. I do not know if this mission was rescheduled and carried out at a later date.

During that four day period when the scouts were waiting to embark I spoke at length with Kelly and Pletnikof. I asked Pletnikof where he and the other scouts were on the day of the Adak occupation. He and three of the thirty-eight scouts were inland several miles. From a low, foothill ridge of Mt. Moffett they had watched the landing craft come ashore.

Prior to the landings, members of their party had spread a cloth, color panel near Kuluk Bay as a code signal for PBYs to relay the information that there were no Japanese on the island. Pletnikof wasn't sure when he found out I was on the island but he thought it was after the landings. Sergeant Kelly knew. Some scouts had reported seeing a PBY land, three men come ashore in a rubber raft but only one return to the plane.

The Weather/ACI Tent Burns Down

During mid October 1942 there was a stretch of the best weather I'd experienced in the Aleutians. Many days were cloudless. On clear nights shooting stars streaked across the heavens. The fogs and drizzles of summer and early fall had ended. Our stormy winter season was still some weeks away.

The frequency and intensity of army bombing and strafing missions over Kiska was stepped up to take

advantage of the current weather conditions.

Our PBY patrol flights were less hazardous because of the good weather except on the sectors immediately to the north and south of Kiska. On these two sectors there was always the possibility that our Yoke-boats might be jumped by one or more enemy float fighters. When that happened, cloud cover or a convenient fog bank were sorely missed.

When clouds did appear during this period of good weather they were usually a scattered to broken deck of altocumulus at an altitude of 8000 to 12000 feet. These cloud bands were
dissipating remnants of overriding warm air from occluded fronts. Low pressure systems were sliding eastward across the North Pacific far to the south of the Aleutians. The semi-permanent North Pacific high pressure cell was split into two cells. One cell was moving southward with the retreating sun. Within a few weeks the other cell would assume its normal winter position to feed and force storms directly down the Aleutian chain from west to east. We did not know that the severest winter ever recorded in the Aleutians was fast approaching.

On this particular October day the weather was fair but there was crispness in the air with temperatures hovering near freezing point. Tatom was waiting for me to enter the last few signals on the latest weather map. LCDR "Cy" Perkins, Executive Officer of VP-42 had entered the tent earlier and was discussing matters in low tones with the ACI lieutenant. In his southern drawl, Perkins asked Tatom to join them for a moment.

"And, Carrigan," he added, "turn that damned stove up and let's get some heat in this tent. Then step outside out of earshot for a spell."

For six weeks I'd been sharing a small office tent with an intelligence officer. There was little I had not been privy to. For Perkins to imply that I was not trustworthy caused me to turn towards him and hesitate. Tatom silently jerked his head sideways indicating I should comply quickly.

"Yes, Sir," I answered striding to the stove where I turned it up full blast. Burning with resentment and frustration I left the tent and walked fifty feet away. I had signals to enter, a weather schedule to decipher, and I had to begin taking a synoptic observation in a few moments.

I'd been standing with my back to the tent for

about five
minutes.

"Goddamnit, Carrigan," Perkin's voice bellowed,"what the hell
are you trying to do?"

I whirled around to see the tent on fire. Like a Roman candle, red hot sparks were showering out of the chimney stove pipe. Numerous burning holes in the canvas roof were spreading.

Clutching an armload of top secret papers and photographs, the ACI lieutenant came running out of the tent. Tatom came through the flap as I reached the tent. With one hand he held a stack of analyzed maps. With his other hand he was beating at embers that had burned through the topmost map I'd almost finished entering. From inside, someone threw a bucketful of water upward toward the roof. When this cascaded back down it brought with it soot and charred fabric. With jackets, the four of us flailed at flames and embers until the tent roof was in tatters but the fires were extinguished.

"Goddamnit," Perkins gasped as he tried to catch his breath,
I didn't tell you to burn the tent down.

It was best to keep silent but I felt like telling him he'd
demanded heat and gotten it.

The tent was ruined beyond repair. Upon Perkin's emergency call, SeaBees arrived on the scene. After tearing down what remained of the tent, they dug up the tundra and beach grass clumps, and leveled off the area for a new tent. Carpenters speedily built a stout plywood deck and installed four foot high plywood sides. Within several hours the new winterized tent was up and everything had been moved back inside. A raised wooden deck instead of mud and tundra made the difference between comfort and misery. None of the enlisted mens' living quarters tents were winterized. I wondered if a little arson on mine would result in similar improvement. This idea never progressed beyond an idle thought. The main deterrent was visions of Perkin's temper explosion if I were involved in burning down a second tent.

Perkins came back that afternoon to inspect the new
weather/ACI tent then visited with Tatom for a few minutes.

"John," Perkins said to Tatom, "I sometimes get

the feeling we have three dangerous adversarys up here: The Weather, The Japs, and Carrigan."

Tatom chuckled.

Perkins came into the tent the following morning while I was out taking a weather observation. When I came inside he and Tatom were discussing the weather. Perkins glanced at me but said nothing.

"Hello, Commander," I said. "Are you warm enough today?" "Just fine, Carrigan. For God's sake don't touch the stove." It was either just prior to the tent's burning or shortly thereafter that LCDR Charles E."Cy" Perkins assumed command of VP-42 relieving Commander James S. Russell. Russell culminated an illustrious naval career as a four star admiral, the highest rank ever achieved by a U.S. Naval aviator. (See note 2. Chapter XX)

Propaganda

While working out of Adak's U.S.Navy Weather/ACI tent I had another layer of my naivete stripped away. It was a shock when I became aware, for the first time, that the U.S. Government was capable of telling a fib.

11th USAAF bombers had carried out a heavy, early morning raid against Kiska. When strike photographs were developed it became clear that little damage had been wrought. Kiska's partially completed dirt airstrip had again been heavily pockmarked with bomb craters but all other major targets had been missed.

Several photographs revealed an interesting fact. Throughout the camp area the Japanese had made piles of empty wooden crates and carboard boxes. On top, they had thrown any old junk and scrap lumber that would burn, poured oil and gasoline over the piles and put them to the torch.

Army pilots verified what the photographs showed. A number of Japanese had also been observed igniting piles then running for cover.

The Japanese hoped that the towering flames and black smoke which erupted from these deliberately set fires would lead us to believe that our raid had caused great damage. We were not fooled.

However, a short-wave radio broadcast out of San Francisco that night stated that a massive U.S. bombing attack on Kiska that day had resulted in great damage to important Japanese installations that were left in shambles and burning infernos.

Perhaps, our government wanted the Japanese to believe their trick worked. Whether the enemy was misled by this propaganda is not known although they did set similar fires on at least one other occasion about a month later. The American public was certainly misled and if the Japanese installations were completely destroyed as periodically claimed, some people must have wondered why Kiska had not already been recaptured.

Interestingly, Kiska earned the distinction of being ranked second to the British defended island of Malta as not only possessing the greatest concentration of anti-aircraft guns but also as the heaviest bombed and most frequently attacked island in WWII.

The 11th USAAF dropped 7,000,000 pounds of bombs on Kiska while conducting 3606 combat sorties. Our navy's Patrol Wing Four dropped 590,000 pounds of bombs on Kiska while flying 704 combat missions plus uncounted thousands of patrols.

It is not known if 11th USAAF figures include bombs dropped
on Bogoslof Island during Bing Omang's tour.

FBI Agents Visit Adak

Two FBI agents paid a surprise visit to Adak in the fall of
1942. During their stay they spent about an hour in and around
our navy weather/ACI tent. I was busy when they entered and introduced themselves after showing identification to the ACI lieutenant.

The conversation that followed was pleasant and dealt in generalities, so general, in fact, that it touched on the weather. At that point, the ACI lieutenant introduced the two agents to me. Both walked over to the map desk and watched my work for a few moments. One asked a few simple questions. The other agent then suggested to the ACI lieutenant that the three of them take a little walk. This was a change. Instead of my having to stop work and leave, they took themselves out of earshot. They returned from their stroll about a half hour later. After ten more minutes of small talk they said goodbye and left.

Bursting with curiosity over the sudden appearance of two FBI agents in the middle of the Aleutians during a war, I asked the lieutenant the

reason. He was noncommittal in his vague answer and passed the visit off as routine business. I knew he was privy to something that didn't concern me so I didn't persist.

FBI agents cannot conduct an investigation without asking questions. Within a few days everyone on Adak knew of the two's presence and the reason they had shown up. Scuttlebutt had it they were investigating two or more plane crashes that possibly might have resulted from a person or persons unknown having drained deicing fluid out of the aircraft in question. Whether the act had been perpetrated by an alcohol seeker or a saboteur, it was still classified as a crime of sabotage of U.S. Government property.

Deicing fluid for aircraft maintenance was stored in large cans or drums. It was understandable how a person desperate for alcohol either for drinking or profit might steal from this source but this had not been the case. It was shocking to think of someone's draining the vital fluid out of the aircraft, especially, since it would have to be someone extremely familiar with the aircraft and have access to them. In short--, someone was deliberately endangering the lives of his flight mates.

Perhaps even more shockingly, the FBI agents were also reported to be searching for a Japanese spy. It was not clear if the agents suspected a possible connection between the spy and the sabotaged aircraft. It had long been rumored that the Japanese seemed to know in advance about some of our plans.

We had heard that a number of Japanese spies in Alaska had been caught and jailed following Pearl Harbor but they were Japanese. If there were still a spy roaming around the Aleutians now, he would almost have to be a Caucasian and in our armed forces. This was a disturbing thought. It was a situation in which one is almost forced to view casual acquaintances and even some friends with question.

With a start, I wondered if someone perceived me as a prime suspect. I'd been in the middle of most all advanced Wing operations. Twice, in the past month and a half, I'd been on the loose with a radioman and the means to transmit code. I'd been in and out of numerous aircraft. I was working out of a top secret intelligence tent. I was blamed for trying to burn this tent with its contents down. Perkins had a feeling he was facing three dangerous adversaries: The Weather, The Japs, and Carrigan. Even this remark fit

the picture too damned well even though it had been said in jest.

Ammo. Cans To Endless Belts

During the late summer and early fall of 1942 a great improvement was made in the manner in which our .50 calibre blister guns were fed ammunition. Prior to this modification cans of ammunition were stored in tiers on the bulkhead behind each gunner's jump seat. This setup was replaced by a large metal tub which was installed athwartship on the catwalk between blister guns. This tub, partitioned in half, held endless belts of .50 calibre ammunition that fed each gun. Each PBY received the tub modification in the field as time permitted. New replacement aircraft already had tubs installed.

Our heavy-duty, air-cooled Browning machine guns fired 1800 grain bullets at the rate of 800 rounds per minute. This rapid rate emptied one of the original small cans quickly. This necessitated swinging the long-barreled gun inboard, opening the receiver plate, working a release lever to remove the empty ammunition can, reaching over to the rack for a full can, locking this in place, feeding the new belt in, closing the receiver plate, pulling the cocking lever back to arm the gun, then swinging the weapon back out for firing.

This operation could be completed in about eight seconds if the gunner didn't panic and get fumble-fingered. Eight seconds seems quick but it was ample time for a "Rufe" fighter to come streaking in for attack. Our .50 calibre blister guns had far greater range than a float Zero's 20mm. cannon and 7.7 calibre machine guns. For this reason many Japanese pilots feinted in and out, just beyond accurate range until a nervous gunner emptied the can. When the enemy pilot observed a gun being swung in for reloading, he pressed home his attack on this temporarily undefended side of the PBY.

It was reported that several gunners equipped with the new endless belts worked a ruse similar to AVMM2c Batuello's in which he pointed his gun skyward and slumped over it to lure an unsuspecting enemy pilot in closer. These gunners shot the equivalent of a can of ammunition then swung the gun in, ostensibly for reloading. When the conned Japanese pilot took the

bait and came in for the kill, the gun was swung out to throw a torrent of hot lead at the surprised attacker. Kiska's enemy pilots must have been amazed at how speedy the ammunition can changers had become overnight.

Four Mice Attack A Cat

Our ungainly PBYs were not always cold turkey shooting exercises for Japanese fighter pilots. Lieutenant C.E. Rodebough of VP-41 was jumped by four "Rufes" and escaped.

Rodebough was attacked in clear skies in the Rat Islands east of Kiska. Without cover, the odds were heavily in favor of the PBY's being shot down. Rodebough decided that the four Japs would have to work hard for this PBY and his plan saved the "Yoke-boat" and crew.

The small, mountainous, almost circular island of Segula was closeby. Rodebough dove for it. He leveled off at one hundred feet above the water and one hundred yards from the island's sheer cliffs. He then circled the island, a rock three miles in diameter.

An attack on the PBY could not be carried out from underneath or from the land side. "Rufes" did make several passes from above and behind but the tightly banking PBY disappeared around the bend before the fast moving fighters drew within effective range.

Only the seaward side remained as the best of the poor lot of approaches to get at the lumbering Catalina. Even this method of attack failed because of the float Zero's great speed. Enemy pilots had to open fire at long range but could fire for a short time only before they were forced to bank or pull up sharply to avoid flying headlong into the cliffs.

Rodebough's outboard blister gunner on the starboard side fired a torrent of .50 calibre slugs at each plane in turn as the group attacked. Intiallly, Rodebough was circling couterclockwise but he found a small bay in which a tight circle could be made. He reversed course to give the starboard gunner a rest and allow his port blister gunner the opportunity to get in his licks.

After several course reversals and an estimated twenty-five to thirty total attacks, the four float fighters broke off the engagement and flew toward Kiska. They had either exhausted their ammunition, were low on fuel, or both.

Flying ability of the enemy pilots appeared to be good but their marksmanship poor. Rodebough landed safely back at Adak with only nine bullet holes in his PBY. Three of these were made by .50 calibre bullets. One of Rodebough's blister gunners had shot his own plane's tail assembly in the excitement of the fight.

The Flood

The predominately good, (by Aleutian standards), weather we'd been enjoying for ten days came to a screeching halt in late October 1942. Adak was hit by monsoon proportion rains that continued unabated for a week. The large, tundra covered watershed which drained into Kuluk Bay sponged up water until it was super saturated. Muddy creeks, rivulets, and draws then overflowed sending torrents of water cascading down into the base complex. Flood waters began to cover the airstrip.

By November 1, 1942, not a single plane could land of takeoff at Adak's new airfield which, by then, was flooded to a depth of several feet.

At this inopportune moment, U.S.Naval Intelligence reported a large Japanese task force had sortied from the northern Kuriles and was heading for the Aleutians. It was a near panic situation but there was no solution until the torrential rains ceased. Squadrons of PBYs, B-17s, B-24s, B-25s, P-38s, P-39s, and P-40s sat immobilized in neat rows or in revetments. Muddy waters swirled over the tops of bomber wheels. Bellies and tail surfaces of some P-40s were partially immersed. Vehicular traffic in the low, flat, airstrip area came to a standstill. Adak had been paralyzed by the weather.

It can be presumed that tidal flood gates were opened but this would provide but a tiny measure of help to alleviate the situation and could only be done during outgoing tides. Surely, the uncontrolled volume of water pouring onto the field far exceeded whatever could drain out through the gates. Sufficient pumps, apparently, were not installed or available to lower the rising lake that formed. We could only wait and hope the Japanese did not choose this moment to attack Adak in force.

If the water level on the airfield had risen another couple of feet at the height of the flood, I believe a PBY-5A might have been able to retract its landing gear, taxi out and make a water takeoff.

Chapter XX

Rains eventually ended, flood waters receded and by November 6, 1942, Adak's airfield was back in operation. PBY patrol flights failed to locate a marauding enemy task force.

Lieutenant Carl H. "Bon" Amme's Altimeter Check Method

By mid fall of 1942 our PBY squadrons had all been rotated back to the states once and some were on the verge of going again. This was necessary for leave, plane overhaul, plane replacement, personnel replacement, all of which required additional time to check out aircraft, become famililar with new equipment, and train new people.

The original schedule, as I recall, was set up on a ninety day basis. A squadron was supposed to fly in the Aleutians for this period followed by a like period in the states. Ninety days flying in the Aleutians was considerd the limit for pilots, aircrews, and aircraft before all needed overhaul including pilots' frayed nerves.

This rotation schedule could not be adhered to in wartime. If
Japanese activities did not disrupt the schedule, our own operations, such as the occupation of Adak, did.

VP-41 and VP-42 were on their second tours. New squadrons VP-61 and VP-62 had arrived in mid September 1942 to help. VP-43 under Commander Jones had been rotated back enmasse on September 22, 1942. Under Commander Chittendon, with LT. Amme as Executive Officer, VP-43 had returned on October 11, 1942, relieved VP-42, and was stationed at Adak.

When I made AerM2c in mid October I'd, once again, asked Tatom for leave so I could properly celebrate my promotion. Instead of granting leave, Tatom decided I should resume flying the weather on a more regular basis. "Bon" Amme and VP-43 came to Adak about that time and I had the dubious pleasure of flying with the Dutch Cleanser man again.

Amme was an excellent pilot. He also had a reputation for being aggressive. When one goes looking for trouble one often finds it. Aerographer's mates who flew with him felt he sometimes took unnecessary chances. U.S. Navy Captain Carl H. "Bon" Amme,
Jr. (retired) insists that he operated solely on the theory of the calculated risk. I cannot argue that it is this kind of attitude that helps win wars.

Amme is a contradition to the axiom, (especially

meaningful in the Aleutians), that a flyer may be either Bold or Old but never both. Amme logged sixteen months' combat flying in the Aleutians and survived. Understandably, it was always with mixed emotions that I climbed aboard his PBY.

Setting the altimeter in flight is one example of the thrill
it was to fly even a routine patrol with Amme. The altimeter is simply an aneroid barometer designed to indicate both height in feet and barometric pressure. There were three altimeters in the PBY, one on each pilot's instrument panel and one mounted on the bulkhead in the navigator's compartment.

Prior to takeoff the altimeters were set at the current atmospheric pressure and at the height of the airfield, (sea level for water takeoff), plus ten feet for a safety margin.

Pressure decreases with height from sea level. If a plane were to rise vertically and rapidly the decrease in pressure would also show true altitude on the altimeter. However, pressure also decreases or increases when one is flying at the same altitude either toward or away from low pressure systems, ie, storm centers. Lows are intense in the Aleutians and the pressure gradient becomes tight causing great pressure changes by the minute in a relatively short distance. This situation produces false altimeter height readings and can become a trap to the unwary pilot who is flying on instruments in pea soup fog. It is small solace to him and his crew if the plane's altimeter were reading five hundred feet when the aircraft hit the icy waters of the Bering Sea.

It was therefore vital to periodically recalibrate the altimeters while in flight. This was also necessary every hour so the aerographer's mates could obtain correct sea level pressure readings for weather observations. This routine check was no problem when flying under scud at fifty feet which was often the case. If we were flying at several hundred feet or higher, the pilot was required to nose the plane over into a gentle dive to a suitable altitude and then level off to set the altimeters at an agreed upon height.

At weather observation times under these conditions the aerographer tapped the pilot on the shoulder and requested an altimeter check. Most pilots went down gently in a long glide and leveled off between forty to eighty feet. One pilot seemed to

prefer an "estimated" one hundred feet for altimeter check.

Pilots themselves usually estimated the height and announced the figure. Some left the proper setting open to discussion among various combinations of pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and aerographer until a consensus was reached.

Amme had his own method of recalibrating altimeters and it was hair-raising. When the hourly time came, I steeled myself to request a check. Sometimes I was forced to hold on to the back of his seat. Sometimes I had a split second to return to the navigator's compartment. The navigator and I both clutched the edge of his small table and braced ourselves. Always, we descended RAPIDLY! Always, we descended at a dive-bomb angle. Always, there was doubt in my mind we would pull out in time. When one flew with Amme, the altimeters were usually reset at fifteen to twenty feet altitude.

On one memorable occasion that fall Amme took the PBY down like an express elevator from 500 feet. He pulled out of the dive and leveled off flying in the trough between two long, open ocean swells I estimated to be twenty feet in height. The navigator and I peeked out the small rectangular window above the chart table and found ourselves staring UP at a wave crest.

"What shall I set it at," I asked Amme, "MINUS TEN FEET?" "No, Carrigan," he calmly replied, "plus ten will do nicely." Amme now readily admits that this was a "stunt" he sometimes
over dramatized but one he considered perfectly because the swells and plane moved along with the wind and it was not a question of the swells overtaking the plane. This simple, plausible explanation would not have pacified me thirty-eight years ago.

Later in the war, the new radio altimeter replaced the old style one. It was not necessary to touch radio altimeters between takeoff and landing.

An Ingenious Method Employed By The Japanese To Supply Kiska

With typical cleverness the Japanese siezed upon a golden
opportunity provided by our Soviet ally to supply Kiska.

Many Russian freighters were plying the waters of

the Bering Sea carrying Lend-Lease supplies from American ports to Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka, other Siberian ports bordering the Sea of Okhotsk, and Vladivostok.

This supply route was their life's blood. It was shorter, direct, and safer than the long Atlantic run to Europe and Murmansk. Murmansk convoys were attacked by both German U-boats and land based bombers and fighters. This route was also unusable periodically because of winter ice.

The Pacific and Bering Sea route was safe because Russia and
Japan were not at war with each other at this time. Russia had her hands full with the Germans on the European front and could ill afford to become engaged in an Asiatic struggle with Japan. The Soviets went to great lengths to maintain this status quo and not precipitate war with Japan.

Although the Russians were receiving vast amounts of Lend-Lease war materiel and other supplies from the U.S., they were considered to be generally uncooperative with us in the "touchy" Aleutian war theatre. This attitude by our Soviet ally resulted in a number of ugly incidents that will be noted later. Russian ships, in this case, were the problem, especially for our patrolling PBYs.

The trouble centered around a stubborn refusal to promptly answer our recognition signals. There was no excuse because each Russian ship had a copy of the daily recognition code and our requests were blinked in International Morse Code. When ships did answer, the long delayed first replys were often incorrect. The Russian cargo ships often did not deign to answer at all.

This Russian attitude and distainful lack of simple protocol jeopordized the safety of our aircrews. It often forced us to play the dangerous game of circling an unidentified ship that could well prove to be Japanese. This was a prime reason why many of our plane crews perceived the Soviets as greedy grubbers biting the hand that fed them. Many developed a real hated toward the Russians and had less respect for them than they had for the Japanese.

Position, course, speed, and description of these Russian
ships were plotted and their projected location was given by the ACI officer at each morning's briefing. Surveillance was maintained on each one until it

passed out of our area to be picked up by PBYs operating from bases to the east.

The observant Japanese were quick to take advantage of this situation. They knew that our PBYs fanned out on search sectors, usually taking off in early pre-dawn and returning late in the afternoon or evening. Accordingly, the Japanese flew Russian flags on their ships and timed supply runs to arrive 75 to 150 miles north to northwest of Kiska in late afternoon as our PBYs were ending their day-long searches.

These ships would often be encountered by a patrolling PBY in the morning. When they failed to answer the recognition signal they were presumed to be another uncooperative Russian cargo ship on a Lend-Lease run. The same ship was usually encountered by another PBY later that afternoon still plunging and plowing its way eastward. Again, it would fail to answer the recognition signal. The PBY would return to base as darkness fell.

At the next morning's early briefing, the PBY flight crews in the logical encounter sectors would be alerted to keep a sharp lookout for this "Russian" freighter. Searching PBYs would find no trace of it. Instead, when the latest army strike photographs were developed after the day's attacks on Kiska, they would clearly show this same freighter anchored in Kiska Harbor, unloading supplies, and proudly displaying a red meatball flag of the Rising Sun.

One particular ship was unloading what appeared, under a
powerful glass, to be crated "Rufe" float fighters.

Because of the Russian attitude we were unable to stop this Japanese method of supplying Kiska. The only sure-fire solution would have been to indiscriminately sink all cargo vessels approaching the vicinity of Kiska.

One incident connected with this unhappy situation almost led to tragedy. A PBY located a Russian flag-flying ship that failed to answer the day's recognition signal. The pilot circled lower and closer, repeatedly asking by blinker light for identification. Without warning, false, painted, plywood bulkheads were knocked down exposing anti-aircraft guns that poured damaging fire into the PBY. No crewman was hit in the surprise attack and no vital aircraft components.

The PBY radioed the enemy contact report. The

Japanese ship made a radical course change, increased speed, and headed directly for Kiska. Meanwhile, the shadowing PBY radioed for USAAF bombers to attack. To assist them in locating the fleeing ship the PBY sent "M-O's" by radio. This was the standard signal used to enable another plane or ship to home on our position by means of RDF. In Morse code the letter "M" is two dashes and the letter "O" two dots. USAAF bombers failed to arrive on the scene and the enemy ship slipped into Kiska Harbor unscathed with another cargo of vitally needed supplies.

This particular Japanese ship's captain evidently had not been totally convinced his Russian flag ruse would succeed. He'd decided to install and camouflage weapons as an insurance policy. In this case his foresight saved him and his ship.

It was frustrating. Failure of the bombers to arrive was not entirely new. Sometimes there were legitimate reasons such as insufficient time to round up crews, fuel and arm planes, and arrive at the scene before dark. In those early months of the Aleutian Campaign the sad joke among navy flight personnel was that army fliers couldn't find anything because they didn't have railroad tracks, highways, or rivers to follow. It was true their navigators had had little practical experience in dead reckoning navigation over an empty ocean.

Put A Shot Across Her Bows

This prevailing general situation that fall of 1942 led us into an international incident with the Russians that might have ended with a court-martial for me.

Our PBY had run into extreme turbulence. Plane and crew were taking a beating when radar contact was made with a ship. It was an old tub of a rust-flaked, 3500 ton freighter wallowing along in heavy seas. The ship was heading east in the Bering Sea about 100 miles northwest of Kiska. She was flying the Soviet flag but
we'd learned the hard way this meant little.

In the rough sea conditions it was impossible to determine if she were loaded with cargo or in ballast. From a safe distance with the Aldis lamp the day's recognition signal was requested. There was no answer. We circled. Everything was battened down on the ship as it struggled onward, rhythmically burying her bows

deep into steep grey seas. Heavy spray was being thrown back to the height of her bridge. There was no sign of life aboard. The sight reminded me of a forlorn, derelict ghost ship destined to sail the seas forever.

Our pilot continued to make tighter and tighter circles around the shabby freighter. Over the inter-com he cautioned us to be ready for anything. With mounting frustration, impatience, and anger, our pilot urged the radioman to keep asking for an answering recognition signal but there was not the slightest response from the ship.

Our blisters were open, guns manned and trained, fingers on triggers. It was a tense situation heightened by the spooky, deserted appearance of the mystery ship. I was stationed at the starboard .50 calibre as the PBY banked clockwise in ever closer circles.

My earphones crackled.

"After-Station. Put a burst across her g_____d bows,"
ordered the pilot in an exasperated voice.

Pushing the "mike" button down I replied, "Aye, Aye, sir." As I squeezed the trigger, the plane gave a violent lurch and
the machine gun burst raked diagonally up across the bridge. Glass exploded as 1800 grain slugs smashed home. I was stunned!

A ship's signalman ran out onto the port wing of the bridge and commenced blinking wildly with a large signal lamp. Another crewman ran up every flag in the box until the signal hoists looked like a Chinese laundry. None of the signals was correct.

"That woke the bastards up," said our pilot. Then he asked the port gunner if he'd like to circle the other way so he could blow out the rest of the bridge glass.

The ship appeared to lose steering control for a spell. She rolled precariously in the trough for several minutes before she came back to her original course, then slowed. Out of the confusion and profusion of flags going up and down and blinking lights we made out the correct recognition signal repeated over and over.

Evidently, an urgent radio message from the Russian freighter reached Moscow. Moscow sent a strong message of protest to Washington, D.C.. For once, communications must have worked speedily and well all

along the line. When we landed at Adak our plane was met by a cavalcade of high brass and oodles of command cars and jeeps.

It was claimed by the Russians that I had killed the quartermaster at the helm. During the inquiry, our pilot exonerated me because of the extreme turbulence. With great fervor, he pointed out that if the Russians would change their crappy attitude, further incidents could easily be avoided. He added that although it had been an accident, what happened might be the one thing that would henceforth make Soviet ships fall into line and answer recognition signals promptly.

It came out under questioning that we had circled for a quarter of an hour before extracting a signal the Russians possessed. They had no legitimate excuse for the long delay.

Our PBY pilot, a long, lean, sandy-haired lieutenant (jg) from the southwestern U.S., added another observation later when he was given an opportunity to speak. Vehemently, he proposed that when we finished off Tokyo, if we were smart, we'd keep going right on to Moscow while the going was good. For these remarks he was reprimanded by being ordered to curb his personal feelings and restrict his testimony to the matter at hand.

Where I was concerned, at least, the matter ended there. Turbulent weather was blamed -- not the weatherman. Tatom showed no displeasure over the incident. I thanked my lucky stars that Commander "Cy" Perkins was back in the states and not present at the time.

Scuttlebutt later indicated the Soviet ship put into Dutch Harbor to have the damage inspected. They couldn't produce the quartermaster's body. They claimed he was buried at sea.

AM ATTACKING

Another related incident took place November 27, 1942 about
100 miles due north of Kiska. On this date a VP-43 PBY
encountered a freighter flying a Russian flag. This ship answered promptly but kept sending an assortment of recognition signals all of them incorrect. It was a Japanese vessel. As time went on the captain must have expected bombers to arrive at any moment. He panicked. He gave up the pretense, made a

ninety-degree change in course and headed directly for Kiska.

The PBY sent an enemy contact report, transmitted "M.O.s" for army bombers to home on, and shadowed for three hours. Bombers failed to arrive. As darkness approached, the PBY pilot sent a message: "Tired of waiting for the army am attacking."

The plane carried four depth charges, no bombs. To insure maximum accuracy the pilot made a dive-bomb attack. He released his four depth charges which straddled and bracketed the ship's stern. These explosions damaged the rudder and the ship turned in a circle until darkness prevented further observation. Repairs were made and the ship reached Kiska Harbor that night as was evident from photographs taken the following day.

Good News-Bad News

While activity against the Japanese in the Aleutians had reached a peak through September and October of 1942 these actions slowed with the approach of savage winter. Concurrently in other theatres of the global conflict Allied Forces scored some notable victories and made substantial advancements during October and November 1942.

On October 13 at the Battle of El Alamein, Egypt, British General Bernard Montgomery defeated German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel's panzer forces. Through November Montgomery chased Rommel's panzer divisions across Northwest Africa and had obtained a cease-fire from the French.

On October 30 the Russians were holding their own at Stalingrad thanks in part to massive U.S. Lend-Lease. By November the Russians had trapped the German 6th Army at Stalingrad.

On the debit side, 600,000 tons of Allied shipping was sunk
in the Atlantic during October 1942.

In the South Pacific during the period October 11 to November
14, 1942, the U.S. Navy scored one small victory, one large victory but suffered a series of disastrous defeats. These battles were all connected with the struggle for Guadalcanal.

The Battle of Cape Esperance was fought October 11-12. While the cape is the westermost on Guadalcanal Island the battle actually took place west of Savo

Island. Japanese cruisers and destroyers on their way to bombard Henderson Field on Guadalcanal were intercepted by carrier USS Hornet and battleship USS Washington protecting the flank of a U.S. cruiser-destroyer force. One enemy cruiser and a destroyer were sunk at the cost of one U.S. destroyer.

The Battle of Santa Cruz Island (East of the Solomon's) was fought October 26, 1942. Admiral Nagumo had fleet carriers Shokaku and Zuikaku plus light carrier Zuiho. In advance of this group was Dutch Harbor attacker, the fleet carrier Junyo. In this battle the U.S. Navy lost the carrier USS Hornet: sunk; the carrier USS Enterprise, heavily damaged; a destroyer sunk, a cruiser damaged, and the battleship USS South Dakota damaged. Japan's carriers Shokaku and Zuiho suffered heavy damage and a cruiser received damage.

The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal was a series of actions that took place November 12, 13, and 14, 1942. It began with a night cruiser action. U.S. cruisers and destroyers engaged Japanese battleships Hiei and Kirishima plus cruisers and destroyers. It was a dark moonless night, there was furious action on both sides, both sides broke formation, both sides, at one time or another, fired on their own ships. The U.S. force was saved from annihilation only by the fact the enemy battleships had shore-bombardment ammunition instead of armor piercing shells because they were on their way to shell U.S. positions on Guadalcanal. Japanese battleship Heie and two destroyers were sunk. Four U.S. destroyers and two cruisers were sunk. Senior
Commanders of the U.S. Force, Admirals Scott and Callaghan along with most of their Staff were killed. Although we lost this sea battle, it caused the Japanese transports to turn back to the Shortland Islands.

On November 14 the Enterprise task force scored a major victory when it sank one Japanese cruiser, damaged three destroyers, sank six transports, and forced one to turn back. Meanwhile, the U.S. battleships USS Washington and USS South Dakota, plus four destroyers detached from the Enterprise task group were attacked by a second Japanese task force of the battleship Kirishima, four cruisers, and nine destroyers. The U.S. lost two destroyers, three others were put out of action, and USS South Dakota was heavily damaged. USS Washington destroyed the

Kirishima and she in turn was scuttled by the Japanese.

The Battle of Tassafaronga off the east coast of Guadalcanal was fought November 30, 1942. A force of five U.S. cruisers and six destroyers met what was believed to be a group of Japanese supply ships at night coming down the "slot". It was, instead, a force of eight Japanese destroyers. U.S. ships hit one enemy destroyer setting it on fire. The other seven Japanese destroyers used the U.S. gun flashes to take aim, fired torpedoes, then sped away. Torpedoes sank cruisers USS Northhampton, and heavily damaged cruisers USS Minneapolis, USS New Orleans, and USS Pensacola. It was another disastrous night action for the U.S. Navy.

While these great battles were being fought in warmer, sunnier climes opposing forces in the Aleutians girded for winter. As Japanese army war correspondent, Mikizo Fukazawa, had so aptly put it, our struggle was confined to "Guerrilla Warfare In The Air: Kiska Isle."

The Williwaw And The Army Major

Tatom always grew most uneasy during any lull between storms. At those times he had me fly the weather to see what was approaching from the west. At the beginning of one such short respite in late November 1942 he sent me on the sector patrol that passed immediately to the south of Kiska.

Because of bad weather no one had gotten a good look at Kiska in several weeks. There was deep concern that the Japanese might have achieved progress on their airstrip.

A jeep roared up as our PBY was about to taxi from the revetment. An army major, attached to intelligence, leaped out and came hurrying to the plane. The other gunner opened his port blister, hung out the aluminum ladder, and the major with his briefcase climbed aboard and went forward for takeoff.

Our machine guns were fired on each flight to insure that they were operating properly. It was a simple routine that also enabled us to remain familiar with the weapons and to get in a little daily target practice. This was always done shortly after we were clear of the base and had settled on course.

"After-Station to pilot," I called over the inter-com "Go ahead."

"Permission to clear the guns?"

"Permission granted," answered the pilot, "but wait until the major gets back there to watch."

When the major was positioned and ready the other gunner and I fastened ourselves to the gun mounts by means of our harness belts. Each blister hatch was opened. Ammunition belts were fed into each gun, guns were swung out and cocked. I aimed my gun well forward under the wing and fired a short burst into the sea. This churned the water into a frothy circle which slid past amidships. This patch of bubbles became my target to hit with another short burst.

Our guns were then put on safety, swung inboard, secured and the blisters closed. When this had been completed a report was made to the pilot that our after-station guns were okay and secured.

The major, a broad pleasant faced individual with light brown hair, and stocky build, had observed with interest every detail of the firing operation. He engaged the other gunner and me in friendly conversation for awhile before returning to the flight deck. In dividing his time between flight deck and blisters we soon learned that the major was a talkative but likeable individual. It was a day of moderate turbulence and the cups of coffee he kept bringing to us were two-thirds spilled.

Our outbound leg took us a good distance to seaward south of Kiska. On the return leg we brushed uncomfortably close to the Japanese held island. On the two Kiska sectors, in decent weather as was the case this day, we usually opened the blisters and manned the guns about a half hour on our approach to Kiska and for a like time after leaving the enemy stronghold.

Although good visibility and scattered clouds had been appreciated for search purposes we felt naked in such conditions as we neared Kiska. Our pilot had climbed to 4700 feet to take advantage of the little available cover.

He was flying in and out of a thin, scattered to broken deck of clouds. Our approach to Kiska was from the west just south of Vega Point located on the southwestern tip of the island. Our course, if maintained, would have taken us within eight or ten miles of the South Pass into Kiska Harbor.

The major came back to the blisters. Enroute he held onto every hand hold because turbulence had

increased. He managed this while clutching maps and papers in one hand.

"Do you think we'll get close enough to see anything?" he asked.

"I hope not," I replied.

"It looks like we'll pass too far offshore," said the other gunner on the portside facing Kiska.

Both blisters were open. The major was standing on the metal catwalk between the guns and forward of the ammunition tub. The most violent Williwaw I've ever experienced in flight struck the plane from above. An unseen giant's hand slammed us down 1700 feet in a matter of seconds, pancake fashion. Just as suddenly, the Williwaw turned us loose and the pilots regained control at 3000 feet.

When the Williwaw hit I was lifted bodily off the gun deck and remained suspended until the express stop at 3000 feet. Our harnesses saved the other gunner and me from being thrown out of open hatches.

When the other gunner and I regained our senses and pulled our bruised bodies upright, we found the major bleeding from a bad head wound, unsconscious, and sprawled in a heap with his face jammed down into the twisted, jumbled mass of belted ammunition that had been partially lifted in disorder out of the tub. Both of us had been facing outward and straining our eyes for possible Jap fighters when the Williwaw pounced. We did not see what happened to the major but he'd evidently been slammed upward into the narrow overhead between the two open blisters. Had he not been standing in a position in which there was something solid above him he would have sailed up and out of the PBY. Seconds before, as he'd done numerous times during the flight, he'd been standing in a gun blister for a better view.

Our pilot called the after-station to see if we were okay. The other gunner reported everything under control except the major who appeared badly hurt and was unconscious.

Our copilot came aft. He said the major should not be moved to one of the canvas bunks in the next compartment forward because of the possibility he had suffered a neck or spine injury. While the copilot carefully supported the major's head I helped slide him forward a few feet. A pillow was placed under the major's head and he was covered with blankets. The

copilot slowed the flow of blood from the head wound and put a dressing on it. The major remained unconscious. There was little else that could be done for him. Our copilot returned to his seat.

While the other gunner kept a lookout for enemy planes, I straightened out the mess of kinked ammunition belts. These were laid back in neat folds so they would feed the guns smoothly in case of attack.

Our guns were secured shortly afterward and I took an hourly weather observation. When I went forward to complete my work I met a crewman putting in order the bunk-storage compartment parachutes, coils of line, blankets, personal bags, sleeping bags, and other gear that had been strewn about.

Forward on the flight deck conditions were almost as bad. Our navigator, having sustained a slight scalp laceration, a bruised elbow, and wrenched shoulder, was still rocky. He and the major had been the only ones not strapped in. The navigator's opened kit, papers, extra charts, parallel rule, dividers, etc. along with some of the major's maps and photographs and radioman's manuals, codes, pads, and pencils were still being gathered up. Some of these items were being retrieved from the bilge, sorted through, and restored to their proper places.

Our aviation machinist's mate told me it was a miracle the Williwaw pushed us straight down on a relatively even keel and had released us before the plane struck water. I agreed. Williwaws usually extend to the surface and hit the water with such force they sometimes make a dent eight feet deep in the sea. Williwaws are packaged into a small area. Our Williwaw probably did extend to the surface. One possible explanation for our escape might be that our initial forward speed had carried us almost through and to one outer edge of the vicious downdraft.

It was fortunate some of the heavier, loose, metal objects had not gone through the aluminum skin of the plane. In his tower seat the mechanic had stared in hypnotic fashion at a gravity defying large crescent wrench that remained suspended against the overhead for seconds. I told him that was nothing. He should have caught our 'kite flying' act back in the blister.

Our pilot radioed a request for a doctor and ambulance to meet our PBY upon landing. When we had taxied to a stop at Adak I went forward to catch up on

some weather paper work. The major was examined then carefully removed to the ambulance at this time. One of the crewman who assisted told me the major regained consciousness before he was lifted from the plane but it was feared he might have suffered a broken neck. I never learned the true extent of his injuries.

As for the rugged old PBY, it was later reported that both wing tips had been sprung upward but this appeared to be the only damage she suffered.

"Trapper" Tetley

Although it often takes some doing in a bad situation it is always better to look at the bright side. A case in point is the experience of Lieutenant (jg) Curtis Tetley, USNR of VP-41 and his crew. On a November 1942 flight out of Adak Tetley had mechanical trouble. With one engine out he was forced to land at sea near Tanaga Island, westernmost of the Andreanofs.

He had difficulty taxiing on one engine but zig-zagged into a small bay. He could not prevent the PBY from going on the rocks where it was eventually destroyed by wind and surf. Before abandoning the plane and making it safely ashore, Tetley got off a radio message indicating his postion and plight.

It was wintertime and the men were soaked and half frozen when they located a deserted trapper's cabin. This shack was well stocked with canned food, traps, a gun and shells, a stove and sacks of coal. Winter storms raged throughout the Aleutians for weeks on end. It was impossible to immediately rescue Tetley and his crew by either PBY or ship.

A small navy vessel reached Tetley's exposed bay on Tanaga late in December. The rescuers, including a pharmacist's mate, risked life and limb getting ashore by small boat in heavy surf. Expecting the worst, they arrived at the trapper's cabin. When they entered they were shocked to find the exceedingly healthy, bearded PBY crew happily feasting on roast duck.

Tetley told his guests that a convenient snow bank nearby held many more frozen ducks. He invited the newcomers to dine and asked if there were anything he and his PBY crewemen could do for them. When told they'd been sent to rescue him, Tetley thanked them but politely declined.

All Tetley needed were food staples. He offered to trade prime fox pelts for these items. One of

Tetley's crewmen had had some experience in trapping. With his help they were getting the hang of it, the fox pelt catch was improving and the season had several months to go. Tetley suggested that the rescuers come back after the war.

These requests, of course, were denied. Tetley and his "trappers" soon found themselves on the stormy seas and headed back to Adak.

Adak Falls Off The Wagon

I wasn't aware of the problem the first two weeks but from mid September 1942 until I left for the invasion of Attu the first week of May 1943--, Adak had a drinking problem. Word was the booze was being smuggled in on Army Transport Command planes making the shuttle runs from Anchorage.

Officers who drank, both army and navy, were guzzling this good stuff. The going price was high, not only for a jug but in some cases for the results it produced.

Enlisted men usually couldn't afford scotch, bourbon, rye, gin, or vodka. Instead, they drank anything they could either make, trade for, or steal. This included medicinal alcohol, 190 proof alcohol for cleaning the human hairs on our hygrothermograph instruments, 'torpedo juice' which was also pure grain alcohol used in the propulsion system of torpedoes, and deicing fluid and shaving lotion. 'Torpedo juice', 'Sneaky Pete', and 'Pink Lady' were nicknames for these various forms of pure alcohol. It was all real 'Kick-a-poo joy juice' straight out of Lil' Abner's Dog Patch even when cut drastically with canned grapefruit or tomato juice.

Those who drank shaving lotion insisted Mennen's Skin-bracer was the best.

Deicing fluid was nothing more than anti-freeze made from wood alcohol which could cause blindness or death. It was said that a number of men, both army and navy, went blind or died from drinking this fluid.

Among my immediate friends in the navy tent camp area we drank 190 proof pure grain alcohol or did without.

In October I'd had one frightening experience that made me a teetotaler for a month. Some off duty squadron radiomen came into our living quarters tent one night to hold a party. They had acquired a gallon

jug of 190 proof pure grain medicinal alcohol. While one clutched this precious commodity another lugged a full case of quart cans of grapefruit juice.

The party began. We used the large metal cups from our mess kits as glasses. A radioman glug-glugged a good measure of alcohol into my cup as I laid in my sack. A can of grapefruit juice was opened and passed around for mixer. I remained propped on one elbow and continued to sip the innocent tasting drink.

Soon the talk grew louder accompanied by boisterous laughter. Others arrived to happily join festivities and the tent became crowded. When my canteen cup was emptied someone obligingly gave me a refill without my having to get up.

After an hour or so and Lord knows how many full canteen cups of the potent mix it became necessary for me to go to the head. My speech wasn't impaired and other than a slight facial numbness when I'd lit the last cigarette, I thought I was completely sober.

I sat up and slipped into my flight boots to go outside. When I attempted to stand up, I fell heavily to my hands and knees. Try as I might I could not get up. I was paralyzed from the waist down. At first everyone thought I was joking. Finally, I had to be helped outside then back to my sleeping bag. No one else was affected this way and my plight was made light of as the party continued. Extremely frightened by the thought I might be permanently paralyzed because I didn't feel the effects of the alcohol in any normal way, I just lay there.

When the jug was emptied the party ended and a flock of happy drunks left the tent. I was afraid to test my legs and eventually fell asleep. When I awoke in the morning my legs were back to normal and I wasn't even troubled with a hangover.

I was sobered in more ways than one. Although it wasn't so in this instance, some unscrupulous person could easily substitute wood alcohol for grain alcohol. The risk was too great. I climbed back on the wagon.

Get Me A Cup Of Black Coffee

Weather forecasters are under a peculiar pressure in addition
to the great responsibility they sustain. When they are right no one congratulates them; when they are

wrong everyone is quick to point a finger even if lives have not been lost. Of all the scientists, meteorologists are the one most often held up for ridicule. They grow weary of being the butt of a myriad of bad jokes. This is especially irksome because most do a much more efficient job, in an inexact science, than they are given credit for.

This pressure situation must be multiplied ten-fold when a naval academy officer such as Tatom, chooses this line of work in which to further his military career. It is certainly a set of circumstances that could drive strong men to drink.

A blizzard had been raging for almost thirty-six hours with winds over 80 knots. It was the first heavy snowfall in November 1942. All planes were grounded and would remain so for at least another twenty-four hours. It was a time when pilots, and perhaps meteorologists, could take a few hours off and relax. Tatom had done just that and in the process he'd 'tied one on.'

Steady snow had ended but a procession of heavy snow squalls ripped through the base. Winds had eased somewhat but in the squalls they gusted to 60 knots. These winds caused the fallen snow to swirl and pile up in deep drifts.

It was late at night. I'd caught up some work in the weather tent, written a letter, and was trying to wade through the first chapters of a supposedly good book. I'd stayed in the weather tent to read because it was winterized. It also possessed better lighting than my living quarters tent and I did not wish to disturb off duty radiomen who were trying to get some sleep.

My boss unexpectedly lurched into the tent. From a voluminous pocket of his snow plastered parka he proudly produced a bottle of bourbon. He smiled broadly, made his way over to me and proceeded to thump my back repeatedly.

"You're okay, Paul, no matter what anyone says. You not only do good work but by God I can count on you when the going gets tough."

Tongue-tied, I could think of no appropriate reply. "Let's drink a toast," said Tatom as he waved the bottle and called for glasses.

"Maybe you'd better sit down commander," I offered. "No, no, no, just get the glasses. One drinks a toast

standing."

"I don't have any glasses but here's a canteen cup." "Where's yours?"

I emptied some pencils and pens from another cup and Tatom solemly poured. He painstakingly attempted to level each cup to the same exact portion until the four fingers in the bottle were emptied.

When he'd proposed a toast to PBY pilots and victory we raised our cups. Instead of clinking glasses we thunked zinc canteens and drained their contents. As the fiery liquid slid down my throat I shivered and shook like a dog passing peach pits.

I finally convinced Tatom that he should turn in and get some sleep. He agreed but then stood at the tent flap talking for awhile. He then quietly and politely bid me good night and unsteadily went out into a snow squall.

After about five minutes I began to think that I should have assisted him his tent and wondered if he'd made it okay. The temperature outside was well below freezing. After another minute or two, I grabbed a flashlight to go check. I hadn't progressed forty feet when I almost tripped over him. A combination of bourbon and fresh air had caught up with him. Half covered by snow, he was asleep and snoring. Had I not had concern and found him, he might have frozen to death or died of exposure by morning.

I rolled him over and tried to pick him up to carry him but he was too heavy to manage. His tent was some distance away but mine was close. Grasping him under his armpits from behind I lifted, tugged and pulled him into my tent. I then took off his boots and parka and got him into my sleeping bag and zipped up.

Upon returning to the weather tent I wrapped myself in two old army blankets and tried to sleep on the plywood deck. This was so uncomfortable I soon gave it up. I spent the remainder of the night fitfully dozing in a chair near the stove.

After entering the early morning weather signals on the map, I waited until the last possible moment before waking Tatom so that he could analyze the map and put out his forecast. It took a good shaking to awaken him. He asked what time it was. Then his eyes squinted about the tent and he must have realized where he was.

"Goddamit, get me some black coffee!" 'Thank you,' can be said in many ways.

A Navy Weather Station Is Established At Nazan Bay,

Chapter XX

Atka

Beginning in early October 1942 I had been entering the Atka synoptic report on my Adak weather maps but had no idea who was stationed there. The following supplies this information and also brings us up-to-date on the continuing adventures and travels of aerological officer Lieutenant (jg) Max C. Jack.

On September 27, about a month after our forces had occupied Adak, Max Jack received orders at Dutch Harbor to set up a weather station at Nazan Bay, Atka. Old time Aleutian cloud chasers Emil Beer, AerM1c and Walter Babic, AerM3c, accompanied Jack along with newcomer Reno Economan, AerM2c, USN. These four were later joined by Larry, an AerM3c originally from Canada. In addition there were three radioman, a first class and two third class; a first class pharmacist's mate; and a third class cook.

The group departed Dutch Harbor on USS Teal and arrived at Nazan Bay September 29. Part of a SeaBee battalion and a U.S. Army Engineer outfit had already been on the island for approximately two weeks. One SeaBee officer and twelve enlisted men were temporarily assigned to the navy weather unit to help construct the Quonsets and for other work.

Max Jack and his weather unit came well prepared to set up a permanent station. They had four Quonsets, a large diesel generator to supply their own power, a steam plant and pipe. On September 30 supplies were still being unloaded from the Teal when a Japanese plane came over and dropped two bombs near the deserted native village. These exploded on a hill above the native cemetary. Max Jack reports that while the enemy plane was still flying around in the vicinity, Emil Beer and several others started chasing a fox they saw on the beach. This did not set well with Jack who called a conference.

The following day the men set up the first barracks Quonset. Next day the weather office went up and on the third day communications with Dutch Harbor was established and the transmission of weather reports began.

During October the army engineer unit built a 1500 foot Marsden steel mat landing strip a short distance inland and about a mile west of the native village. By the first of November 1942, the first aircraft arrived. This airstrip was used only for emergencies and the occasional visiting inspection

tour by either navy or army brass.

About the first of 1943, SeaBees built a small pier at the north end of the bay for unloading supply barges.

Duty at Atka settled into uneventful routine in what had become the back-waters of the Aleutian Campaign along with the Dutch Harbor area. The unusually bad winter of 1942-1943 curtailed most outdoor activities providing little change and increasing the men's boredom to the extreme. Emil Beer tells me that the year he and the other aerographer's mates spent at Nazan Bay was so bad they nick-named the place "Atka-traz".

Max Jack's stay on Atka was shorter but he learned one valuable lesson during the experience. To this day he never jokes on the telephone. On Atka he had a friend, who was an army captain, and an inveterate practical joker. This captain frequently called Jack at the office disguising his voice each time and announcing he was a navy commander,or captain, or army colonel or general and demanded to know what the weather was going to be.

This had gone on for sometime when one day an aircraft landed that Lieutenant Jack failed to notice. A short time later the weather office phone rang and a voice said, "This is General Schaefer."

Before the speaker could continue, Jack said, "Yeh! Wise guy, well this is Peter and I'm plenty hard. Now what the devil do you want?"

"I landed about thirty minutes ago," said a real General Schaefer, "and I want to check the weather to Adak."

It might be appropriate here to leap-frog ahead in my story for a final note on Atka. During April 1943 the navy sent additional officers to Atka including a doctor, communications officer, operations officer, and a replacement SeaBee officer. Max Jack was relieved as Officer in Charge of the navy base but remained as O-in-C of the weather station. At that time preparations were entering the final phase for the big push west to the beaches of Attu.

On September 1, 1943, the Naval Auxillary Air Facility(NAAF) on Atka was decommissioned and the weather unit remained as the only naval activity.

It Made No Sense To Me

By the tail-end of 1942 all of the Wing's

weathermen, with
the exception of Tatom and me, had been to the states on leave.

First to reach the states were Chief Max White, Carter, Calderon, and Olson aboard Gillis. This AVD was ordered to Todd's Shipyard in Seattle at the end of July 1942 to repair boiler damage caused by near misses when she was attacked in Kuluk Bay, Adak on July 20.

Carey and Roberts reached the states about a month later in the crippled Williamson. This old AVD's depth charge damage was so extensive the decision was made not to repair her. She was decommissioned and cut up for scrap. Roberts and Carey returned to the Aleutians the latter part of September with White, Carter, Calderon, and Olson in the repaired Gillis.

Chief Herold reached Dutch Harbor in mid September in the torpedo damaged USS Casco. After working out of the Dutch Harbor weather office for about a month he requested and was granted leave by a FAW-4 Staff Officer.

Early in November 1942, Emmett Smith and Don Livingston went on leave from Dutch Harbor. Smith, Livingston, and Herold returned from leave together in December.

Meanwhile, I was stuck alone on Adak through September, October, and early November. Sans rotation and/or leave I was still accumulating more flight time than squadron aircrews. I could only wonder when, if ever, Tatom would authorize leave for me or at least provide additional weathermen to help. It made no sense to me why a new weather station should be established and staffed at a back-water place like Atka and leave a forward base such as Adak so short-handed in weather personnel.

During one period aerological help aboard the Gillis had been within a few miles of my tent for over two weeks. Tatom saw fit not to bring any of the weathermen ashore because the ship had better weather facilities and the aerographers were maintaining a twenty-four hour watch schedule. These Wing weathermen in Gillis became available unexpectedly but Tatom acted a tad late and they slipped through his clutches again.

Gillis, fresh from repairs in Seattle, came out to Adak in late October 1942 to relieve the Thornton of PBY and MTB servicing and plane guard duties. During a mid November 110 knot storm Gillis attempted

to get underway to seek more sheltered waters. When the order was given to "Up anchors" her deck windlass tore loose. Unable to retrieve her anchors, the cables were cut. She was drifting down on two loaded anchored ammunition ships when she finally got turned around. In so doing she hit her twin screws on rocks, and bent both screws and both main shafts. At the same time this was happening our newly laid minefield to the east of the harbor entrance was blowing up. Seas churned by 110 knot winds had also ripped loose some anchored mines.

Gillis was ordered to a floating drydock at Kodiak to repair this new damage. White, Carey, Carter, and Calderon rode the ship back to Kodiak where the Gillis remained over Thanksgiving then returned to Adak in time to celebrate Christmas 1942.

The first aerographer's mates to join me on the beach were
Wing men Lester Roberts and Glenn Olson. Roberts came from Dutch Harbor having been dropped off there by the Gillis on her return from Todd's Shipyard. Olson's presence was purely accidental. He'd been sent ashore on business from the Gillis just before the November storm hit. He hadn't been able to return to the ship before she left for Kodiak. With verbal orders, Tatom simply transferred Olson to his Adak command. From Sand Point in the Shumagins via a short tour at Dutch Harbor came CAerM Edward S. "Duck" Hudson who brought Red Morrow with him. These two men had orders to report for duty with NAF Adak. Many other Wing and NAF weather personnel would arrive at Adak over the next several months.

In mid November a Quonset was made available for a weather office and another for a proper ACI office. Crated gear for an aerological unit had arrived and this equipment was moved into the new office. Chief Hudson was supervising the uncrating of instruments and supplies to set up a functioning office when Tatom told him to unpack only the essential gear. Our new home would be temporary and we would soon move to a permanent site.

The arrival of Hudson, Morrow, Roberts, and Olson enabled us to set up a twenty-four hour watch schedule but things were in a jumbled mess. Half the office space was jammed with crates. We still used my portable anemometer for wind velocity and a compass for wind direction. It would have been impractical to erect the tall steel mast and install wind instruments

then, in a few weeks, take the assembly down, move it to a new site and do it over again. We did install a thermoscreen with its instruments because this was a piece of equipment easy to move.

The Fourth Office But The First U.S.Navy Weather Center At Adak

Adak would continue to grow in size and importance as the struggle with Japan went on. In anticipation of this the establishment of a navy weather center at Adak had been authorized. This had been a main reason for the sudden influx of weather personnel. With winter upon us, Tatom's urgent objective was to select a permanent site for the weather central, get the buildings erected, and the station in operation.

He chose the top of the several hundred foot high knob at the northern end of the landing beach. This site was near mid point of the north-south runway. A fairly level area of approximately two acres provided ample room for our complex of weather huts.

Sheer, rocky cliffs extended around the knob's perimeter from south through east to the northern flank. These almost vertical cliffs gave way on the western inland side to an escarpment that ended at the eastern edge of the navy's tent city.

Our vantage point commanded a 360 degree view. The hilltop was about a quarter mile from the runway. This narrow strip of land between the airstrip and Kuluk Bay was almost wall-to-wall tents with a sprinkling of Quonsets between. This side of the runway was still navy town but, by that time, the original "Nashville" was indistinguisable because of the hundreds of army tents surrounding it.

The western side of the runway was strictly army town with
the exception of the U.S. Navy SeaBee camp at Happy Valley which was located to the southwest on the edge of the base's congested area.

Daily, construction activity was spreading the base not only north and south but inland. Ugly signs of man's arrival in this pristine place could already be discerned reaching up the slopes of towering Mt. Moffett four miles to the west. Ribbons of roads and cut banks scarring the landscape were visible leading to ammunition dumps, fuel storage areas, gun emplacements, and scattered clusters of tents and

Quonsets.

Kukuk Bay's waters stretched eastward and when the visibility was good the mountain peaks of neighboring Kagalaska, Little Tanaga, and Umak Island could be seen.

Forbiddingly beautiful Great Sitkin Island loomed to the northeast. Her smoking, steaming, volcanic peak was like a mysterious, mist-shrouded sentinel guarding our new base. Bering Sea's usually troubled waters reached to the horizon from east through north.

Tatom's first step was to have a road built to our hilltop. Navy SeaBees were too busy at the moment so he got an army bulldozer and operator to do the job. After the bulldozer reached the top of the hill Tatom had the operator scoop out five revetments for the Quonsets. One was to be our weather office, another for storage, a third and fourth enlisted men's quarters, and the fifth a barracks for officers. A sixth hut added later was a large elephant Quonset that served as our balloon inflation shed, hydrogen gas making area, and extra storage.

Five, prefabricated Quonsets were duly delivered to the sites and unloaded. It was at this time that Tatom mustered us and told us we would erect the Quonsets ourselves.

"Nothing to it," he said, "just a hammer, nails, screwdriver,
wrenches, nuts and bolts. Any simpleton can put one of these up."

Tatom then turned to Chief Hudson and there followed a
classic conversation.

"What do you know about electricity?" asked Tatom. "We'll
also have to wire the huts."

"All I know, sir," replied Hudson, "is that if you grab hold of one wire it's okay but if you grab both you get knocked flat on your butt!"

"Fine," Tatom beamed, "You're in charge of it then." "Where will I get all the necessary material, Commander?" "Don't ask me. You're the damned electrician." Unfamiliar tasks were tackled with great enthusiasm.

Considerable pick and shoveling was necessary to level the roughly bulldozed revetments. Drainage ditches also had to be dug around each site. Tatom might not have known where to acquire wiring supplies but he'd quickly located a dozen new "idiot sticks" for this

work. Blisters ensued.

With corner stakes driven and string stretched, we began to assemble the first Quonset, the weather office. A second hut was started at the same time. This was to be our storeroom.

While this construction work was in progress, watches were maintained in the weather hut below. We continued to sleep in barracks tents at navy town. It was a long way around by road to our hilltop and a foot path was soon worn directly up the escarpment. During one stretch of this early construction we went seventy-two hours without sleep. A portable generator supplied light at night so the roofing phase could be completed before the onslaught of a storm. The last of our unopened crates from below was unloaded at our new location late one night in shrieking winds and slashing sleet. This final crate was a massive one containing a radiosonde receiver. When this had been lifted off the truck and carried inside I was so exhausted that I fell sound asleep standing against a crate in our storeroom.

Tatom and Hudson went into consultation on the best way to arrange weather office space. When this had been decided we set about with wrecking bars and hammers to uncrate all of our instruments and other gear. Hudson, with his years of experience and with the help of our aerographer's manual installed and calibrated the instruments.

After our new weather center went into operation, the barracks huts were constructed. As work neared completion a transition was made to the mountain top and the weather operation below was shut down.

Our pick, shovel, and carpentry work did not come to a halt at this point. The next project Tatom assigned was construction of an officer's plywood outhouse. He wanted this completed before he or any other officers moved to the hilltop. Tatom selected a site on the west side facing the runway and base proper. The Lord Baron of the mountain assembled his serfs about him.

"Dig it here. Dig it deep, and make it a four-holer," he
ordered.

Before this had been completed, Tatom had second thoughts and decided the location was too exposed to prevailing winds. He told Hudson that the four-holer would be the enlisted men's head. We could put the finishing touches, which happened to be the roof and

a door, on 'our' head in our spare time. Tatom marched his work party to the more sheltered northeast side of the hill where he selected a spot and ordered us to start digging. The entrance to the officer's four-holer was to be constructed so that a sitter could enjoy the panoramic view, weather permitting.

Wooden steps and walkways were also built around the weather office and leading from it to the officer's barracks. A raised wooden deck was constructed upon which the thermoscreen was mounted and the theodolite installed. A four-sided plywood windscreen with hinged door was built around the theodolite.

It was sometime in mid December 1942 before all of the major work was completed and we settled in on the hilltop at the new navy weather complex.

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Adak-January 1943 To May 1943

A Change Of Command

Christmas 1942 and New Year's 1943 came and went with little fanfare and little letup from winter storms. On January 4, 1943, Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, USN, a veteran of six major Pacific sea battles while serving under Rear Admiral William F. Halsey, USN, relieved Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald as Commander North Pacific. Kinkaid's North Pacific Task Force was placed under command of Rear Admiral Charles Horatio McMorris, USN who relieved Rear Admiral William W. Smith, USN.

CinCPac, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz made these changes to get the sluggish Aleutian Campaign rolling. Kinkaid was chosen because he had a battle proved record of being an aggressive exponent of the calculated risk. This quality was expected to mesh with Alaska Defense Command, General Simon B. Buckner, also a man of action.

In the enlisted ranks, news of Kinkaid's appointment was received with a general, 'so what', attitude. Locked in the grip of winter, little or no change in the military situation was expected, at least not until spring. Such notions were dispelled in a hurry.

Amchitka Occupied By U.S. Forces

In a large-scale offensive thrust far to the west, U.S. Forces occupied Amchitka January 12, 1943. That such a move took place within eight days of Kinkaid's arrival was surprise enough. That the landings were carried out in horrendous weather was a further shock all of which drove home the point that a real shake-up had taken place.

The Amchitka operation was under the command of Admiral McMorris. Brigadier General Lloyd E. Jones, USA commanded the 2100 combat troops, most of whom were toughened Alaska veterans
from Buckner's 4th Infantry. This landing force, including an engineer detachment, was aboard four transports. Largest of these was USS Arthur Middleton an attack transport of 20,000 tons with a crew of 600. Once again, Lt.Cmdr. Carl "Squeaky" Anderson was beach master.

This invasion force, including four destroyers and three cruisers, had been waiting at sea almost a week for a lull in the fierce weather. McMorris grew impatient. In the early morning darkness on January 12, 1943 he ordered destroyer USS Worden into Amchitka's Constantine Harbor. Worden's mission in a blizzard's twenty foot seas was to land Colonel Verbeck and a detachment of Alaska Scouts, the spearhead of the occupation force.

Constantine Harbor offered little protection. Amchitka's small, shallow, reef and rock-studded harbor was exposed to the howling winds and waves from the Bering Sea.

USS Worden launched her whaleboats, placed the Scouts ashore, then recovered her boats without casualty. She got turned around and headed for the harbor entrance. Mountainous seas and swift currents threw her on the fang of a reef. Plates were ruptured and the engine room flooded.

Destroyer USS Dewey got a cable across to the Worden but a towing effort failed when the cable parted. Dewey's effort had caused Worden to pivot partway around. When the cable snapped she slid off the reef, laid on her side, seas slammed her on the rocks and she sank.

Prior to capsizing, Worden launched some of her boats and her crew abandoned ship. Fourteen men died in the 36 degree F. water but Dewey and landing craft from the Arthur Middleton rescued 180 of Worden's crew.

The weather moderated and by nightfall on January 12 eighteen hundred troops had been put ashore. Cruisers and destroyers stood offshore to lend artillery support if the troop landings were opposed or to intercept enemy warships should they appear. No enemy troops were on the low, narrow, boggy, forty mile long island. Japanese air attacks were expected at any moment because Constantine Harbor is only

seventy miles from Kiska.

Following the combat troops, my boss, Lt.Cmdr. John F. Tatom and Chicago Times war correspondent, Keith Wheeler, waded ashore through the icy surf. The pair, along with Squeaky Anderson, had been together in USS Indianapolis for the initial shelling of Kiska in August 1942.

It was fortunate Japanese planes did not attack during this
early phase because those ashore had trouble just surviving.

After the Alaska Scouts were put ashore shortly after midnight, the first day's landings were carried out in cold but relatively decent weather in a lull between storms. During the remainder of the daylight hours, additional men, ammunition, food, some tents, a few small tractors, and miscellaneous supplies were brought ashore in good order.

Everyone had gotten soaked because the landing craft grounded about one hundred feet from the beach. Those ashore spent the first night with no way to dry out, miserable in their wet clothing. During the night, while desperately needed supplies were still coming in, a northeast gale struck. Bone chilling winds of this blizzard blew directly off the Bering Sea ice floes the southern edge of which were only several hundred miles north of the Aleutians.

Constantine Harbor's bottom is rocky and in storm conditions anchors will not hold. USS Arthur Middleton, loaded with vital supplies, drug her anchors and became impaled by a pinnacle rock that holed her double bottoms and caused flooding of her engine room. Most landing craft shuttling supplies wrecked within one hour that night. Those that survived that gale were either damaged, wrecked beyond repair or sunk in the blizzard that struck the second day and lasted through the third.

Combat troops had come ashore with three days' emergency rations. Additional food put ashore prior to the storm was exhausted. The remaining one or two operable landing craft could not bring enough food supplies ashore to sustain over 2200 men for even a day. Starvation or not depended on Aleutian weather.

Delicate vegetation covering the water soaked tundra was quickly trampled into a muddy, clinging ooze that one sunk in to calf height and beyond. It was exhausting to take two or three unencumbered steps let alone progress while staggering under 100 pound

combat packs or loads of supplies.

37mm. guns, heavy machine guns, mortars, ammunition boxes and other supplies all began to slowly sink into the muck. The few vehicles brought ashore, including tractors, were unusable in the terrain until roads could somehow be built. Men's backs were the only transport. Some troops made their torturous way inland to secure objectives and establish outposts. Conditions soon were the same everyplace men set foot, --Mud--Mud--Mud--.

The first night's storm and subsequent frequent ones continued to raise havoc with unloading and landing supplies. Tugs, lighters and motorized barges that came in later were either sunk or wrecked on rocks and beaches.

Aleutian weather had caused the loss of life, destroyer USS Worden and rock-bound USS Arthur Middleton. Equally disastrous, the weather was responsible for the loss of small craft, the only means of landing supplies from cargo ships. This had created the desperate situation; so desperate that many needed items such as fuel drums, lumber, tentage, or anything else that would float were jettisoned from cargo ships in the hope these supplies would drift ashore. Winds carried most of this material to the rocky base of cliffs on the harbor's southern shore where the items were unretrievable.

The lost oil and gasoline drums were punctured from being pounded against rocks. This produced a gooey oil slick that covered the waters of the harbor and drifted to the supply beaches. Already working in terrible conditions of high winds, blizzards, and near freezing water, the men at these locations were forced to struggle in waist deep water while attempting to recover floating supplies covered with a slick oil scum.

Freezing, wet, suffering, and hungry, the men on Amchitka found themselves in a survival test. The barest necessitites for comfort were still lacking. Supply priorities, in case fighting should become necessary, were guns, ammunition, and food. Men wore the wet clothes they'd come ashore in for two weeks before their barracks bags with dry clothing reached the beach.

A pair of gloves brought twenty dollars. A carton of five cents a pack sea store cigarettes- ten dollars. One small candle was worth a dollar which was also the going price of a five cent candy bar.

Slowly, progress was made and conditions became bearable. The mud worsened.

The first Japanese planes attacked on January 24 and sporadic raids continued for several weeks. Occasionally, there were several raids a day. These bombing and strafing attacks, carried out primarily by no more than two planes at a time, were considered ineffective. One soldier was killed and two wounded in the many attacks. The majority of bombs, 20mm. cannon and machine gun fire hit no vital targets and caused only slight damage to several unoccupied tents and sleeping bags. Bombs aimed at ships in the harbor all missed. Our anti-aircraft fire was just as ineffective and no enemy planes were shot down by ground fire.

The greatest danger to men hunkered down in water-filled foxholes around Constantine Harbor was considered to be from our own criss-crossing fire at enemy planes.

In another remarkable feat of engineering, Colonel Benjamin Talley and his army engineers completed a short fighter strip in sixteen days. On January 28 the first P-40s of Lt. Col. John Chennault landed at Amchitka.

Lethal immediately precedes lethargic in the dictionary. Kinkaid had reversed the order, our lethargy had been shed and in occupying Amchitka we'd gained a strategic advantage which would have lethal consequences for the Japanese.

Concurrently, Allied Forces made advances on other fronts. In an equally far off corner of the Pacific, late January also saw the fall of Buna on Eastern New Guinea to the 30,000 troops of General Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur's force, half of which were Australian troops, had engaged the 12,000 Japanese at Buna in November 1942. These enemy troops were the half-starved, disease ridden remnants of a crack Japanese division that had landed at Buna on July 21, 1942. They had attempted the jungle climb over the Owen Stanley mountains to attack Port Moresby on New Guinea's southeast coast. This had been a desperate move by the Japanese who had originally planned a large scale amphibious assault on Port Moresby. These plans were cancelled by the Battle of Coral Sea on May 7-8, 1942. The Japanese division never reached Port Moresby and demoralized, had fallen back to Buna.

Early 1943 was generally a quiet time of planning in other areas of the South and Southwest Pacific. Most action centered around a mutual exchange of bombing raids. U.S. planes bombed Japanese airfields at New Georgia and Kolumbangara Islands. The U.S. lost some ships and planes while the enemy lost many planes mostly carrier aircraft. These aircraft were becoming more difficult for the Japanese to replace. Japanese pilots were also becoming harder to replace because of the long indoctrination and training methods in use for many years.

One of the U.S. ships lost during this period was cruiser USS Chicago, sunk off Guadalcanal. She was attacked the night of January 29 by enemy planes which dropped flares and then torpedoes. The Chicago was heavily damaged and under tow the following day. Although she was protected by six destroyers, all equipped as the Chicago was with the new, super-secret proximity fused shells, and a combat air patrol of ten F4F Wildcats from carrier USS Enterprise, she was attacked by Japanese bombers and sunk.

Leave

Tatom returned to Adak from Amchitka in late January 1943. Around the first of February he surprised me by authorizing a short leave.

I flew as far as Kodiak without difficulty. At this congested point I was repeatedly bumped off flights because my leave orders carried low priority. The standard U.S. Navy term, "First Available Transportation," turned out this time to be the old navy oiler USS Ramapo. Empty after delivering her load she left Kodiak in light ballast and unescorted sailed direct from Kodiak to Seattle across the Gulf of Alaska.

Shortly after we got underway I was surprised to hear my name called over the ship's intercom. I was summoned to the bridge. The executive officer had noticed that one of his passengers was an AerM2c. In a polite, friendly manner he asked me to stand wheel watches on the bridge with his quartermasters so I could instruct them in taking accurate weather observations. I agreed when he said he'd prefer not to make it an order.

A severe winter storm overtook the ship in the middle of the gulf. Southeast winds reached hurricane force and the venerable ship labored through the most

mountainous seas I'd ever seen. Solid grey-green water surged across her low decks between the bridge and crew's quarters and mess at the raised poop on the stern. Between bridge and poop and over a maze of pipes there was a steel catwalk that ran the length of the deck. Seas that swept the deck often reached the height of this catwalk. Although a mast provided a sanctuary, midway, the dangerous sprint across required exact timing to avoid injury or being washed overboard. In making this mad dash men were drenced and bruised, including me, and one crew member sustained a broken arm.

With the frontal passage the wind shifted into the northwest. As the deep low pressure system approached mountainous southeastern Alaska it began to fill. The pressure gradient increased and winds reached 86 knots accompanied by heavy snow showers.

Following seas of giant proportions made steering difficult. Temperature plummeted and thin layers of ice began to build up on exposed surfaces adding measurably to our top-heaviness. Had the ice buildup been severe it would have been impossible for crewmen to venture on deck to chop ice.

Several breaking rogue seas pooped us. Even with hatches dogged copious amounts of seawater found its way into the sleeping compartment at the stern. All loose gear including waste baskets, ash trays, and slop buckets rolled back and forth in the sloshing water with each violent roll and pitch.

At this worst of all times our rudder controls broke under immense strain. The tanker drifted at the mercy of the awesome sea. Radio silence was broken and a distress message flashed. A USCG cutter was ordered from the vicinity of Sitka to speed to our aid. Any ships in our area were advised of our situation and asked to assist.

The Ramapo was adrift for approximately fourteen hours.
Darkness hightened my terror. I thought the old oiler would either break up or capsize and sink. I'd been desperate for leave but this wasn't worth it,--too late for choices!--.

Crewmen jury-rigged the rudder controls. With maneuvering power restored the ship headed into the wind and sea and rode out the storm. A radio message must have been sent that we had everything under control for I never saw another ship on the scene or on the radar screen. About twenty-four hours later the

wind decreased to gale force and the seas, that had been estimated to be sixty feet during one period, subsided to twenty. We came about and resumed course for Seattle.

My ten day leave did not begin until I reached the continental limits of the states. Transportation by airline was booked solid. Space was available in either train or bus to my east coast home but such a round trip was impossible because of my short leave. I spent my time in Seattle and Tacoma.

It was wonderful to see Jean again but we had so little time together. Between attending classes, studying, on floor duty at the hospital, washing, ironing, and pressing uniforms and caps, and trying to get some needed sleep she had precious few moments to spare. These fleeting moments were always exquisite with happiness in meeting and equisite with sorrow at parting.

Between visits with Jean I consumed large amounts of cold beer and mixed drinks, gorged myself on long dreamed of food, saw every movie in town, and stuffed quarters in juke boxes.

One evening I was seated next to the window on a crowded, overly warm Seattle bus. When the aisle passenger got up to get off a well-groomed businessman with his folded evening paper sat down beside me.

"Hello there," he said pleasantly as he glanced at the several service ribbons, (fruit-salad), adorning my blouse, "You fellows must be going through hell in the South Pacific."

"I've been in the Aleutians," I replied. "Oh," he said and started to read his newspaper.

I stared at him for a moment but he was oblivious. Our short conversation was over. I had to stifle an urge to hit him with short left hook right through his newspaper.

In a little over one week's time in the states I had become nauseated by the attitude of many American citizens, particularly defense workers and businessmen. Dozens of conversations I'd overheard in bars, buses, restaurants and on street corners were mostly on the bitching side. They dealt with shortages, food and gas rationing, finding tires for cars, changing jobs for higher wages, large and modest profiteering deals being worked on, and union strike votes coming up.

"By God," I heard one man say, "they better damn well agree

to our demand for a hefty pay boost or we'll vote to strike."

These people all seemed to be caught up in their own greedy little worlds but the problems they bitterly complained about seemed trivial to me. Apparently, a great number of workers had flocked from the hinterlands to Seattle for high paying defense plant jobs. The complainers also spoke in contradictions because other snatches of conversations clearly indicated they never had it so good. One man planned that if the war could only last another four or five years he'd have enough saved to open a sporting goods store in his home town in Idaho. To fight for Mom, apple pie, and Chevrolet was one thing but it was obscene to think of sacrificing one's life for those who wished for a prolonged war.

Conversations dealing with the war fronts were solely about the fighting in Europe, Africa, or the South Pacific. The close to home Aleutian front seemed not to exist. This was particularly infuriating to me. The "Oh", of the businessman had been said with a touch of contempt. He had relegated me to near draft-dodger status because I'd been in the Aleutians and not the South Pacific.

When my leave ended I reported in at NAS Sand Point, Seattle. By that time I was more than ready to return to the secret Aleutian war zone just to get far away from the civilians' midst. This was probably fortunate for me because I tended toward a short temper and violent solutions in those years.

While it had proved impossible to fly me to the states on leave once I'd reached Kodiak, the navy had no problem flying me back to the war zone. It was at Dutch Harbor on this return trip that my plane became weathered in for several days and I had the opportunity to renew old aquaintanceships.

It was during this stop-over that CAerM T.J. Bliss and I had our pleasant chats and came to understand each other better. Boyd Omang, John Lynch, Chuck Herold, Forrest Medaris, Howard Curtis, John K. Fogg and others were also there.

These old hands were part of the original weather group that had been together at NAS Sand Point prior to Pearl Harbor. At that time we had all slaved under Bliss. At Dutch Harbor, these same people found themselves once again under his tyrannical thumb. John K. Fogg was moved to compose a poem dealing with this situation. Fogg's offering has survived the ravages of

time.

Section "C"
Dutch Harbor, Alaska

Any similarity to a <u>living</u> person is purely coincidental

Peaceful is the morning, still is the night
Smooth is the work, few is the care
The men are all happy, that includes me
For we are that fast watch, Section "C"

'Smiley at the teletype pounding away
The job is important, be it night or day
His typing is steady, mistakes are few
Faster men are made, but tell me who?

With radio tuned in, reception "S-5"
Fogg does his idea of the Jersey Jive
While entering the map, he sings a song
His nonsense keeps up the whole day long,

Lynch, our master and Chief to be
Tells us stories of his days at sea
With smiling eye and debonaire look
He proceeds to break the Russian Book,

Yes, we are the three, the motley crew
Ready and willing when there is work to do
But every watch will have its' woes
And we have ours, here's how it goes

When the clock rolls around to seven
Then things turn to Hell from Heaven
All laughter ceases and turns to hate
We are made to suffer the worst of fate

We start to tremble, the reason is near
Our minds are filled with Aweful Fear
Master of Meaness, cause of grief
In it walks, this thing called "Chief"

His head is large, his gut immense
His mind petite, with little sense
When I see him it makes me think
Will science pay for the missing link?

But every day will have its end
Dusk finds him on a homeward trend
Out of the door, on the road to home
Waddles swifty our little gnome

Happiness again, and laughter galore
For skin head Benito, is out the door
The office settles down to perfect bliss
Please Mr. God make it always like this.

When the weather moderated I caught a PBY from Dutch Harbor to Adak. Although my leave was short I'd been gone over three weeks.

I Meet Walter Scott Hassell, Warrant Aerographer, USN

Changes had taken place at Adak in my absence. Construction work had continued but on a curtailed basis because of severe winter weather. Supplies and personnel had streamed in. Adak was not only the advanced air base from which attacks against Kiska, Attu, and enemy shipping in the Aleutians were launched but it was the staging area for future, large scale offensive operations.

Unknown to me Adak had become a Joint Army-Navy Weather Center. Additional Quonsets had been built on our hilltop to house the army weather personnel.

One hut had also been added that joined our weather office and storage hut to form a winged complex. Within, a great deal of rearranging had taken place.

Dressed in watch cap, winter flight jacket, flight boots, sheath knife, and with a four day stubble of beard, I walked into what should have been the navy weather office. I'd entered a hut filled with officers' desks and swivel chairs spaced in neat rows along each side bulkhead. One section held a large conference table. Many metal filing cabinets at the back of the hut flanked another door.

Instead of the expected familiar faces and hum of activity the place was like a library and as quiet. Two soldiers were in the hut. One at the rear, wearing the chevrons of Pfc, was busy at the filing cabinets.

The nearest soldier was seated at a desk just inside the doorway I'd entered. He wore no tie and his open collar displayed no officer's insignia nor were there chevrons on his sleeve.

He was insolently relaxed, rocked back in a swivel chair, hands clasped behind his head. Khaki woolen army trousers terminated in a pair of mud caked navy flight boots. These boots were propped up on a corner of the polished desk top.

This apparent soldier was middle aged and skinny. His white hair framed a tanned, leathery face creased with wrinkles. His piercing blue eyes surveyed me with an interested but arrogant look. The army must be getting desperate to draft an old fart like this. I resented his stare and that he had his muddy boots on one of our shiny desk tops.

"Where the hell are all the navy weather guys?" I asked. "Just who the hell are you looking for in particular?" shot back the shriveled up soldier, mimicking my tone and manner.

"Any of them--all of them. Where are they?" I demanded with mounting anger.

"And just who the hell wants to know?" he sarcastically surprised me with.

"Look dog-face," I said heatedly, "if I want any crap out of you I'll knock it out."

"Listen big fellow," he said with icy calmness,"if you're going to get nasty you'll have to leave. Or would you rather be thrown out?"

That did it. With a vicious swipe I knocked his boots off the desk. This spun him halfway around in his swivel chair.

"Now little man," said I, "just who the hell are you and what are you doing hanging around here for in the first place?"

Slowly, dramatically, he stood up and faced me.

"I'm your new Commanding Officer, Warrant Aerographer Walter Scott Hassell."

I stood dumbfounded. Before the war I'd heard Bliss, Omang, Herold and others talk about Scotty Hassell. The description fit the man before me. Hassell was obviously savoring my embarrassed predicament. Then a wide grin appeared on his face. There was a mischievous twinkle in his blue eyes when he spoke again.

"That's alright, Heapo, I've been expecting you back from leave. Having met you I suspect that all of the tales I've been hearing about the "Black Irishman" are probably all too true."

"How did you find out about "Heapo"? was all I could stammer as his use of this New Jersey nickname further shocked me. I'd never liked it and no one in

the navy knew of it.

"A letter from your brother Ralph arrived after you went on leave and "Heapo" was included in the address. You'll have to tell me sometime how you came by it. I think it's cute."

Although small and wiry, Hassell possessed a monumental ego.
Co-workers often found him to be pompous and overbearing.

Only a warrant officer at this time, he gave orders to younger officers of higher rank. His authoritative manner and bearing seemed to allow him to assume this role without opposition. Once he'd established domination he rode it to the hilt. A prime example was a pet phrase used when addressing young ensigns, lieutenant (jgs), and even full lieutenants.

"Now goddamnit, son," Hassell would say, "that's enough of
this bullshit. We'll do it my way. Understand?"

Hassell had been assigned to Patrol Wing Four and as such was the only other aerological officer besides Tatom. In truth, Hassell was not my new commanding officer but few people ever argued with him.

Other AerMs later told me that when they first met Hassell
they thought they were being addressed by an admiral.

Over the months that followed Scotty Hassell and I had many confrontations. He seemed to delight in needling me to the breaking point. He had a fine sense of timing and always knew exactly when to quit. He enjoyed the game and always played with good humor. I like to think he may have been secretly pleased to run across someone who wasn't afraid to stand up to him. We grew to like each other and worked well together.

Aggressive Action Pays Large Dividends

Admiral Kinkaid had given Rear Admiral McMorris orders to hit the enemy at every opportunity, keep enemy supply ships from reaching Attu and Kiska, and to take any appropriate offensive action. McMorris's total task force included heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis, light cruiser USS Richmond, and four destroyers.

McMorris took his small force westward to Attu and beyond in search of Japanese shipping. With his weak force McMorris could not afford to split it or hope to guard both Kiska and Attu so he aggressively

sought to intercept enemy supply ships before they reached the Aleutians. It was the first time since the Japanese capture of the western Aleutians that a U.S. task force had ventured so far west.

On February 18, 1943, McMorris was in dense fog not far from Attu when he received a report from a patrolling U.S. submarine that two Japanese ships were in the vicinity of Attu. Adak also intercepted this submarine report. The 11th USAAF sent a B-17 piloted by Aleutian veteran, Captain Frederick R. Ramputi of the 36th Bomber Squadron to attack the Japanese ships. Ramputi was scheduled to arrive at Attu before dark while McMorris was not expected to reach the scene until after dark because of dense fog.

Shortly after receiving the submarine report, the task force steamed out of pea soup into clear weather. McMorris ordered full speed ahead and arrived off Attu in early afternoon but could find no Japanese ships.

Ramputi, flying at 10,000 feet, arrived on the scene and saw six ships below cruising along Attu's shore. He had a U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer aboard who was specifically charged with ship identification. The chief assured Ramputi that the ships far below were Japanese. Ramputi opened his bomb bay doors and made his run. Remote bomb release switches failed on the first run. Emergency release mechanisms failed on the second run. Manual release mechanism would not work on the third bomb run.

McMorris was unable to make contact with the B-17 and reluctantly ordered the Richmond to open fire with her AA batteries. No damage resulted but the incident was another one of those "accidents" that could have ended in disaster.

After Ramputi flew away toward Adak, McMorris continued his search for the reported enemy ships but was not successful. McMorris decided to shell Japanese installations at Chichagof Harbor and Holtz Bay. The impromptu, leisurely, two hour bombardment killed about two dozen Japanese, destroyed a building and pockmarked the runway the enemy was laboriously constructing by hand near Holtz Bay. This damage was insignificant but it would have far-reaching effect.

McMorris proceeded westward after shelling Attu and intercepted the incoming 3100 ton Akagane Maru. This supply ship was loaded with airfield construction equipment, munitions, supplies, and an infantry platoon. Eight inch shells from the Indianapolis crippled Akagane Maru. Destroyers sliced in to finish

the job with torpedoes but all six fired torpedoes malfunctioned. Destroyers sank the enemy vessel with shell fire. Two other Japanese supply ships enroute from Paramushiro to the Aleutians turned back, not because the Akagane Maru was sunk, of which the enemy was unaware, but because word had been received by radio that Attu had been shelled for the first time and a U.S. task force was on the loose.

The shelling of Attu coupled with the sinking of Akagane Maru was a serious blow to Japan. It was imperative that Japan complete the airfield on Attu in order to retain her Aleutian foothold. The enemy planned to use this as a bomber base in addition to its proposed complement of forty-eight land based Zero "Zeke" fighters. If this plan had succeeded it would have prolonged the Aleutian Campaign at an increased cost in U.S. casualties. Admiral Kinkaid's order that had sent McMorris on an aggressive offensive far to the west had achieved quicker and greater effect than was realized at the time.

CAerM Charles C. "Williwaw" Herold Sent To Amchitka

Tatom ordered Herold from Dutch Harbor to Amchitka in mid February 1943. Herold stopped at Adak from February 20 to February 25 and, with only his aerograper's manual and roll of blank weather maps, reached Amchitka February 27, 1943.

USS Arthur Middleton was still impaled on the pinnacle rock. The rock protruding into her engine room had been repeatedly blasted with small charges. This reduced the rock into small enough pieces which could be dropped through her holed bottom. Repairs were being made and she was expected to depart Amchitka within the week. Herold paid a visit to the ship and obtained her mercurial barometer from the captain.

Amchitka's original Navy Seabee Battalion departed in the Arthur Middleton. These Seabees abandoned their tents, extra clothing, and supplies. The replacement Seabee outfit came ashore equipped with their own new gear. Herold made many good raids which produced proper winter clothing and boots suitable for the elements.

He also moved into one of the large, recently abandoned, winterized tents of the original Seabee outfit. This became his spacious, albeit almost empty

weather office, its only instrument being the Arthur Middleton's barometer.

Herold lived among the Seabees, the only navy unit on Amchitka at that time. The new Seabee commander was a nice guy, too nice, Herold thought, because he had his officers and chiefs lining up in the deep mud with the crew for chow and they all ate at the same tables. Herold ended that on the first day.

A big Seabee, Seaman Master-at-Arms gave him a little dust
but fiesty Herold, an old salt, told him that he didn't give a
good ____ how the Seabees did it, he was a U.S. Navy Chief and
they were going to do it the navy way. Before he stopped talking they had set up separate tables for officers and chiefs. A Williwaw is a big blow and we had not nicknamed Herold without good reason.

Herold never took the opaque rain cover off his chief's hat. On Amchitka even army colonels soon began wondering, "Just what the hell is that navy chief, chief of?" Herold let them wonder.

Herold's weather office tent was on the northwest end of the fighter strip about a mile from the 11th USAAF operations and communications. Among Williwaw's early requisitions from his roaming raids was a precious army teletype machine. He talked some army signal corps men into running a line that hooked him up with the Army Meteorological tent at Constantine Harbor. In this way he would be furnished with weather signals besides his own eventual PBY search plane reports.

Navy personnel descended in force on Amchitka in early March
1943 with the arrival of a detachment of PBYs. Included among
these navy units were a Patrol Service Unit (Patsu), communications, operations, administration personnel and additional Seabees.

The squadron commander was Senior Naval Officer (SeaNav) present. He took a liking to Herold's large tent because it had a good stove, a phone, teletype, and was in the desired location. The tent became the SeaNav's office, living quarters, navy weather office, and also housed the squadron radio.

With the arrival of PBYs, Herold worked alone breaking code, entering and analyzing maps,

forecasting, briefing flight crews, and flying a sector patrol to gather his own latest weather information. Putting in twenty-two hour days became the norm.

In the beginning, only part of a PBY squadron was based at Amchitka. In addition to conducting search patrols these PBYs acted as "Dumbo", (air-sea rescue of downed pilots and crews), for army pilots who carried out almost constant daylight strafing and bombing attacks on Kiska.

From the latter part of March through April and May of 1943, operations were stepped up as this new base expanded. By mid May twenty-four sectors were being flown out of Amchitka. Although our Joint Army-Navy Weather Center at Adak was more than adequately supplied with AerMs Herold worked alone at Amchitka until mid April 1943.

The Thermoscreen Steps

While these events were taking place to the west at Amchitka under primitive conditions Adak had developed to a slightly more civilized state.

After leave, it didn't take long for me to get back in the routine of standing watches and flying weather patrols. W/O Scotty Hassell assigned me with equal rapidity to some extra manual labor.

Emmett Smith and I were off watch and for lack of anything better to do, made the mistake of wandering into the weather office. Hassell told us there was an easy job, one that would take but an hour or so, and was urgently needed. Because of the addition of a joining hut and rearrangement of weather office space it had been necessary to move the thermoscreen and theodolite to a new location. Our simple project was building wooden steps to the thermoscreen platform.

All the necessary lumber was neatly stacked in ankle-deep mud outside the back of the hut. Hassell indicated the precise location he wanted the steps constructed. Tools having been selected we went to work, laid out the notches on two long 2" X 12's" for the steps and risers and after these notches had been sawn, cut the steps to length.

When I began to drive the first of two, pointed 4" X 4" stakes with a sledge hammer to anchor the base of the steps, I struck a rock. Smith and I took turns attempting to dig this rock out but couldn't locate its edge. A steel rod used as a probe indicated we had

encountered solid bedrock or a boulder so huge it even extended under the hut and across most of the revetment's width.

Finally, the steel probe went down through only mud and soil to a depth of several feet. This place was far to one side of the revetment and the farthest possible distance from where Hassell wanted the steps. There was no other choice. Smith looked in the office to check with Hassell but he was gone.

There was no other logical location so Smith and I set to work. Although a little unhandy to the doorway it would be a great improvement and time-saver as opposed to going out the other door of the weather office and having to walk around to the back.

We were not expert carpenters. The handsaw had jumped out of the kerf and raked my knuckles. Smith's left thumb was mashed by the hammer. The exertions had tired us, especially the unaccustomed labor of shoveling and swinging the heavy sledge. This frustrating work had progressed to the point at which the side 2" X 12's" were spiked into place at the upper deck, anchored securely at the base, and Smith had nailed home the first three steps. Somehow, the whole assembly had gotten a trifle catywompus and several inches off to one side of our string line. I was in the process of sledge hammering the base back to a true line when Hassell popped out of the back door.

He took one horrified look then threw a fit.

"Goddamnit, Heapo," he almost screamed, "are you such a dumb
sonavabitch you can't follow simple instructions? I Want__Those
__Steps__Here!,(pointing)__not way the hell and gone over there."

"There's a big rock,".....I began.

"A big rock...A big rock," Hassell parroted. "For Christ's
sake, did you ever think of moving the f_____g thing or are you
too lazy?"

"You miserable little fart," I spat advancing toward him with the sledge, "the steps are going in THERE whether you like it or not and <u>Don't You Ever</u> call me a sonvabitch again."

Hassell scurried backward toward the door, cocked his head to oneside, held both hands placatingly toward me and sweetly said, "Okay..okay Heapo, if

that's the way you want it we'll build them over there." He ducked back inside.

Emmett laughed. I still fumed.

"You know," he said, "Hassell wouldn't take that from anybody
else. I think he's a little afraid of you."

"He's the creep that dishes out all the crap. He never gives a guy a chance to even explain. I could strangle him without giving it a second thought."

"Maybe he senses that," Smith ventured.

"To hell with Hassell. Let's finish these steps. It's almost chow time."

Master Sergeant Cox

Fleet Air Wing Four staff aerologist, Lt.Cmdr. John F. Tatom was also O-in-C of the Joint Army-Navy Weather Center, Adak. Army and navy weather personnel, both officers and enlisted men, were apportioned to each watch section. With far more navy weathermen present the ratio was about three to one.

Tatom and Hassell were the lone FAW-4 officers. Those with duty orders to the base were Lieutenant (jg's) Max W. Mull, William J. Douglas, John G."Mac" McQuarrie, Burton W."Smokey" Lindley, and Lester P. Mallory. These officers had been ensigns when they came north and had subsequently been promoted May 15, 1942. Duty at Adak was made almost pleasurable because of the
gathering of familiar faces both officer and enlisted. It was similar to the way our navy weather personnel had become stacked up at Dutch Harbor prior to the Japanese attacks on that base some seven months earlier.

Shortly after the Gillis returned to Adak from drydock repairs at Kodiak, Tatom had transferred Chief Max White, and AerM2c's Bob Calderon and Dick Carter to the beach leaving only AerM2c Elzie Carey aboard the seaplane tender.

Because of Max White's experience analyzing maps and forecasting for plane operations while he served in the Gillis, Tatom assigned him to stand duty officer watches.

Notwithstanding Scotty Hassell's ursurping some power among the junior officers, the ramrod of the weather center and especially the navy enlisted contingent was office chief Edward S. "Duck" Hudson.

Hudson's army counterpart was huge, bearded, heavy-set, Master Sergeant Cox.

There was great contrast between these two men in size, temperment, and approach to problems. Each in his own way achieved good results. Hudson and Cox worked well together and this harmony set the tone for the rest of us.

Hudson, medium sized and wiry, ruled his aerographer's mates in a business-like manner, his basic seriousness tempered with a measure of kindness and humor. Cox was a jovial giant in or out of the office. He maintained discipline among his army enlisted men by dint of his imposing physical stature and occasional flashes of quick and violent temper. This combination sometimes produced an explosion that rivaled Aleutian volcanos.

Cox was a bona fide entrepreneur. From the official viewpoint some of these sideline operations were of a slightly shady nature, although many of his clientele were officers. Cox was such a wheeler-dealer that even in a place like Adak he could procure almost anything a man could conjure.

Through a multitude of deals with his many contacts throughout the Aleutians and Alaska, especially Anchorage, Cox soon turned the army enlisted weather barracks hut into an exceedingly plush living quarters. Even the officer's quarters looked like squatters' shacks by comparison.

Thick carpeting, overstuffed chairs, sofas, and indirect lighting were a few of the accoutrements that gave the army hut the air of an exclusive club. To a large degree this is what it came to be.

Among others cheerfully working for Cox 'Enterprises' was a slight, bespectacled corporal who, for several years, had majored in chemistry at the college level before becoming an army weatherman. This "professor" was resident brewmaster when not standing office weather watches.

His distillery was a large oaken barrel placed close to the oil stove in the army hut. A sheet of plywood covered with elegant cloth camouflaged this moonshine still and made it look like an innocent writing table.

Cox provided sugar, raisins, apples, pears, yeast, or whatever was available and his corporal-chemist brewed with loving, meticulous care. Spare weather thermometers hung suspended at different levels in the working mash. These thermometers were

checked every hour so that a proper, constant temperature could be maintained throughout the fermenting process. Temperature was regulated by settings on the nearby oil stove. Periodic fermentation tests were made as the working mixture bubbled and was babied to perfection.

Cox, in his position, knew well in advance when his superior officers intended to hold barracks inspection. He had acquired and installed two electric fans such as one finds in a restaurant kitchen. These were mounted high up at each end of the hut, one to draw fresh air in, one to suck air out. These fans were started several hours before inspection to flush out the odor of fermenting fruit that assailed one's nostrils upon entering the hut.

The First Keg Is Tapped

The brewmaster had told Cox that it was time to siphon off the first batch of joy-juice. Cox graciously invited all off duty AerMs to a party. He casually suggested that since festivities would include a bit of gambling those of us who wished to participate should bring along some coin of the realm.

When a group of us knocked and entered the army hut that night I sensed the navy might be in trouble. A game of four, five, six was already in progress. Most surprising it was being played on a new, large table covered with the same type green cloth used on a billiard table. A centered light hung low directly over the table. Seated with the players in the circle of bright light was the inimitable Cox wearing a green eye shade while running the game. It was a scene straight out of a gambling casino.

Cox rose and gave a warm greeting to his navy guests. The four, five, six game was suspended as siphoning preparations to tap the barrel began.

The brew was carefully drawn off into sparkling clean gallon jugs. It was a surprisingly clear liquid of the palest green color. Canteen cups were filled all around and a toast was made. Approving sippers expressed delight at the magic wrought by the corporal-chemist-weatherman. Someone exclaimed that the concoction tasted like California champagne. Others readily agreed. I hadn't the faintest notion what California or any other kind of champagne tasted like but had to agree that my cup was filled with a mighty fine drink. It was smooth, --make that

smoooooth--.

A festive air reigned. Small groups engaged in conversation while others sampled delicious hors d'oeuvres Cox had set out on a snack bar. After the wine had flowed for a proper time, Cox led his navy pigeons to the four, five, six table.

We sailors had vaguely recalled hearing of this game but none of those present had ever played it. We were separated quickly and neatly from our money but were so happy it didn't matter. Several hours later Cox suggestd that we should all get some sleep. We thanked our hosts and bid them goodnight.

By that time, it took some maneuvering just to get to the door. Lester Roberts, Emmett Smith and I left together and stepped outside into sleet driven by storm force winds. After groping our loud, laughing way toward our hut I stopped as we were about to pass the weather office. My none-too-bright idea was to visit our army buddies and navy shipmates on watch. Emmett thought this was a splendid idea. Roberts did not. He cautioned that Hassell had the duty and in our condition we'd better keep quiet and steer clear of the office.

His mention of Hassell stuck a pin in my happy bubble and
sent me off on a tangent of drunken fury. Rather than avoid the office, I announced that it was an ideal time to tell that little runt off and a perfect time to break him in half. I ran wobbling to the office before either man could stop me.

Hassell was seated at his desk at the back of the office when I burst in and made, more or less, straight for him. Dispensing with formalities I shouted that I was going to break his scrawny neck. All work in the office ceased. Everyone was immobilized except Hassell. Cat quick, he jumped up and ducked under my outstretched arms. Coatless and hatless he sprinted out into the icy gale with me hot on his heels.

I chased Walter Scott Hassell all over our cliff-ringed mountain top that stormy winter night, all the while shouting in a scream to match the wind. Upon tripping he almost fell into my clutches but finally found a hiding place.

Roberts and Smith caught up with me. Panting, out of breath, and in my exhausted stupor, they had no trouble leading me to our hut and my sleeping bag.

I had the day watch the next morning and steeled

myself for the walk into the office to take my medicine. I hadn't been so drunk that I didn't clearly remember what had happened. In fact, why wasn't I already in irons?

Hassell, evidently still sleeping after his night watch and run for life, was not there. Nothing was said to me but I worked in apprehension until early afternoon. Hassell walked in while I was busy at a desk logging a weather observation. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him head directly toward me in his flight-booted, characteristic gait for which we'd nicknamed him "shuffle shoes". Bracing myself for that which was to come and not looking up, I kept at my work.

Muddy flight boots scraped to a stop alongside me. A hand lightly squeezed my left shoulder. Turning, I looked up into Hassell's face. His usually mischievous blue eyes were serious with almost a trace of sadness in their depths.

"I know you've had several close calls lately flying in this atrocious weather," Hassell said in a kind, gentle, almost fatherly voice. "I'm glad you let off some steam last night. We all must do that occasionally or we'd explode."

"Will you accept my apology?" "No need to apologize." With that he walked away. Late that afternoon a junior officer came on duty. A good friend of some vintage and no teetoteler he sidled up to me.

"I heard about your escapade last night. You're psycho enough without booze. Why don't you leave it alone?"

To him I answered, "Monkey see, Monkey do."

Alcohol consumption continued to cause some problems at Adak through the spring of 1943. Most of the army and navy enlisted weathermen, some weather officers, and many other army and navy personnel acquired jugs of the brewmaster's product. Although the brew earned the nickname "Green Death" because of its color each batch was consistently excellent with an alcohol content of about twenty-percent. Men

stashed these "goods" here and there but most jugs were hidden among personal belongings in barracks huts.

For about a month one man, who slept in a top bunk, presented
us with a mystery. He kept a jug with his other gear on deck but in spite of being watched closely no one ever saw him tip it day or night. Nonetheless, he would hit the sack cold sober and get up with a pleasant high. He often slept on his side with his back to the room but there was nothing unusual about this. Hudson discovered that this man had run a length of small diameter rubber tubing secured with tape up the inside of the bunk frame. At either end was a flexible eighteen inches. All of this tubing was hidden by draped clothing. Before turning in the man inserted one end in his jug while pretending to rumage through his gear. After he climbed in the sack he kept the draw end handy under his pillow. We didn't give a damn whether this man drank or not and he could not explain why he'd resorted to such subterfuge.

After the inaugural blow-out there were no other large parties at the army hut. Individually or in groups of two or three we sometimes stopped by at night for a quiet drink, conversation, or gambling. The brewery was in constant operation and Cox always had a supply on hand. If one visited or came to play cards or dice, he generously served a drink or two. If one wanted a jug to go, the price came high. Our often being short of cash, Cox would ask, "What have you got to swap?"

His operations were far-reaching and Cox accumulated enough items in this manner to fill several large footlockers. Cox was also a shop-keeper, a shrewd businessman as well as a born trader. Being honest and fair in all his dealings, interesting and likeable, such transactions with him were happy affairs.

The Aleutian Kee Bird

The bird population of the Aleutians is incredibly great. The habitat is ideal for seabirds and it is also a stop-over for countless numbers and many varieties of migratory fowl. A number of birds with strange names are also residents of the Aleutians or have been reported as occasional visitors. Some are

quite rare and some can be found only in the Aleutians. Ornithologists, for example, report sightings of the rare Aleutian Savannah sparrow, Unalaska Fox sparrow, and Aleutian long spur. Other sightings include the Kamchatkan nightingale, Swinhoe's wagtail, Peale's falcon, Snow and Rustic bunting, western pipit, and others. I know nothing of these strange named birds but I do know a little about the rare Aleutian Kee bird.

Sadly, the Kee bird has apparently become extinct because there have been no reported sightings since the winter of 1945. They were so rare, even in 1942, that zoologists had had little opportunity to study them. For instance, nothing is known about their breeding ground, nesting habits, or migration route. Their visits to the Aleutians were infrequent, brief, only in winter, and long after all other migratory birds had flown south.

The first Kee bird usually showed up during the cold snap accompanying our first blizzard. Besides being rare, they were almost invisible against a background of snow. Quite possibly, the Kee bird was capable of the chameleon like ability to change seasonal coloration as the ptmarigan and ermine do. Arrival of the Kee birds always seemed to coincide with our having a new weatherman fresh from the states in our midst.

One of us Aleutian veterans would come stomping in from
outside, brushing off the snow.

"Well," this man would announce,"the Kee birds are back. I
just heard one cry out."

Other old timers would perk up immediately.

"Why do they stop here in the winter at all and why so late?" one would ask. "Why don't they keep flying south to sunny California or South America like other birds do?"

"Because they're such incredibly dumb birds," a man would
reply.

"What in the world do they eat around here to survive?" "Beats me,"someone would offer, "although the Aleuts claim
that the Kee bird eats ice worms."

"I don't know about that," the first man would say. "All I know is at least one is back. I didn't see it but I sure heard it and once you've heard their

loud, distinctive, plaintive cry you'll never forget it!"

"True, true," and "Boy, you can say that again," would echo around the room.

At this point the neophyte Aleutianite, his curiosity about to burst, would invariably ask, "What kind of a noise do they make?"

"K E E E E E E E E E E R R i i i S T ! I T ' S CUCK-CUCK-CUCK-COOOOOOOOLD!" we'd all chorus.

Realizing he'd been conned, the newcomer would cuss us out. We'd laugh like loons at his foolish feeling of embarrassment and at our own cleverness. One more select member had been initiated into the Aleutian Kee Bird Club. This man could hardly wait to be in on the fun next time a new weatherman arrived.

Our Hydrogen Gas Factory

In the event we ran out of helium for inflating upper air balloons each major navy weather station, in isolated areas, was provided with equipment to make hydrogen gas. It was a scary process.

Helium, though it does not provide the lift of hydrogen, is safe to use. Hydrogen, the lightest gas known, provides great lift but it is highly explosive, dangerous to make, use, or even be near.

We ran out of helium in mid March 1943 when the ship bringing our new supply of tanks failed to arrive.

"Well men," said Chief Hudson, "it looks as though we'll have to make some hydrogen."

He took Roberts, Smith, Livingston, and me with him to the elephant Quonset at the edge of the south cliff where the simple but ominous looking hydrogen generating set awaited. The apparatus consisted of a large, silver painted cylinder cradled between two triangular angle-iron legs welded to a common base plate. A short piece of pipe welded crossways at the bottom of the cylinder served as a rocking handle to agitate ingredients in the tank.

These ingredents were Ferro-Silicon, Caustic Soda, and hot water. That was it! To this day, I'm astounded that one can make a gas as dangerously explosive as hydrogen so quickly and simply.

Hudson read aloud to us from the instruction manual furnished with the generating set. It was like listening to a horror tale. Only the proper proportions of the three ingredients were to be used--OR ELSE! One should not rock the tank too lightly or too slowly but also not too vigorously--OR ELSE! As the gas began to generate after agitation, a close watch had to be kept on the pressure gauge--OR ELSE. In this case, the OR ELSE, was to run, clearing the area if the pressure rose rapidly past a specified pounds per square inch.

A safety valve, that was simply a soft metal plug on one side of the tank, would blow out in case the pressure generated was too great. BUT, the manual cautioned in bold type, this plug should not be counted on for complete safety. The plug could explode upward and outward with the force of a lethal projectile and for this reason alone, one should be long gone. There was a second good reason for not hanging around. Contents of the tank would be forced through the safety plug hole with great force and spray over a large area. Caustic Soda is Sodium-Hydroxide which is lye. This could blind and burn skin tissue. Instructions included emergency measures if exposed portions of the body became contaminated with this fluid. Long before Hudson finished reading we had reservations about even tackling the first attempt. The final paragraphs, however, were the real killers.

Printed in heavy black type it cautioned that all connections
of the screwed in head assembly at the tank's top including the pressure gauge, main valve, and adapter nozzle for the balloon inflation hose had to be constantly checked for leaks. Because hydrogen gas is odorless and colorless, suspected leaks should be checked for with bubbles made from high quality castile soap and soft water. Rain water is soft but the only soap available was Fels-Napha and this would not even produce lather. NEVER USE A MATCH TO CHECK FOR A GAS LEAK.

Hudson read on. Extreme caution must always be exercised not only while checking fittings for tightness with a wrench but throughout the surrounding vicinity to make certain that a wrench or other tool did not strike another metallic object that could produce a tiny spark that would cause an explosion. Smoking was prohibited throughout the area for a

distance of one hundred-fifty feet.

Whoever wrote the manual saved the most chilling paragraph until last. It was stated, unequivocally, that a hydrogen explosion would occur spontaneously without the aid of a spark if just the right amount of hydrogen and oxygen were present in the room. What might that "right" proportion be?

We set to work. The first job was to pack buckets of hot water from our barracks hut stove. Cold water could be used but hot water speeded up the generating process.

Cases containing Ferro-Silicon and Caustic Soda were stored in neatly stacked rows along one wall of the elephant Quonset. Ferro-Silicon, which was in the form of small chips and corkscrew curls, was packaged in sturdy, 6" X 6" X 4" carboard boxes. Caustic Soda came in metal cans about six inches in diameter and four inches tall.

Proportions had been simplified for us at the manufacturer's end. Doling out or measuring was not required beyond simply funneling the contents of the proper number of cans and boxes into the tank with the help of the wooden push rod supplied. A precise number of gallons of hot water was then added. As this was poured into the tank it cleansed the funnel of Ferro-Silicon and Caustic Soda. It also washed the threads of the tank neck that the valve assembly or capping plug screwed into.

A slight hitch occurred when Don Livingston slipped on the icy path while hurrying with a steaming bucket of water. He fell, spilled the water and burned his hand and wrist. Hudson was poised with other buckets of hot water at the tank when this accident happened. Once the water started to go into the tank all of it had to go in quickly. The cap was screwed in tight and the rocking and shaking had to be started immediately.

When Don fell, Hudson's buckets had to go back to the hut for reheating while Don's fresh bucket was heated. This caused a lot of grumbling by the off watch people in the hut. They were trying to sleep or relax, soaked in perspiration from an oil stove turned to its highest setting. When Livingston left with the last bucket they thought the stove part of our hydrogen operation was over. They had turned the stove down and even opened the hut door to cool the place off. Don had to break the news that the water heating process had to be repeated.

Our first tank of hydrogen turned out well as did most
succeeding batches. The generator tank was also the storage tank so that we could not make a supply ahead and one tank of gas lasted only a short while. The ship carrying our helium tanks was delayed by winter storms for over a month. As a result, many batches of hydrogen were made.

I can recall only two batches of poor hydrogen. Not being a chemist, I don't know if it's technically possible to have such a thing as good and bad hydrogen. These two batches took an extra long time to generate and one did not reach the recommended pressure. Both tanks contained excessive moisture that was visible in the form of beads clinging to the insides of inflated balloons.

At the other extreme we concocted several batches that had real pizzazz. Evidently, someone lost count and poured in extra ingredients. A large tank of this stuff would have propelled a rocket to Venus. After agitation and a quiet lull when nothing seemed to be taking place, the pressure needle rose so rapidly we barely had time to clear out of the building before the safety valve blew. Like a piece of shrapnel, one plug went through the corrogated tin roof. The other plug's exit was never determined. Both of these generation attempts required considerable cleanup work.

A slow leak that developed in the control valve was our most dangerous problem. It was the only valve assembly we had and the cause of the leak was never found. It was known that a certain amount of hydrogen was seeping into the atmosphere of the enclosed shed. Each time we cautiously opened the door to enter, we wondered if we were letting in that critical amount of oxygen necessary for the BIG BANG.

The Battle of the Komandorski Islands-March 26, 1943

By March 1943 the Japanese on Kiska and Attu were being hammered by planes from Adak and Amchitka and by ships of our North Pacific Task Force. The concentration was on Kiska.

Japan's High Command was faced with a dilemma. It could not adequately supply its embattled garrisons on Attu and Kiska or could it afford to abandon the two strongholds. This would leave Japan's vulnerable northern flank completely exposed. Because evacuating

her Aleutian troops would pose as many problems as supplying them, Japan chose to hold Attu and Kiska at all costs.

Single Japanese supply ships occasionally slipped through the U.S. air and naval blockade but many others were either sunk or turned back. A large convoy, under cover of dense fog, arrived at Attu March 9, 1943. Several days of thick weather enabled the Japanese to transship some of these supplies on to Kiska.

A lone enemy ship ran the blockade and made it to Attu March 10, 1943. During the next two weeks, under better weather conditions, other ships that attempted the Aleutian supply run were either sunk, damaged, or fled back to Paramushiro.

In a desperate attempt to beef up the northern garrisons and bring in additional supplies, Admiral Hosagaya assembled his Northern Force of heavy cruisers Nachi and Maya, light cruisers Tama and Abukuma, and five destroyers including Wakaba, Inazuma, Hatsushima, and Ikazuchi. This force would escort Asaka Maru and Sakito Maru, fast, heavily laden and armed 7,000 ton merchant cruisers doubling as transports, and the Sanko Maru a smaller and slower freighter. Under personal command of Admiral Hosagaya in his flagship, Nachi, the convoy sortied from Paramushiro March
22, 1943.

Admiral McMorris in his flagship light cruiser USS Richmond accompanied by heavy cruiser USS Salt Lake City,(Old Swayback Maru to her crew), and four destroyers, Bailey, Coghlan, Dale, and Monaghan was on another foray to the west in search of Japanese supply vessels. PBYs reported a number of Japanese ships heading east from Paramushiro. On March 26 McMorris had his task force two hundred miles west of Attu and one hundred miles southeast of the Russian Komandorski Islands. His ships were spread out to cover as much ocean as possible in the hope that one or more could make contact with the enemy vessels.

As dawn broke, radar contact was made with several unidentified ships ten miles to the north. These ships were heading east in latitude 53 degrees-zero minutes North and longitude 168 degrees-40 minutes East.

McMorris radioed a contact report, gathered his force, turned northeastward to intercept, and prepared to attack the supposed unescorted cargo ships.

In the overcast dim light the Japanese discerned the approaching American warships. Admiral Hosagaya ordered the three cargo ships to reverse course to the west. He formed his warships into two columns, the four cruisers to port to cut off the U.S. ships from escaping east toward safety, and the five destroyers to starboard as a buffer between the U.S. fleet and the three cargo ships.

McMorris quickly learned that he was not speeding to attack unprotected cargo ships when lookouts began reporting one Japanese cruiser after another approaching at 30 knots. Hosagaya's ships were newer, larger, faster, and had more firepower. McMorris could not outrun or outgun the enemy so he chose to try to destroy the three fleeing cargo vessels while he still could. The U.S. force turned west but Hosagaya's flanking ships cut off the attempt to come within range of the cargo vessels.

Nachi opened fire with her eight inch forward turret guns at
0838 hours at a range of twelve miles. Her second salvo straddled
the Richmond whose smaller six inch guns could not reach the Japanese heavy cruiser. Salt Lake City opened fire with her eight inch guns at 0842. The Japanese identified Salt Lake City as a heavy cruiser and since the other U.S. cruiser had not opened fire Hosagaya concentrated his attack against Salt Lake City.

Captain Bertram Rodgers, USN, Salt Lake City's skipper fired salvos and dodged the concentrated fire of the four Japanese cruisers that were slowly closing the distance. Rodgers had the helmsman steer toward the splashes of the last enemy salvo because he anticipated that enemy gunnery control would make a correction for the miss.

Salt Lake City's fourth salvo blasted into the base of Nachi's bridge. Flames and smoke enveloped the superstructure of Hosagaya's flagship. Fires were extinguished but a generator had failed which cut off all electrical power forward and put Nachi's main batteries out of action. Generator repairs took half an hour during which time Nachi was forced to zigzag in order for her other guns to bear. This manuevering cost her the speed advantage.

Nachi fired eight torpedoes at Salt Lake City from long range but all torpedoes were dodged. The American ships had turned to port and with the

Japanese ships in pursuit the long range gun duel had progressed in a southwesterly direction. When Nachi was hit, the Japanese warships had closed the gap to eight and one half miles. During the period that Nachi was forced to zigzag, the U.S. ships were enabled to widen this distance to fifteen miles.

Three eight inch shells from Salt Lake City's sixteenth salvo scored direct hits on Nachi's bridge, mainmast, and torpedo tubes. The bridge shell killed three officers standing close to Admiral Hosagaya but he was unhurt. Explosions wrecked electrical wiring to the forward main batteries which had just been returned to action. Nachi was forced to zigzag again.

At 0910 an enemy shell struck Salt Lake City amidships, killed two sailors but did not cause heavy damage. The U.S. ships had been lucky so far, thanks mostly to accurate gunnery from Salt Lake City. Nachi was smoking, appeared to have slowed, and was firing at extreme long range. McMorris still had hopes of attacking the cargo ships but this possibility ended when old Swayback Maru reported that her hydraulic steering system had been damaged by the shock of her own salvos. This meant that her rudder had to be worked manually which severely limited rudder angle and prevented high speed turns. Chasing salvo splashes effectively would be almost impossible.

McMorris and Hosagaya had both requested air support. An hour into the battle Hosagaya was notified by radio that bomber help from Paramushiro would not be available. McMorris learned that 11th USAAF bomber help from Adak would be delayed because all available bombers were loaded with high explosive bombs for use against Kiska installations. It would be many hours before these bombs could be unloaded and the planes rearmed with armor piercing shells and torpedoes obtained from Adak's scattered ammunition dumps in the hills. Neither opposing fleet commander knew of the other's air support problem; each expected enemy bombers to appear overhead at any moment. None of requested attack bombers ever arrived. Three patrolling PBYs converged on the scene and witnessed the battle while acting as scouts.

An hour and a half after the battle started, a Japanese shell plunged through the main deck of Salt Lake City and exploded below the waterline. Water rushed through a large jagged hole and partially flooded an engine room.

McMorris' largest, most powerful ship was taking

water and slowing while her repair parties tried to patch the hole in her hull. She could no longer dodge salvos. Captain Rodgers requested a protective smoke screen. Salt Lake City's own smoke generators were cranked up and destroyer USS Dale raced around her laying thick black smoke. Unfortunately, an east wind was blowing. In order to stay within the smoke screen, the American ships, on the run, had to keep moving westward. Hosagaya's fleet was between the U.S. task force and Attu and forcing McMorris ever closer to Paramushiro.

A second damaging hit crashed home below Salt Lake City's waterline at 1103. This explosion on the port side aft flooded her gyro room, burst oil tanks and salt water and oil poured into her portside compartments. Salt Lake City slowed and in spite of pumping she took on a five degree list to port.

In an attempt to restore trim and counteract the flooding, engineers inadvertently pumped salt water into the main engine fuel lines. At 1150 the salt water was introduced into the boilers and extinguished the burners. Without steam, propulsion was lost. Salt Lake City went dead in the water. All during this time her after guns kept firing at the closing Japanese cruisers.

In the concealing smoke, McMorris maneuvered Richmond close to Salt Lake City and asked Captain Rodgers if he wished to abandon ship. Rodgers declined and requested more time to try to get up steam.

McMorris ordered destroyer Dale to continue to circle the crippled cruiser and lay smoke. He ordered the other three destroyers, under command of Captain R.S. Riggs, USN in USS Bailey, to carry out a virtual suicide torpedo attack against the two Japanese heavy cruisers.

Destroyers Bailey, Coghlan, and Monoghan, twisting and turning at flank speed to evade enemy salvos, raced toward almost certain disaster to launch their torpedo attacks. At 10,000 yards Bailey received a hit that knocked out her electric power. She fired five torpedoes, lost headway and turned away with enemy near hits cascading water over her. Monaghan and Coghlan reached a point 9,000 yards from the enemy cruisers without being hit when at 1203 the enemy fleet astonishingly turned tail and retired to the west at high speed.

An odd set of circumstances had saved Salt Lake City and

quite possibly the entire U.S. North Pacific Fleet from
destruction. First of all, Hosagaya did not know that Salt Lake City was crippled and dead in the water because she was hidden by smoke. All during the time that Salt Lake City's crew had been fighting the flooding and trying to get the boiler relit she had kept firing. She had run so low on armor piercing shells that some high explosive ammunition had been used. When these shells exploded close to Nachi they made a white phosphorous splash similar to aerial bombs. This, coupled with the large amount of radio traffic intercepted between the U.S. task force and Adak led Hosagaya to believe he was being bombed through the overcast by U.S. planes. Hosagaya was so convinced of this that he'd ordered his anti-aircraft batteries to fire blindly up through the clouds.

Because his ship had received considerable damage, he was still in range and being fired at by the smoke shrouded American heavy cruiser, under torpedo attack by U.S. destroyers, and thinking that we was also being attacked by enemy bombers, Hosagaya broke off the engagement.

Although casualties were light on both sides and no ships had
been sunk, the little known Battle of the Komandorskis was a resounding American victory and important for several reasons:

1. It wrested naval supremacy of the North Pacific from the Japanese. They had already lost air supremacy in Aleutian waters and no further surface supply convoys were attempted by the Japanese. This assured the success of the U.S. blockade which left Japan's garrisons on Kiska and Attu in a desperate situation.

2. Although some purists may list it as number one, the battle lasted the incredible duration of three and one half hours. It was the longest classic surface engagement in modern naval history.

3. Admiral Hosagaya's action of retiring with a superior force was not viewed with favor. In disgrace, he was subsequently relieved of command and replaced by Vice Admiral Shiro Kawase, IJN.

In a final note, Goodwin, Turnbull, and Spence, who earlier had been my weather shipmates aboard USS Indianapolis, took part in this battle. This trio had been transferred to the ComCruDiv Flag unit of Admiral McMorris and served under him in his flagship

Richmond. During the battle, Goodwin was the bridge messenger of Admiral McMorris.

Japanese Verification of Ship Losses

The sea war had finally made a move to catch up to the air war in the Aleutians. By the spring of 1943, however, U.S. air attacks had already accounted for about forty Japanese ships either sunk or heavily damaged, most by bombers of the 11th USAAF.

Some of these losses were verified by postwar interrogation of Colonel Fujii, IJA. Fujii was the executive officer of Japanese forces on Kiska for the major portion of time that the enemy held the island.

Colonel Fujii stated that one ship,(he could not recall the name), was attacked by U.S. aircraft and beached before his arrival on Kiska. The Nissan Maru, Kano Maru, and Nojima Maru were also either sunk or beached before his arrival.

On October 7 or 8, 1942, a torpedo attack by B-26's on ships in Kiska Harbor all missed.

The Melbourne Maru was also hit during October 1942 in Kiska Harbor during a bombing raid and was damaged but not sunk.

In late November the Uragio Maru was bombed and strafed in Kiska Harbor and beached.

An army chartered ship was sunk in early December 1942 by air attack fifty miles northwest of Kiska. During the same month, the Kotohira Maru was bombed and sunk by a B-24 while entering Holtz Bay, Attu..

The Cheribon Maru was sunk in Holtz Bay by a B-24 in mid December 1942.

The Akagane Maru, with an infantry platoon aboard had been missing since last reported west of Attu in February 1943. There were no survivors and Colonel Fujii assumed she was sunk by aircraft. She had in fact been sunk by U.S. destroyers after being crippled by eight inch shells from USS Indianapolis.

In February 1943, one destroyer was sunk west of Kiska. A second one escaped the air attacks without damage.

Colonel Fujii believed several other sinkings and

damaging attacks by aircraft occurred but these he documented were the only ones he could clearly recall.

The B-26 Torpedo Attack

The B-26 torpedo attack, a complete failure, mentioned by Colonel Fujii is one I remember well. I watched preparations for a large scale B-26 torpedo attack and observed the planes takeoff on this mission. It happened about a week after I returned from a sealion cave on Amchitka and during the days of the first Adak Weather/ACI tent.

U.S. Navy Field Torpedo Unit (FTU) #42 had moved to Adak and set up shop on the northeast side of the runway near my weather tent. Besides serving the navy's needs this mobile outfit was temporarily assigned to the army air command at Adak to furnish and install MK-21 aerial torpedos. In this instance the torpedoes were mounted outside the fuselage and under the belly of each B-26. The clearance from torpedo to steel mat runway was a scant six inches.

The U.S. Navy had performed this service for the USAAF earlier at both Cold Bay and Umnak in June of 1942 during the Japanese air attacks on Dutch Harbor.

At Adak the torpedo attack was mounted in haste when a strike at Kiska disclosed an unusual amount of enemy shipping in the harbor, including warships. I recall this B-26 torpedo attack for two reasons: 1. The torpedoes had been painted a brilliant orange-yellow. This vividness was a striking contrast to the drab paint of the aircraft and base as a whole. 2. The B-26 raid was talked about for a long time.

Why this torpedo attack failed was certainly debatable and the magnitude of the golden opportunity missed heightened the "discussion". The army claimed that the navy torpedoes were defective. Pilots reported that some torpedoes either dove and appeared to explode on the bottom while others ran erratically and still others appeared to run under ship's keels and explode on shore. At least they all ran so they contained "torpedo juice" and the propulsion alcohol had not been drained out for a party. The warheads apparently exploded on contact, not prematurely or not at all as was often so of our early WWII torpedoes.

The navy claimed that the army pilots did not make the proper low approach, consequently the torpedoes were dropped from too high an altitude which caused them to strike the water at an improper angle.

Failure of this mission was probably a combination of faults. In botched joint ventures, the army and navy found it convenient to blame each other.

FTU #10 relieved FTU #42 February 4, 1943 and torpedo operations were moved to the southwest side of army runway "A". Colonel Fujii did not mention a later, smaller scale B-26 torpedo attack which was highly successful. Strike photographs showed one ship sinking and two others badly damaged.

A Few Amchitka Activities

During March 1943 the vital new base on Amchitka grew in size and importance. The bomber strip was being extended to a length of 10,000 feet to accomodate the new behemoth B-29 Boeing Super Fortress when this aircraft became operational. Japan's home islands would be within bombing range of B-29s based at Amchitka.

At the end of March, CAerM Herold was still working the Wing weather detail alone on Amchitka. The round-the-clock schedule was taking its toll. Herold's weight had dropped from 165 to 126 pounds. His legs, ankles, and feet had become swollen to twice normal size. The SeaNav at Amchitka sent a radio dispatch to Tatom at Adak requesting that immediate weather help for Herold be sent to wing operations at Amchitka. This squadron commander also ordered Herold to curtail his flying in order to get some rest.

Tatom ordered Lester Roberts, AerM2c and Jack Junior Parlier, AerM3c to Amchitka to assist Herold. Their first and foremost priority was to take with them, install, and operate a radiosonde unit. It was almost April before these two men and the radiosonde equipment reached Amchitka.

Parlier had recently come north to be assigned to our small contingent of Fleet Air Wing Four aerographer's mates. Jack Parlier was destined to never mature beyond his apple-cheeked innocence. His life, full of boyish dreams and enthusiasm would be snuffed out in less than a year. He would be the first U.S. Navy weatherman to die in the Aleutian struggle.

Shortly after Roberts and Parlier joined Herold a joint army-navy weather office was established on Amchitka but it was separate from our wing operations.

Boyd Omang made chief at Dutch Harbor and went on leave. When he returned to the Aleutians he reported

in at the Kodiak Navy Weather Center where he relieved CAerM Joseph A. "Jake" Leahy as office chief. Leahy, Fred "Fatty" Wall, AerM2c and Walter "Ironhead" Zamorski, AerM2c were sent to Amchitka. This trio was ordered to set up a navy weather office at Constantine Harbor in conjunction with the 11th USAAF Communications unit.

The three men departed Kodiak March 15, 1943 and stopped at Adak for a week while awaiting further air transportation to Amchitka. At Adak they picked up a complete, crated aerological unit that would be sent out to Amchitka via first available ship.

Leahy, Wall, and Zamorski left Adak and arrived at
Constantine Harbor on April Fool's Day 1943. They were temporarily quartered in a 15 foot pyramidal tent. The three had little besides their clothes and personal belongings. Chief Leahy had three army cots and three sleeping bags issued to them. Conditions were still so primitive at Amchitka that their water supply was seepage from a slit trench the three dug in front of their tent. This trench was protection against the occasional Japanese bombing and strafing attacks.

In order to make life easier for himself and his men, Leahy took on the additional job of Chief Master-At-Arms. This job was available because of the recent influx of navy personnel at Amchitka. In this capacity Leahy was able to acquire a new tent, wooden decking, potbelly stove, and roof rafters. The Sergeant Coxes of this world have their counterparts in many U.S. Navy chief petty officers most of whom are 'operators' in their own rights.

An LST (Landing Ship Tank), eventually arrived from Adak with the crated aerological gear and Lieutenant (jg) Burton W. "Smokey" Lindley. Lindley was one of the best of the good guys among our young officers.

This navy weather unit had to wait until the bomber strip was completed. Originally started by army engineers, it was the 8th Battalion (eight-ball) U.S. Navy Seabees who laid the steel matting. Unsung heroes of the Aleutian Campaign, the Seabees laid the metal strip for the Amchitka bomber runway in hurricane force winds and blizzard conditions to complete the job in record time.

When the bomber strip was operational the NAAF weathermen moved into the new aerological office. The two joined Quonsets were located about halfway up the

bomber runway. One hut was the 11th USAAF radio room for copying and transmitting weather and the navy weather office occupied the other Quonset. This setup was officially designated the Amchitka Joint Army-Navy Weather office. In the meantime, White, AerM2c and Leonard Volkering and Terhaar, both AerM3c arrived from Kodiak to help Lindley, Leahy, Wall and Zamorski.

Chief Leahy's experience dictated that he was the one to set up the weather office. There were hours of planning. Close on the heels of layout came the opening of crates, unpacking, assembling and installing instruments, calibration checks, storage of materials, construction of the thermoscreen etc. In addition, Leahy had to devise a workable Watch, Quarters, and Station Bill. The problem of feeding the men had to be worked out. They were the only navy men on that side of the runway and far removed from the nearest navy chow facility.

Leahy solved this problem with half of the five gallon can of
190 proof alcohol he'd thoughtfully brought with him from Kodiak.
By means of this unit of exchange he made arrangements with the army master sergeant in charge of the 11th USAAF pilots' mess for the navy aerographer's mates to eat there.

Many times throughout the Aleutian Campaign our supply of 190 proof pure grain alcohol was a life saver. Always on hand to clean delicate weather instruments, specifically the human hairs of our hygrothermograph, it found many other uses.

The chief aerographer's mate in charge of the Aerological Supply Depot at Kodiak, whoever he might be, always saw to it that the units in the field to the west had an ample supply. It came in five gallon cans and we routinely requistioned ten gallons at a time. The prescribed procedure in our aerographer's manual for cleaning hairs used only a tiny amount,--a droplet--. Five gallons would be sufficient to clean the hairs for five years on every hygrothermograph that U.S. Naval Aerology ever possessed. One surely could never fault the original aerological genius who established that our alcohol be packaged in five gallon tins.

With Leahy's work load and the man-killing schedule in which Williwaw Herold was enmeshed, the two old friends did not even have the opportunity to say, 'Hello'. For over a month neither knew of the

other's presence on Amchitka. Leahy found out about Herold. Herold did not learn until 1980 that Leahy had been on Amchitka in 1943.

Leahy was located on one side of the bomber strip; Herold's PBY operation was at the far end of the fighter airstrip. The two chiefs were separated by a mile of knee deep mud. On Amchitka, this alone was enough to discourage a sex maniac from visiting the most beautiful woman in the world even though he'd been invited to spend the night.

While the joint army-navy weather station on Amchitka proved to be a smooth running operation, a combined combat effort failed.

During the spring of 1943 a squadron of P-38 Lightnings joined the P-40s at Amchitka. Remembering the decoy trick employed to shoot down two out of three Kawanishi flying boat bombers near Nazan Bay the previous year, an 11th USAAF officer proposed to the navy that a PBY be used to lure Japanese "Rufe" fighters out of Kiska Harbor so that Amchitka's P-38s could shoot them down.

This was not the same as the Nazan Bay ploy by which a radar equipped B-17 located the Kawanishis for the "Pea-shooters". The navy either failed to stress that the timing of the proposed joint operation should be a delicate thing for the safety of the lumbering PBY, or, if it were mentioned, it was later ignored.

Part of VP-43 had been transferred to Amchitka from Adak. The decoy PBY, piloted by Lt. Carl "Bon" Amme, got airborne and flew to Kiska to entice the float Zeros out. Meanwhile, at Amchitka it was chow time. The P-38 pilots must have figured a few minutes one way or the other wouldn't make any difference so they ate lunch.

Amme reached Kiska and flew lazily around outside the harbor. This phase bore quick fruit. Two "Rufes" could not pass up the dangled bait. They pounced. With holes being stitched through the PBY's wings and fuselage by two gleefully firing Zero pilots, Amme avoided being shot down in flames by diving into a cloud bank. In a classic janfu the P-38s failed to arrive at the scene in time.

Our Job Priorities Were Subject To Sudden Change

While these activities were taking place to the

west we were kept busy at Adak. From the moment Adak's navy weather operations moved to the hilltop, Tatom assigned CAerM Ed Hudson a list of priority projects. Each morning, Hudson had to make a progress report to Tatom who often expressed displeasure at the slow rate of completion. We were on a four watch schedule with eight hours on and twenty-four off. With the exception of the watch that came off duty at 0800, (unless it was an emergency), the men were available for work detail or weather flights on their twenty-four hours off. To appease Tatom, and in spite of conscience pangs, Hudson often kept us busy on these various projects in horrible weather.

During one spring storm Tatom's jeep stalled in the middle of a large, axle-deep water hole at the bottom of our hilltop road. He went over his boot tops getting from jeep to muddy ground. Rather than trudge uphill the long way by road in his sodden boots and socks Tatom decided to take the shorter path that led past the enlisted barracks Quonsets to the office. He had placed construction of steps and wooden walkways from these huts to the office close to the bottom of the current priority list, (19 out of 21).

Tatom slipped and fell in ankle deep mud in this area, thereby heavily soiling his aviation-green trousers and hooded Eskimo parka. In an angry mood he reached the office and summoned Hudson.

"I don't give a damn what's at the top of your priority list move construction of the steps and walkway from the enlisted huts to number one and get started on it immediately. Also send two men to the bottom of the hill in an office jeep, pull my jeep out of that _____ mud hole, get my jeep running and bring it up
here. I also want that hole filled before nightfall."

Hudson erred when he said, "The men are on what they consider a few hours set aside for their free time right now, commander. Can I wait until the storm eases?"

"G------t," replied Tatom, "the men have no free time. They owe me twenty-four hours a day. I don't care how hard they work, it is going to be done and if I hear much more from you, you'll be first class again."

Tote that barge...lift that bale...

All Command Headquarters Move To Adak

In spite of occasional janfus at the operational level, Admiral Kinkaid's appointment as COMNORPAC had resulted in the long hoped for cooperation between Army and Navy commands in the Aleutians. Generals Buckner and Butler had quickly moved their headquarters from Anchorage to Kodiak and into the large, two-story Navy Alaska Sector building which they shared with Admiral Kinkaid, COMALSEC, Rear Admiral John W. Reeves, USN, and FAW-4 Commander, Leslie E. Gehres.

In preparation for the planned 1943 spring offensive against Japan's Aleutian strongholds, General Buckner and Rear Admiral Kinkaid concurred that all headquarters be moved to the forward base at Adak.

Gillis was used to move Wing Flag Headquarters from Kodiak. Bill Stewart, AerM2c, returning from leave, and an effeminate AerM3c, new to the navy were passengers. Elzie Carey, the sole AerM assigned to the seaplane tender, and Stewart renewed an old friendship disrupted shortly after the enemy attacks on Dutch Harbor the previous year.

When flag gear came aboard there were four cases of Canadian VO from Gehres's private stock sitting on deck. Carey shielded the view of the busy O.O.D. while a crewman was successful in putting eight fifths inside his foul weather jacket and getting into the fireroom air lock undetected. This booze remained untouched that day and well hidden. Remainder of the four cases disappeared somewhere betwix and between deck and stowage. That night the 8-12 watch on the after gun got put on report, in entirety, for being drunk. They couldn't officially be charged with theft of the liquor but they paid the price nonetheless. Carey recalls a shipfitter first class being busted over the incident.

Another high priority cargo was a deckload of crates each containing a porcelian toilet bowl. Gehres and staff would move to Adak but they did not intend to rough it.

Enroute Gillis ran into a storm. Little was seen of the new AerM3c who was so seasick he thought he was going to die. At one interval he rolled about on the deck of the head amid vomit, three inches of sloshing water, toilet paper and feces that had spilled out of the clogged communal metal trough. Mortified by his condition and plight he was too weak and sick to do anything about it. Sobbingly, he refused Carey's offer

to help him up.

When the seaplane tender reached Adak this 'tender' passenger came out of seclusion. He stopped by the weather office to say goodbye to Carey.

"I hope you had a nice trip," Carey said.

With a limp wrist gesture the little doll replied, "Oh, I
hope I never see your old boat again."

Stewart, packed and ready to go ashore, was also in the office. He cracked up with laughter in spite of his Herculean effort at self-control.

By the end of March the move had been made and Alaska Defense Command (Buckner), COMNORPAC (Kinkaid), COMALSEC (Reeves), 11th USAAF (Butler), and COMPATWING FOUR (Gehres) were in their harmonious cluster of headquarters on an Adak hillside.

Ringside Seat At Adak's Aerial Circus

Air strikes against the entrenched enemy resumed with intensity in early spring 1943. B-24s, B-25s, B-26s, P-38s, P-39s, late model P-63 Kingcobras, and Canadian and U.S P-40s flew round-the-clock missions whenever unsettled spring weather permitted.

Strikes were carried out by single planes, groups of two, three or more and often in squadron strength. At times Adak's airfield resembled a busy New York subway station with planes taking off or landing every few minutes. From our hilltop the weathermen watched these comings and goings with great interest.

It was our understanding the P-38, P-39 and P-40 were powered by the V-12 liquid cooled Allison engine but each type fighter had a distinctive engine sound. This may have been the result of different horsepower ratings, turbochargers, or power settings because each type had been designed to perform best at certain altitudes. By sound alone we could tell which type fighter was taking off or flying overhead.

P-40s made the most noise. This loud sound was coupled with an irritating and distinctive harsh, raspy-throated rough note. It gave one the urge to grab a screwdriver and tinker with the carburetor to try to smooth things out. A P-40 reminded me of an angry hornet.

Although it was twin-engined the P-38 was least loudest of the three. Its powerful smooth roar blended with a predominent whistling sound of turbos.

A P-39's engine sound was not as raucous as a

P-40 and smoother. Its blower made a whine rather than the teakettle whistle of the P-38.

From the moment of their arrival in the Aleutians P-39s were plagued by trouble from collapsing nose wheels. Many crashes, most during landings, occurred. A heavy looking fighter they came in like a rock and appeared to land faster than a P-40. Most P-39 crashes were bad ones. When the nose wheel collapsed the sliding, spinning result was at high speed. The plane seemed to disintegrate strewing pieces all down the runway.

Although the problem with collapsing nose wheels was worked on and eventually solved P-39s at Adak were gradually replaced by P-38s and P-40 Kittyhawks as these became available. Before I left for the invasion of Attu in May P-39s had all but disappeared from the scene.

Perhaps a determination had been made that the P-39 was better suited to a different type of air warfare. Another explanation is that a large proportion of P-39 production was going to Russia. With its mid-mounted engine behind the pilot, 37mm. nose cannon and six machine guns it was a Soviet favorite. Equipped with additional guns and wing-mounted rockets it proved deadly against German tanks, motorized columns and trains.

A number of takeoff and landing crashes resulted in the original plane involved slewing off to one side or other and crashing into parked aircraft. Spectacular fires and explosions usually followed this kind of accident.

There was infinite variety in crashes. One time a P-38 pilot became lost temporarily in fog on his return from a mission. He was critically low on fuel when he found a hole in the soup and spied the runway. In the excitement of the moment he forgot to lower his tricycle landing gear. We watched in fascination as the P-38 settled lower and lower until both propellers chewed into the steel mat runway. One could liken the noise to poking a pancake turner into a whirling fan then multiplying the decibels a thousand fold. This plane porpoised on its belly down the runway, its bent-tipped prop blades spinning until the pilot cut his engine switches. The wild slide was in more or less a straight line and the plane remained on the runway. As fire trucks and emergency vehicles surrounded the P-38 the pilot climbed out unharmed.

There were a considerable number of one-legged

P-40 landings. Sometimes these cripples circled the field several times before landing. Others came straight in. One assumed that enemy aircraft of AA fire had either damaged the hydraulic systems or the wheel lowering mechanism. I can't recall seeing any of these planes get both wheels up or both down.

They came in on one wheel and this drew everyone's attention. All made good touchdowns. By manipulation of controls the pilot kept rolling on an even keel until speed decreased to the point at which the plane simply fell over on the wheelless side. This usually caused the plane to spin round and round as it slid until it either hit something or came to a jolting stop on the runway. Occasionally the one down wheel collapsed quickly upon landing and this usually resulted in a bad crash.

The wildest sights happened several hours after a great number of different types of fighters took off at close intervals. Hunting was good and the fighters strafed until ammunition was exhausted and fuel running low for the return to Adak. At times even the P-38s remained over the target areas longer than was prudent. They were a long range fighter to begin with and it was common practice for them to be flown on one engine to and from missions to conserve fuel. This concept was pioneered by P-38 pilots on early missions to Attu. Although P-38s could stay over the target area longer they often arrived back at Adak intermingled with P-39s and P-40s.

Some planes were shot up, some pilots wounded. Many planes were almost out of fuel. A few, completely out, came in dead-stick with feathered props. These planes all had to land NOW and they did. People in the control tower must have been driven to distraction because there was no control possible.

On several memorable occasions we watched fighters landing simultaneously from both directions. As two raced toward each other the pilots kicked rudder pedals and jiggled joy sticks so the planes would miss as they passed. Crashes could not be avoided under such madhouse conditions.

Heavy and medium bombers were by no means exempt from crashes. Martin's B-26 Marauder was evidently a structurally stronger plane than North American's B-25 Mitchell. In what appeared to be similar type crashes the B-26 held together better while the B-25 came

unglued in large sections.

All plane wreckage was quicly removed, usuable parts salvaged and the remainder hauled away to any one of half a dozen dumps.

Routes Into Kiska Harbor

At the beginning of the Aleutian Campaign our attack planes went into Kiska from the east because the harbor's main entrance and our faraway bases lay in this direction. As months went by air attack schemes and routes into Kiska Harbor underwent many changes. Weather, a search for the most effective means of attack, and Japanese defensive measures had dictated some of the early changes in tactics. An example was our use of Kiska Volcano as a landmark which brought our planes into Kiska Harbor from magnetic north. Dive bombing through holes in the cloud cover had worked until the enemy filled these holes with murderous flak. Low-level attacks had gradually replaced high-level ones. Some of our planes made low-level attacks from the south through the opening between South Head and Little Kiska Island. To discourage use of this approach the Japanese shifted guns to concentrate more fire in this channel. Like chess it was move and counter-move.

The greatest changes in tactics occurred after we'd established an airbase on Adak. Because of the shortened distance, bombers and fighters could make a circuitous approach and attack from any direction. Bombers and fighters usually flew just above the wave tops from Adak to Kiska. Detection by the line-of-sight enemy radar was thus avoided until the last possible moment. Japanese, scanning the skies to their north through east to south, were often caught by surprise when planes attacked from a westerly direction.

One such approach started low and ended low but there was a thrilling, roller coaster bump in between. Planes came streaking in from the west or southwest across wide Vega Bay. This necessitated a sharp pull up to clear the high ridge of South Head before executing an equally steep dive into the harbor. To counteract this tactic the Japs concentrated additional AA weapons along the ridge of South Head.

In the spring of 1943 attacking bombers and

fighters often were arriving individually every few moments at Kiska. This caused the enemy to expend large amounts of hard to replace ammunition. It also exhausted the defenders physically and mentally by keeping them constantly at battle stations.

By this time, U.S. and Canadian pilots had been in, over, and around Kiska so many times they knew every ridge, valley, draw, rock and clump of tundra. The next natural progression was for some of the most intrepid pilots to start attacking enemy installations by flying at wing and belly scraping level through two narrow valley passes from the islands interior.

Attacking planes that used this dangerously daring approach
appeared as if by magic. A number of times, surprise was so complete that Japanese were caught in long chow lines. In addition to fighters, this approach was used several times by B-25 and B-26 pilots. All of the pilots involved were surely of the daredevil, crop-duster variety.

A Steel Cable Mouse Trap

In a final chapter to this cat and mouse game the enemy pulled a surprise of their own. Hordes of Allied planes were beating a path to the Kiska door. The Japanese decided they might as well have that better mouse trap. It was ingenious.

The most frequently used narrow pass was the site cleverly selected to build the trap. On both sides of the pass, at a spot where planes were forced to make a slight banking turn, the Japs constructed vertical anchor points bedded in solid rock. A series of closely spaced, light steel cables would be stretched horizontally and tightly across the pass and anchored to the tiers of rings.

When everything was ready the enemy stretched and cables taut across the constricted corridor. They awaited dawn and the arrival of the first Allied planes.

There was no way of knowing then, and none at this late date, how many planes and lives the cables at Kiska claimed. A persistent rumor at the time placed the figure at three planes: one B-26 and two P-40s. Scuttlebutt claimed one P-40 was Canadian. Another rumor identified the bomber as a B-25 while others insisted two bombers were involved.

The most consistently heard version stated two

P-40s, flying Indian file, were first to fly into the trap and have their wings sheared. A medium bomber, following in their wake, did not have time or the maneuverability to avoid the cables. A fourth plane's pilot reportedly witnessed all or part of the triple debacle. This fighter pilot instictively firewalled his throttle and pulled the stick back into his belly to escape. He'd not seen any tracers and at first had no idea what caused the other planes to disintergrate in midair. As he flashed over the area he caught sight of a plane wing of large piece of fabric clinging to a sagging cable.

This survivor spread the alarm and our planes stopped using this route. According to scuttlebutt a later flyover reported there appeared to be more wreckage in the canyon than would result from three planes. This suggested the possibility that one or more unwitnessed single aircraft from Adak or Amchitka may have entered the death corridor either earlier, or before the warning reached all aircraft already in the air.

The cables were a Japanese success. Our planes were denied
use of this advantageous approach.

Incomplete postwar Japanese records make no mention of the cables at Kiska. To my knowledge our high command never released any information on this incident although a report must exist in the files.
Shooting At The Army Target Sleeve

While these activities were taking place the Black Irishman was getting into mischief at Adak. One early spring afternoon the sudden staccato of light and heavy machine guns was heard. I grabbed the BAR I'd come ashore with but had not fired and belt of clips. With other hastily armed men I ran outside to do battle with the enemy.

Towing a target sleeve a plane was flying parallel with beach. Army crews in sand-bagged emplacements along the beach and on the northern slope of our hilltops were firing bursts as the sleeve neared each gun.

The plane was making passes from north to south about 200 yards offshore and slightly higher than our hilltop. A group of us watched the fireworks for awhile. There were remarks about the poor accuracy. Most gunners, as was usually the case, failed to lead the target enough and tracers clearly indicated they

were lagging far astern. When this happens it is almost impossible to correct one's aim before the target, even a slow moving sleeve, is out of range.

After five minutes the other weathermen returned to office or barracks hut. I got the bright idea to indulge in a little target practice with the BAR. Certain that my joining in would not be officially sanctioned I positioned myself prone in the tall grass and awaited the sleeve's next pass.

To fire immediately after the last in line .30 calibre on the
north slope would be the best way to escape detection. This gun opened up on the sleeve and ceased fire before the target was in suitable position for me. This plus the fact I could not tell if this were the last in line .30 calibre caused me to hesitate. In those few seconds the heavier and slower firing .50s had opened up from beach positions below. All too quickly the sleeve was getting far to my right.

I knew instinctively when I squeezed the trigger that the angle was too acute and I'd led the sleeve too much. My tracers arched out and crossed the towline closer to the plane's tail than the sleeve.

Duck Hudson had been watching target practice from open main doors of the elephant Quonset some distance behind me. By coincidence Chief Hudson had been busy belting extra .50 calibre ammunition for the two machine guns delivered recently to the weathermen. One of our sand-bagged emplacements faced the runway; the other the sea. We'd not fired these weapons and both were wrapped in tarps. I was not aware of Hudson's presence and he had no idea I was in the tall grass until I opened up with the BAR. In a hollering rage he rushed up to me.

"What the hell are you trying to do shoot the _
___g plane
down? Give me that _____d BAR."

"Okay, Duck," I replied, "It's all yours. Here take it." "Like hell," he said after reconsidering. "It's yours. Keep
it but hide it fast."

Instead of circling for another pass the target plane landed. Within ten minutes an army major came roaring up our mountain road with his jeep wheels throwing dirt and rocks like a Pike's Peak race car. Before the fuming major could enter the weather office Hudson intercepted him.

"Where's that navy idiot with the light machine

gun?" the major demanded.

Hudson, puffing calmly on his curve-stemmed Dutch pipe matter of factly lied. "We're a non-combatant weather outfit, major. To my knowledge, sir, we have no automatic weapons."

"Someone on this hilltop does. He almost hit the tow plane." "I observed considerable .30 calibre machine gun fire coming from those emplacement over there," said Hudson, helpfully pointing out the army emplacements on the nearby north slope.

"Well," welled the major, "thanks for you help chief. Damned sloppy gunnery. You can bet I'll get to the bottom of this."

He climbed in his jeep and drove to the emplacements. We heard no more about it. Hudson gave me his solemn oath that if he ever so much as saw my BAR again he'd see that I was court-martialed, "for something."

Roll Out The Barrel

Adak had slowly dug its way out from the worst recorded winter in Aleutian history. Melting snow exposed a winter's accumulation of debris. A few days after my target sleeve escapade Hudson decided it was high time for spring house cleaning on our hilltop.

Alongside the elephant Quonset, at the edge of the south cliff, were three large empty drums that had contained oil for our heating stoves. Hudson ordered me to get rid of the steel barrels.

A short walk to the front of the weather shack showed that all of our transportation was gone at the moment. I went back and pondered the drums. These were thousands of empty metal barrels all over Adak. I had no idea where to take the three even if transportation had been available. Rather than incur further wrath from Hudson, who was still angry with me, I decided to simply push the barrels off the cliff. There was nothing directly below except a field of tundra.

After rolling the barrels to the cliff and lining them up side-by-side I pushed them off in rapid succession. There seemed no reason they wouldn't fall and tumble to the base of the cliff. I stepped to the edge to observe. With shock I saw them bouncing and

cartwheeling at high speed as they neared an army tent camp 100 yards from the base of the cliff. Stunned, I watched the drums rampage like three crazed rhinoceri through the tent area.

Soldiers were shouting and looking toward the cliff top. One was pointing in my direction. I stepped back to get out of sight and almost bumped into Hudson. He asked what all the shouting and commotion down below was about.

"Geeeez, I didn't think they'd go that far."

"Please," pleaded an incredulous Hudson, "tell me you didn't push the barrels off this cliff?"

"The jeeps were gone. It seemed the simplest thing to do." "My God, it was simple all right. You could have killed someone and may well have."

"They collapsed some tents but I don't think they hit anyone."

"You can bet your sweet ass the army'll raise hell about this and I'll be damned if I'll lie for you this time."

No majors came Pike's Peak racing up our hill this time. Twenty-four hours went by without so much as a peep out of the soldiers camped below.

I was asleep about noon the following day after the mid to 0800 watch when a frantic cry of, "FIRE! FIRE!" from the door woke me. Everyone in the hut ran outside to find thick smoke billowing up from below and enveloping our hydrogen shed. Flames fanned by a stiff southwesterly breeze marched swiftly through grass and tundra and up the slope of our hill. With shovels, blankets, clothing, anything we could lay hands on, we fought the flames.

"Don't let it reach the shed or the explosion will level this hilltop," Hudson kept hollering. Like maniacs we battled the fire. Eyes smarted. Smoke seared our lungs. Arms were sapped of strength.

The upper two-thirds of the rocky cliff face on the south was mostly devoid of dried grass and the fire petered out on that front. On the western slope, soldiers living in Quonsets and navy personnel from the radio shack fought the fire because it threatened their huts. We were able to stop its advance on the

southwest side and eventually put it out although flames came within 100 feet of our hydrogen shack.

"Your soldier friends below almost got even with you, didn't they?" said a blackened faced, red-eyed, weary Hudson. "It would have served you right if they'd blown your ass sky high."

There had not been a previous grass fire at Adak nor did we experience any after that. Can there be any doubt the soldiers seized the opportunity provided by a perfect wind direction for their retaliatory measure?

The Eagle's Nest

Two bald eagles had their nest 40 feet below the cliff top on the southeast side of our mountain retreat. A pair of eagles uses the same nest year after year. This nest had seen many seasons as indicated by the amount feathers, droppings and whitened fish bones. In preparation for the new brood eagles repair damage caused by winter storms. Four feet across on the inside the nest was crudely made mostly of driftwood. Some sticks were thick as a man's forearm and fully four feet long. One of the eagles was seen flying to the nest with a limb this size.

Many hours were spent awaiting the eggs to hatch that spring of 1943. We sweated out this event like nervous fathers outside a hospital maternity room. Two eagle chicks cracked their shells and emerged.

Our quiet, close presence as we looked down upon the nest did not seem to frighten the parents. Momma and papa began bringing home small fish and chunks of larger fish for their young.

Don Livingston and I took many great photographs of the young
eagles being fed, growing daily, and of the adults coming in to land with wings spread in a braking action. It is not generally known but on Adak from fall of 1942 at least through May 1943 only officers were allowed to have cameras. We had pooled our funds and purchased the camera and rolls of film through Sergeant Cox. He'd had these forbidden items flown in from Anchorage. Our inexpenside little Kodak Brownie had its limitations.

"If this camera had a telephoto lens or we could get closer
we could take some exceptional pictures," Don wished aloud.

The nest was on the end of a ledge which turned to sheer cliff toward the beach side. On the near side the ledge continued to a point below our hydrogen shed. All of the ledge was not visible but it looked passable even though it appeared to narrow progressively as it extended away from the nest.

"I'll take the camera," I offered, "and see if I can work my way along the ledge to the nest."

"Be careful," Don said. "It's a long way straight down." My climb down to the ledge was a bit scary but easily done. I moved along cautiously while traversing two places where the ledge narrowed alarmingly. At the second constriction, which hadn't been visible from above, the ledge canted slightly from level to down and outward. An overhanging rock bulge also forced me farther from the cliff than desired. I hesitated so long at this point Don hollered to ask if everything were okay. I finally got the nerve to inch across maintaining good handholds while my right shoe cleared away loose dirt and rock chips.

By this time I was desperately sorry I'd attempted the ledge walk. The nest eventually came into view when I rounded a bluff face. Although still quiver-kneed I felt safer because the ledge was wider. I forced myself not to look down or think about the return trip.

I'd approached to within 15 feet of the nest and had stopped to snap several shots of the young eagles from this close and new angle.

"Look out!" Don shouted.

The full grown eagle gave a shrill squeaky cry that sounded more like it came from a barnyard chicken before I turned and saw it. With powerful feathered legs ending in sharp talons spread wide and thrust forward the fierce eyed eagle came at me. I threw one arm up to cover my face as a taloned claw raked the shoulder of my foul weather jacket. Thrashing wings beat at me for a second before the eagle dove off to one side, lost altitude and flapped majectically away.

Petrified, I hollered for Don to help me. "Hang on. Don't panic. Don't fall. I'll get help." I told him to hurry. 'Don't fall?' I thought. It wasn't a case of falling but rather one of being pulled off. Anyone who believes an eagle will not attacks a human

can redo their thinking.

Don came back within minutes with Hudson and a half dozen men. Hudson was carrying a coil of manila line. He lowered one end to me.

"Keep calm," he said. "Put the line under your arms and around your chest and secure it with a good bowline."

"Hell," I croaked, "I haven't tied even a bad bowline since I left boot camp. I've forgotten that knot."

Hudson retrieved the line, tied the loop and lowered it down. "Where are the eagles," I asked.

"Never mind the eagles. Get ready. We'll pull you up." Hudson and Don positioned themselves side-bu-side at the cliff edge. Others spaced themselves along the line and dug in their heels like a tug-of-war team. At Hudson's signal all started to pull. This, too, was a heart-stopping experience for me.

They'd yarded me up about twenty feet when someone hollered, Here he comes again!

This time I had my face to the cliff, legs kicking in air for a foothold. I was not about to turn around so I didn't see the eagle but I certainly heard and felt it. There was a rapid whooshing sound as great wings beat the air close to my head. At the same time I received a jarring thump on my back. This must have come from a wing but felt like someone whacked me across the shoulder blades with a board. This attack lasted several seconds before the eagle flew away. Don thought it was the same eagle, the larger of the pair.

Hudson was grunting under the strain as I neared the top of the cliff.

"If...I had one fragment...of brain left," he puffed, "I'd take my knife...and cut...this line. It's a mystery...to me...how one man...can get into...so much trouble."

Don and I shot the remainder of the roll from the cliff top and turned all three rolls over to Cox. He sent them to Anchorage for developing. He had given us a price for this service and we paid ordering two sets of prints. Weeks went by without word of our pictures. One day Cox sadly told us his Adak contact received word from Anchorage that none of our photographs

turned out.

Most of the pictures were likely so unusual we were sure somewhere along the route, probably at the developers, somebody 'put the arm on them'.

Cox didn't wish to set a precedent by refunding the full price most of which (he said) would have to come out of his pocket. He insisted, however, that we accept the profit he'd turned on developing.

Adak's Bloodiest Most Bizarre Fight

Wesley "Muscles" Strong, AerM1c, whom most of us had not seen since the war started, arrived at NOB Adak with duty orders to the Joint Army-Navy Weather Center. About the same time CAerM Olaf "Swede" Thoen and, of all people, Claude Giles, AerM1c reported for duty.

I'd served with Thoen for a short time in the Indianapolis. He'd been with the task force most of the time since then and was still attached to the staff of COMNORPAC.

Giles, you may recall, was the man on the roof of Kodiak's hangar who almost ate my accidently fired tracer. We were not overjoyed at seeing one another. For different reasons we avoided each other as much as possible. Trouble brewed, however, between Strong and Giles.

Seven off duty weathermen were gathered in the partitioned shop at the rear of our storage hut. Thoen, Strong, Stewart, Giles and I were in the group. One man was painting metal brackets, another was working on a wood carving, the rest were having a bull session. From a secret nook, Thoen produced a full gallon jug of Green Death. This flagon was being passed around behind the closed door.

Giles couldn't hold his liquor as well as some and he became extremely argumentive at these times. Chief Hudson had of late been chewing out Stewart and others for deliberately getting Giles drunk. Strong was argumentive even when sober. Shortly before the jug was emptied Strong and Giles got into a heated argument. All attempts to placate them failed.

Giles grabbed a shovel, raised it and advanced on Strong. Strong backed warily away, reached above the workbench and took down a crosscut handsaw. The fight that ensued was not only the most bizarre I've ever witnessed but also one of the bloodiest and most frightening.

Giles swung and jabbed while Strong used the saw like a swordsman. Most of Gile's swings missed but some of his quick, thrusts struck Strong's upper body including face and head. One long jab lifted a patch of flesh and hair that partially scalped Strong. Whenever Gile's thrusts were parried Strong's sharp saw slid down the shovel handle and lacerated Gile's hands. Other saw swipes, thrusts and slashes opened jagged ugly wounds.

Men nearest the door ran out to avoid being hit or cut. Three
of us were trapped at the back of the room between duelists and door. Because of the flashing weapons we could not get close enough to break up the fight. If we had managed to grab one man first the other would likely have taken advantage.

The fight ended when the two men were so bloody they could no longer see and so exhausted we were able to disarm them and get them to sickbay.

Does the Wind Really Blow That Hard In the Aleutians?

In response to this frequently asked question I can offer several examples. The record setting Aleutian winter of 1942-1943 was notable for its low temperatures, low pressures, amount of snowfall, frequency of violent storms and astounding winds.

Most of the AerMs had never spent a winter there nor had a previous weather station been established at Adak. With no basis for comparison we believed we were experiencing typical winter weather.

Many of us had spent our early years growning up in northern states. We considered the temperatures mild and snowfall nothing to write home about. Storm center pressures were an exciting topic because they were close to the lowest recorded pressures in the deepest hurricanes and typhoons. It was the winds, however, that were most impressive and vividly recalled. Because our instruments did not register high enough many of the awesome velocities were estimated.

The worst storm struck April 7, 1943. Sustained winds
estimated at 140 knots with gusts to 180 knots (208 mph) were damaging.

It was downright frightening to be in a shaking, trembling weather shack while staring wide-eyed at the anemometer dial, the needle of which was slamming

violently against the peg at 120 knots. At other times the needle would be steadily pegged with such force it bowed while above the express train roar of constant wind the periodic banshee shrieks of much stronger williwaws could be heard.

A REEEK, SCREEEEEEK, sharp creaking sound of fastenings pulling loose meant another section of corrugated tin roofing was ripping off.

During the height of this storm we worked desperately to keep from being blown bodily out of our barracks hut. The wind, southerly at first, was so strong it started to cave in the south end of our Quonset. Under Hudson's direction, eight 2" X 6" X 12' braces were spiked to a deck cleat and that end of the hut. This saved us. If the end had collapsed under wind pressure our hut would have been transformed into an open-ended tube--a wind tunnel--. The north end bulkhead would have exploded outward. Like dry peas propelled through a blow gun, all in the hut would have been hurtled out.

As this storm moved eastward our winds veered northwesterly. Most of the strongest williwaws came screaming down off Mt. Moffett from this direction. These did not have a direct thrust against the north bulkhead but we moved braces to this end.

These northwesterlies did strike directly into an exposed end
of our balloon inflation, hydrogen factory and extra storage shed. This elephant Quonset was destroyed by a particularly savage series of williwaws. A large supply of radiosondes were quickly scattered and wrecked beyond use. Many of the 10 pound instrument packages were blown off the hilltop and into the sea below. Hundreds of balloons and other boxed supplies met the same fate.

One of the three anemometer cups was carried away during the storm but the instrument still registered 65 knots on two cups and one bare arm. Mr. Tatom asked for a volunteer to climb the mast and install a new rotor assembly. He got none. When the wind slacked off to near hurricane force, Hudson and two men risked life and limb on the mast to replace the rotor. Hudson made the installation while two men supported him. Until this repair job could be done the portable, hand-held anemometer I'd come ashore with was used for wind velocity.

Just prior to this storm, Army Communication System (ACS) completed construction of a wooden framed

and plywood building preparatory to their moving to our hilltop. This building was to the northeast of our weather office and close to the cliff overlooking Kuluk Bay. It was the only structure not set in a revetment.

Extra heavy framing was negated when the 20' X 20', hip-roofed building was glassed on four sides. Several hundred, foot square window panes extended from thigh height to six inches below the top plate. Wise to the winds, weathermen had questioned the use of so much glass. Five-eighths inch steel guy wires were installed at each of the building's corners. Four holes had been dug, forms built, and cement poured for deadmen to anchor these cables.

During the storm, Don Livingston and I decided to go outside and view the destructive winds in action. Debris of all sizes, shapes and forms, much of it quite lethal, was flying through the air. Sometimes on hands and knees, we made our way to the lee side of a Quonset thirty feet from the new, unoccupied ACS building. With protection from the Quonset and revetment we watched in awe as Adak's materiel went soaring by.

Sheets of corrugated roofing, plywood, boards, wooden crates, cardboard boxes, scraps of lumber, sheets of paper by countless thousands were all whirling and cartwheeling through the air. Some of these items including sheets of plywood and tin were hundreds of feet above us. Some pieces were gaining altitude as they sped seaward. It was all being blown into the Bering Sea. Debris was visible as far as eye could see.

The ACS building was trembling and jerking against its guys when an exceptionally violent gust blew in one of the panes. An immediate explosion followed.

As wind whistled through the shattered pane it had created a sudden and tremendous increase in pressure inside the building. This blew the roof off. Intact, it went up thirty feet like a two ton kite then out to sea. Four walls followed suit amid sounds of shattering glass and splintering wood. One 8' X 20' wall section's eye bolt held for several seconds. Long enough for the wall to thresh back and forth at the end of its anchor cable like a berserk tethered beast. This was the last section to go. The 20' X 20' deck had preceded it.

In seconds, all that remained of the building

were the four
guys.

Elsewhere on the base a Seabee was reportedly struck and killed by a flying object. A soldier found dead was believed to have been decapitated by either a whirling piece of metal or plywood. Dozens of men were reported to have suffered broken bones, severe bruises, or cuts when their duties had required them to venture outdoors.

A considerable number of aircraft were destroyed and many damaged. There was great damage to tents, huts, warehouses, other buildings and installations. On our hilltop, in addition to the destroyed elephant Quonset and ACS building, there major damage to Quonset roofs.

Mother Nature's absolute power at times like these does not
well lend itself to description.

Flying Backwards

The foregoing examples of Aleutian wind were observed from
ground level while the following relate to PBYs in flight.

Our PBY had taken off from Adak one crisp winter dawn in early 1943. Westerly winds at takeoff were about twenty-five knots. The forecast called for good weather during the patrol and similar conditions at the base upon our return. Before being obscured by clouds, a short nightime upper air sounding had indicated stronger westerly winds aloft. Below 10,000 feet these were not expected to exceed fifty knots.

Our assigned sector was immediately south of the chain. The pilot headed westward and climbed through a thin, scattered deck of stratocu. From our jump seats facing aft the other gunner and I watched the eastern sky turn shades of peach, pink, then brighten into a new day. Mountains and peaks of Adak and Kanaga were brilliant white in their snowy mantles.

As the PBY flew on, westerly winds increased markedly and the forecast moderate turbulence became heavy. Upon taking my first hourly observation we had progressed only about forty-five miles and were south of Kanaga.

In seeking less turbulent air, and to gain altitude in case we were struck by williwaws, our pilot climbed to 4,000 feet. With sparse clouds,

excellent visibility and well functioning radar this extra height enabled us to search a large area below and to a farther horizon.

It seemed to take forever to pass Tanaga and approach the Delarof Islands. On the third hourly observation we had reached a point south of the eastern tip of Amchitka. We were still cruising at an airspeed of 110 knots but our ground speed had decreased to 30 indicating headwinds of 80 knots. White caps and foam streaks indicated winds 35 knots at the surface. After completing my observation I returned to my starboard waist gun, plugged in my earphone jack and tried not to think about the creeping cold.

Within five minutes the surface winds increased to an
estimated 45-50 knots. About ten minutes later the pilot's voice on the intercom said, "Hang on. We're heading for the barn."

He banked and the PBY almost flipped on its back as the low, jet stream wind struck the underside of the large parasol wing. Our PBY went streaking downwind eastward boosted by a tremendous tailwind. Islands that had been standing still a moment ago disappeared rapidly astern. Our action had been reminiscent of a seagull that suddenly tires of flapping wings merely to maintain position, turns, then sails off downwind and out of sight.

In flying the weather we were required to take an observation at each dogleg and each turning point in addition to the standard hourly report. I went forward to complete this observation.

The navigator said we were returning to base because it was impossible to continue. This decision had been reached when two successive triangular sights on mountain peaks proved we were LOSING GROUND at our indicated airspeed.

Facing aft the other gunner and I had been flying forward but pilots and crew facing forward on the flight deck had been flying backward.

It had taken three and a quarter hours to reach our unscheduled turnaround near Amchitka but our PBY landed at Adak in about forty-eight minutes. Surface winds had increased but were under 40 knots.

What's That Mountain Doing Out Here In The Middle Of The Ocean?

CAerM C.C.Herold had a spine-chilling experience with low jet stream winds earlier in the campaign. This was on a long patrol from Nazan Bay to the west of Attu. Radar on the PBY was either malfunctioning or the operator could not adjust tuning. Pilots, navigator and crew were new to the Aleutians.

Outbound the flight was made at 50 feet against moderate head winds below a stratus ceiling and in and out of fog, an experience nerve-racking to pilot and copilot.

Near the Russian Komandorski Islands the weather improved. On the homeward leg the pilot took the PBY up to 3500 feet. With a feeling of elbow-room at this height the pilots relaxed but Herold grew apprehensive because visual contact with the sea had been lost. Unknowingly they had climbed to an altitude of a low jet stream's fierce winds. Flying between cloud layers the PBY headed east.

About an hour and a half later the navigator was peering out his little port above the chart table.

"What in the world," he asked Herold, "is that mountain doing out here in the middle of the ocean?"

Herold took one look and told him it was the volcanic peak on Kiska. The navigator said this was impossible as they were still somewhere west of Attu according to his calculations.

Cloud layers began to merge. Herold told the pilot they had just passed Kiska's volcano and Semisopochnoi's was dead ahead. He urged the pilot to alter course to the north and get down through the first hole before it was too late.

The PPC was hesitant. He checked with the navigator who was busy rechecking his DR figures. A lengthy discussion followed. Finally, the navigator admitted he could have made an error, the mountain peak might have been on Attu but certainly not Kiska. Herold was adamant and said he damn well knew Kiska's volcano when he saw it.

"Look Out!" yelled the copilot.

Both pilots horsed back on the yoke, made a wing straining pull up and an equally violent wing-over to port, so violent both gyro-horizons tumbled. The plane had barely missed flying headlong into the volcanic peak of Semisopochnoi. They had covered the eighty-five miles from Kiska in less than twenty

minutes.

Pilots and navigator were convinced. They continued northward away from the Aleutians into the Bering Sea where the pilot letdown throught the first hole. It was determined later that with an indicated airspeed of 105 knots ground speed had been close to 250 knots.

Ens. C. H. "Bon" Amme ran into similar unexpected winds his first twenty-four hours in the Aleutians early June 1942. He'd flown from San Diego with other elements of VP-43 and landed at Cold Bay. After refueling he was ordered to join his commander at Nazan Bay far to westward. Amme took off on instruments as darkness came on. Rather than risk flirting with unfamiliar peaks at night he climbed on top, turned south, flew well away from the chain before turning west to fly through the night. At dawn he turned back toward the Aleutians, spiralled down through the first hole to get his bearings and discovered he was only a hundred miles west of takeoff point.

Most who have flown any length of time in the Aleutians have run into these low jet stream winds. Because PBYs were so slow we were the most effected.

Most readers may recall seeing similar wind phenomena though not likely of the same degree. Winds at ground position were light or even calm yet clouds several thousand feet above were racing silently past at a high rate of speed.

A New Plane For the U.S. Navy

In early spring 1943 word sifted down that the navy would soon be supplied with Lockheed Aircraft's new, "hot", land based medium bomber. Twin-engined, twin-tailed this was the famed Vega Ventura designated PV-1 by the navy. P denoted Patrol, V identified the manufacturer as Vega Division of Lockeed and 1 was model.

Patrol Wing Four had become Fleet Air Wing Four (FAW-4) by then and our outfit would be the first to be equipped with the new aircraft. VB-135, (V-heavier than air, B-bombing squadron), was completing training at Ault Field Whibey Island, WA. and would soon be based at Adak.

Evolution of this plane is not difficult to trace. Lockheed's first Vega designation was Wiley Post's famous Winnie May in which he and navigator,

Harold Gatty, set a new round-the-world speed record in July 1931. Again in Winnie May, in 1933, Post set a solo round-the-world record bettering his previous one by twenty-one hours. Post's high speed plane was high winged, single engined and single tailed.

Lockheed produced the Electra in 1935. This slim fuselaged, rather stubby winged, twin-engine, twin-tailed aircraft has a resemblance to the PV-1. This again was a fast plane. Also dependable and tough, Electras are still in use today in many parts of the world.

The next development came in 1938 with a plane designated 14-W-Special in which Howard Hughes set a new round-the-world record. Hughes had intended using a Douglas DC-2 but at the last moment chose the 14-W-Special. Speed again, must have been the primary factor that swayed Hughes.

In the 14-W-Special, the PV-1's characteristic fat, pregnant appearing fuselage is evident for the first time. This belly bulge extended well below the stubby wings. This made the 14-W-Special a mid-wing monoplane as opposed to the Electra's low-wing configuration. Both were twin-engined, twin-tailed.

Lockheed next introduced the famous Lodestar in early 1942. Production of a military version for the British, who were in need of a fast attack bomber for sub hunting, began in mid 1942. Britain's designation for the plane was Hudson bomber. A few were acquired by the USAAF and designated B-34. In essence, the Hudson was a PV-1 although many modifications were made in the U.S. Navy version.

By 1942 the U.S. Navy had learned at high cost its PBYs operating in combat zones were extremely vulnerable in encounters with enemy fighters and when used as attack bombers against ships and shore installations. We had greater need than Britain for this new plane. It had extraordinary speed, fighter-quick maneuverability, adequate firepower and toughness. When the plane proved to have these exceptional offensive and defensive capabilities, so lacking in the PBY, the U.S. Navy requisitioned most of the production scheduled for Britain.

Readers interested in learning all about the important but generally unknown role played by PVs during WWII in the North Pacific are urged to read Charles L. Schriver's definative "The Empire Express".

PV-1 specifications, technical data and squadron

information is from "The Empire Express". Interspersed are my thoughts and comments. Covering fourteen months from time of its arrival I flew missions in the PV-1 from Adak and Attu with three of four squadrons. Time enough to form definite opinions.

Wing span 65 feet 6 inches, overall length 51 feet 6 inches. Unloaded weight 12,500 lbs, useful load 10,000. Design overload 31,000 lbs but military maximum overload 34,000. Service ceiling 27,000 feet, range about 1500 miles although in the Aleutians many combinations of extra fuel tanks were installed to increase the range. Hydraulically operated deicing boots on leading edge of wing and tail surfaces were a boon for Aleutian operations.

The PV-1 had twin .50 calibre Browning machine guns in a top mount power turret. Twin .30 calibres were in a ventral tunnel. Two fixed, .50 calibre Brownings were mounted high up, one on each side of the nose and remotely fired by the pilot. Additional forward firing fixed guns were installed as a chin package as the months went by.

Two Pratt-Whitney, twin-row Wasp R-2800-31 engines, equipped with single stage, two speed turbochargers, developed 2,000 hp each at 2,700 rpm at sea level. These huge powerplants gave the PV-1 a rated top speed of 280 knots (322 mph). In early 1943 this was extraordinary performance for a medium bomber. Even this impressive figure was exceeded and speeds over 320 knots (368 mph) were achieved under emergency conditions. Few fighters in the world at that time could top this.

The PV-1 pilots' SOP manual cautioned to NEVER draw more than
52 inches of manifold pressure but if it were absolutely
necessary it should not exceed five minutes. During winter operations it was discovered our dense sub-arctic Siberian air caused a ram-jet effect. Firewalled throttles and turbos on high blower drew 56 inches and horsepower of each engine was boosted to 2,200. Speed was a PV's best asset when encounters with land based fighters could not be avoided. In early 1944 over
Paramushiro I observed a manifold pressure in excess of 55 pounds and an indicated airspeed of 327 knots. It was often necessary during that stage of the war for a pilot to maintain such extreme manifold pressure for upward of an hour. This kind of emergency

performance usually necessitated changing both engines.

Another great feature of the PV-1 was a new type ASD-1 search radar. This model, which covered 240 degrees from its nose cone mounted antenae, was the first sophisticated set to give a scope picture of topography in addition to distance and bearing to targets. With the ASD-1 it was possible to bomb accurately through cloud cover. Of even greater importance to most it was a blessing for finding our way home in stormy weather and fog.

A PV-1 was a fighter-bomber as was its smaller Lockheed cousin the P-38 Lightning. Our hot plane could be flown on one engine as was proved many times and can be vouched for personally. This did require a most critical observance of minimum single engine speed to avoid a stall.

Minimum clean stall speed was 105 mph. With the aid of Fowler flaps this was reduced to 90 mph. That was still speedy for the short steel mat runways of the Aleutians. Fowler flaps were a new and dramatically effective airbrake so much so they required gradual and judicious application. Otherwise, it was like jamming on the brakes of a car. Landings were always exhilarating especially when the airfield was in a box canyon surrounded by high mountains, the only approach from the sea, invariably with either cross winds or tail winds, and frequently sudden, dreaded williwaws.

Takeoffs were far more critical and accounted for many of the PV-1 crashes in the Aleutians. Usually overloaded with ordnance and extra fuel beyond the manufacturer's gross weight military limitations it took every inch of a 4,500 foot runway to get airborne.

Although it was an aircraft with remarkable performance and sorely needed it was delivered before all bugs were eliminated. This happens often in wartime and was especially true of the guinea pig handy Aleutian front.

The main problem for several months was a nightmare
arrangement of thirteen separate fuel cells all operated manually. This design flaw was blamed for some early takeoff crashes. In each case scuttlebutt said one of the powerful engines quit. The tremendous torque of the other flipped the plane over and it literally screwed itself into the ground or sea. A

modification solved this problem.

Takeoff crashes of this nature happened even though a Lockheed test pilot proved at westcoast air stations that a PV-1 could takeoff on one engine. To further demonstrate a PV-1s fighter-like capability this pilot did an aileron roll during single engine takeoffs. Impressive! But it was executed by a skilled test pilot and PLANNED. It could be a different story when one engine quit unexpectedly on an inexperienced pilot taking off in the dark, from a short runway in an overloaded PV-1.

Under command of Lt.Cmdr. P.C. Williams, USNR, VB-135, the first U.S.N. PV-1 squadron, was commissioned February 15, 1943 at NAS Ault Field, Whidbey Island, WA. VP-42 had been decommissioned and some pilots and crewmen from this PBY squadron became part of VB-135. Used to their former steeds some of these plane jockeys found the transition to the PV-1 like climbing off the back of an old plow horse and onto a rearing wild stallion. Unfortunately, the training program was short. With only 60 to 80 hours flight time pilots, crews and planes were rushed to the Aleutians.

Two of the other three PV-1 squadrons in training would soon join VB-135. VB-136 was commissioned at Ault Field March 1, 1943. Under command of Lt. Cmdr. Nathan S. Haines, USNR VB-136 would arrive at Adak April 30, 1943. Some pilots and crewmen from VP-41 were the nucleus of this squadron.

VB-139 was formed at Ault Field and began training under Lt. Cmdr. W. R. Stevens, USNR on April 1, 1943 and arrived on Amchitka October 7, 1943.

The fourth squadron, VB-131, was commissioned in March 1943 at NAS DeLand, Fl. and operated in the Caribbean as part of FAW-11 until March 1944. At that time it was transferred to FAW-4 and reorganized at Whidbey Island under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Rolland Hastreiter, USNR. After training, VB-131 arrived in the Aleutians October 20, 1944.

In the Aleutians, the reputation that the PV-1 was a bad plane spread quickly and preceded VB-135's arrival. Comments included: The wings are so short and stubby it flies like a rock and comes in hot; It's an awesome machine that can jink like a fighter but this makes it hard to handle. Scuttlebutt labled the plane a killer. These opinions were formed by men who had not even seen the PV-1.

It was a different story with those flying the

plane. I can't recall ever speaking with a pilot or crewman who did not like the PV-1 from the beginning. In current terminology it was a macho plane. A most endearing quality in wartime and a morale booster. It was true the plane took some getting used to but this earned a healthy early respect. As pilots and crews became more familiar with the PV-1 they also slowly gained confidence in it in spite of the fact one VB-135 crew was lost in a training accident.

VB-135 departed Whidbey Island March 25, 1943--destination
Adak. Only seven of twelve planes arrived in early April. Three were reported to have crashed enroute and two were delayed at Kodiak by mechanical problems. This strenghtened rather than dispelled rumors about the PV-1.

Although I learned to appreciate its many sterling qualities I disliked flying in the PV-1 for three reasons. First, it was a land plane. It could not land on water and it did not float. This was of great significance. We were operating in a remote area of small islands, volcanic peaks, few airfields and water everywhere.

It was a drastic change to be in a land plane 700 miles at sea and realize one HAD to locate a tiny fog swept airstrip. We could no longer resort to a chop-flop landing at sea to either taxi home or to a safe anchorage until fog lifted.

A PV-1 put us in the same situation as 11th USAAF crews for whom I'd always felt compassion. But they had no basis for comparison: they had not flown in PBYs first. This transition to a land plane was a tough for me and a large minus on my PV-1 balance sheet.

Secondly, I felt I was flying in a dark, cramped coffin. I could never see properly out of the little beast. I was too used to manning a waist gun where one had a panoramic view and alI the light available. Hour after hour from a PBY blister an AerM could observe changing cloud formations, visibility and also keep constant tabs on wind direction and force on the sea below.

The top turret allowed some light to enter but the gunner blocked most of this. Some light came through the glassed ventral gun hatch. Several small ports on each side of the fuselage, at the nav table and at the radio/radar station, let in light. There were a couple of small camera ports, one lowdown on

the starboard side aft of the power turret. No more than peep holes, the largest of these ports was about 10" X 12". There was a small astrodome aft of the navigator's table. This to my notion was worthless. The deck was raised in this area to accomodate the large bomb bay. Unless one were about 5' 4" tall one could not stand upright to peer out. When one stood in the uncomfortable position of knees half bent and poked one's head up, (without getting knocked unconscious when it was turbulent), one couldn't see anything anyway. The plexiglass bubble seemed to collect all outside moisture within miles, was perpetually covered with beads of water and moving streaks of moisture and fogged up readily from one's breath. After the first few attempts to view clouds from the astrodome it ceased to exist for me as a weather observation point.

A large windshield, side windows, and glass canopy provided excellent visibility from the cockpit. To take advantage of this for weather observing one was forced by lack of space to either kneel or crouch uncomfortably behind the pilots. Neither position could be maintained for long.

Last but not least, an AerM flew as extra crew in the PV-1 but there was no extra seat. In case of action he manned the twin-mount .30 calibre ventral guns. These were fired from a prone position while lying on a thin pad. If I were desperate to get off my feet I would sometimes flake out on this but only for a few uneasy moments. I could picture my embarrassment if I fell asleep: "Hey, someone wake up that lazy cull of a cloud-chaser. It's time for him to take an observation." Without a decent place to rest weary bones and still remain alert between observations it was extremely tiring and uncomfortable.

In the early months a PV-1 carried a crew of five with the co-pilot doubling as navigator. Because of the hazards flying in the Aleutians a regular navigator, either officer or enlisted man, was added. This enabled co-pilots to concentrate on flying.

After sixteen months of was the flying weathermen had acquired varying degrees of skill in aerial DR navigation. Mainly to keep busy in a PV-1 I often acted as assistant to the navigator. Sometimes I was ordered to help, sometimes it was a request, other times my offer was accepted. An experienced AerM was allowed to read instruments and relay indicated air-speed, altitude, temperature, compass heading and

was often permitted to take the drift sight. Many navigators preferred to have an AerM estimate surface wind velocity. These small measures of assistance permitted the navigator to concentrate on his calculations to fix our position.

Like pilots, navigators came in all sizes, shapes, temperments, personalities and degrees of expertise. All were locked into their own pressure cooker world. A few would not accept any offer of help. A few spent the entire flight with worry-knit brow while endlessly recalculating plots. A few of these resented any intrusion on their thoughts.

A short time after VB-135's arrival Mr. Tatom ordered me to
be the first to fly-the-weather in our new plane. It was an indoctrination/photo flight to Kiska and Attu.

In rapid succession two PVs made dawn takeoffs ahead of us. Fifth in line, my plane moved ahead 50 yards. With another plane we waited on a taxi strip off the south end of the runway. The third PV gathered momentum, roared dwon the runway and out of sight. The fourth plane and mine were held up about fifteen minutes before the tower cleared us for takeoff.

This delay was caused by a fatal accident. The third plane had crashed into the sea off the north end of the runway. There were no survivors.

Our flight was routine. The PhoM didn't get any pictures because of cloud cover over the target areas. For reasons of inconvenience mentioned earlier I returned with a feeling of frustration. I was disappointed, too, with the PV-1's performance for it seemed a rather tame animal not the heralded beast of rumor.

On takeoff there had been an unmistakable surge of great power. On our landing approach I was treated to a dramatic display of Fowler airbrakes. We were coming in a bit hot and high. More flap had to be applied in a hurry. Our PV shuddered as though it had flown into an invisible wall of molasses. Excess speed and altitude were shed in seconds.

Most disappointing and most surprising was our ambling cruising speed. Except for a twenty minute period outbound in the vicinity of Kiska when the pilots went to battle cruise settings I don't believe our indicated airspeed topped 150 knots. This was only 40 knots faster than cruising speed of a PBY.

The moment I walked into the office Mr. Tatom asked for a full report. I told him a PV-1 had clearly

not been designed for a weatherman. He listened with mounting impatience. Halfway through my list of gripes he cut me short.

"Your slight discomfort is of no moment," said he. "What is important are your hourly reports. If you had made the hop in a PBY you would be reaching your turn around about now."

This was not true but I didn't argue. Our flight of almost
900 miles had taken about six hours. A PBY would have landed two
to three hours after us.

Like it or not Aleutian AerMs had two planes to fly in: One skittish, dangerous, uncomfortable and fast when the wraps came off: one slow, roomy, and docile.

By April 1943 weather personnel from four commands were working at the Joint Army-Navy Weather Center, Adak, namely: COMNORPAC, COMALSEC, FAW-4, and 11 USAAF.

After turning over the reins of Fleet Weather Central, Kodiak
to Captain Thomas J. "Tim" Raftery, USN. Cmdr. Howard B."Hutch"
Hutchinson, USN had come to Adak to assume command as O-in-C of our Joint Weather Center from Mr. Tatom. Tatom remained senior FAW-4 Staff Aerologist. Lt.Cmdr. Russell H. "Ken" Maynard, USN
arrived to assume FAW-4 duties as second in command to Tatom.

Believe it or not: Ripley, among the aerologists reporting for duty with COMALSEC that spring was Lt. John Paul Jones Fleet. Eight hours a day, it seemed, Lt. Fleet worked mainly on turning out an endless stream of office memos. Within a matter of weeks, Mr. Hutchinson sent Mr. Fleet back to Captain Raftery at Kodiak.

Elsewhere in the Pacific during this period Japan tried to reinforce Lae and Salamaua on the north coast of New Guinea. This resulted in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. Using delayed-fuse skip bombing methods pioneered and developed by 11th USAAF's Colonel Eareckson on Japanese Aleutian shipping, 5th USAAF bombers sank all eight transports and four of eight destroyer escorts. Two other transports were sunk during the next several days. This stunning defeat caused Japan to abandon ship supply and all troop and supply runs to New Guinea were made by barge and

submarine thereafter.

'Do you know what that is, youngster?'

The drinking problem at Adak was heightened during the fierce winter of 1942-1943. Weather restricted outdoor activities. Men, blankly surveying four walls, slowly but inexorably went slightly "rock happy".

It was not only the lowly but often the lofty who fought off acquisition of the "Aleutian Stare" by succumbing occasionally to alcohol.

Another senior officer overindulged one night. Extremely respected and liked by officers and enlisted men, his usual routine was an analysis of the daytime map and preparation of a forecast. He would afterward, of his own volition, offer a workshop open to all. His interest and extra effort provide us a measure of this man.

One storm-lashed night, Emmett Smith, myself, one other AerM and two army men had the watch. Scotty Hassell was duty officer. He was also in a mellow mood. Rocked back in his swivel chair, flight boots propped upon his desk, he was cap-napping while waiting for Smith and me to finish entering signals on the latest synoptic chart.

Our routine on the 1600 to midnight watch was less hectic than the mid to 0800 and day watch. With no need for urgency I was entering signals with care as Smith called off the data.

With the roar of a revved up engine in low gear a jeep drove up and stopped. Our door flew open and this officer came weaving into the office. Hassell leaped to his feet and ordered, "Attention!". Although we'd not been given 'At ease, men' or 'As you were', Hassell advanced to greet out unexpected guest but he was silently waved aside. We were surprised by the unusual night visit but mostly by the condition of the visitor. The rest of us had jumped up a Hassell's command and had remained rooted at attention.

After steering himself to the map desk the officer attempted to climb atop the high stool I'd just vacated. My proferred arm lent to steady him was pushed aside. He made it astride the stool and attained balance but only after a few precarious moments when he looked like a cowboy in a loosely cinched saddle upon a restless stallion.

A few seconds of eye-focusing on the map followed. He then carefully selected one of the special fountain pens used for entering signals and began to draw a meandering isobar,(a continuous line that connects points of equal sea level pressure). His isobar enclosed some extremely odd shaped pressure cells.

This line was not only strange but it was being drawn with a permanent ink pen. This was highly unusual because maps are analyzed lightly in pencil accompanied by much erasing as one goes along. When everything is finalized the pencil lines denoting isobars, pressure cells and fronts are drawn in heavier.

But not this man.

Most impressive was even in his state no study of signals was required before he drew the heavy ink line in a matter of seconds. Lord, I thought, the man is truly a genius, especially because the ink line encompassed the Bering Sea, and most of the North Pacific Ocean where weather reports were non-existent.

Because I was not looking for anything else I saw nothing but one continuous ink line that made these strange loops and circles. When he'd finished he reared back, teeter-tottered, and focused on me standing alongside.

"Do you know what that is, youngster?" he asked. "That's a g_____d Bunny Rabbit!"

With a startled look I saw it sure as hell was exactly that,--in black ink--, all over my precious map. Tall ears looped into the Bering Sea, the little nose sniffed the Kuriles, the back arched from the Shumagins to the cotton tail off Vancouver Island, B.C., hind paws were off the southern California coast, the belly rested on the ocean along a line that passed north of Hawaii and to the front paws a 1000 miles west of Midway.

My mind was trying to untangle what had happened when it was further short-circuited. As the officer slid off the high stool and stood up he swept the map up in his hands, ripped it not quite in half, wadded it into a ball and threw it on deck. Without another word he lurched out the door and was gone.

Several seconds passed during which the office watch was turned to stone. In a daze I picked up the crumpled ball of paper that represented an hour and a half of painstaking work and stared at it.

"It wasn't a bad bunny rabbit," Emmett mused aloud. Someone giggled nervously. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry so I got angry.

The engine sputtered to life, over-revved, and with a clash of gears the jeep took off down our steep mountain road.

In the weather hut we did not hear the crash far below. MPs estimated the jeep must have been doing at least 50 mph when it came off our hill spur onto the main arterial. At that junction it hit a ten-wheeled army truck head on.

It took over an hour to extricate the more-dead-than-alive officer from the wreckage. After emergency local treatment he was transferred to the states for surgery, long hospitalization and convalescence. Except for one permanently gimpy leg he recovered fully from severe multiple injuries and returned to active duty.

Diary Entries

My Adak di ary entries toward the end of April and early May 1943 are as follows:

April 24	Eight cruisers slid into Kuluk Bay today. It is the largest task force up here since last summer. It looks as though the tenants of Kiska have failed to pay their rent. Big doing ahead. 69V??, 13 hours flight time.
April 25	Easter--went to church--did me some good I guess. We had our own Easter Parade--the lights and heavies flew west this afternoon.
April 26	51V26 0515 takeoff. Landed 1740 12 1/2 hours. Gotout to N48-10, 169-13 E.
No date	Things. 11 1/2 hours, 13, 11, 5.5, 12 1/2, 9 1/2 hours.
May 6	53V??, 7.5 hours.
May 7	51V212 9.5 hours.

This was the period Mr. Tatom took me off the watch list and I flew eight days in a row. Something was in the wind. Another sure sign was correspondent Keith Wheeler's frequent visits to our weather office during the past few weeks. Major offensive action was

imminent whenever he apppeared.